TWO DOZEN (OR SO) THEISTIC ARGUMENTS

Lecture Notes by Alvin Plantinga

I've been arguing that theistic belief does not (in general) *need* argument either for deontological justification, or for positive epistemic status, (or for Foley rationality or Alstonian justification)); belief in God is properly basic. But doesn't follow, of course that there aren't any good arguments. Are there some? At least a couple of dozen or so.

Swinburne: good argument one that has premises that everyone knows. Maybe aren't any such arguments: and if there are some, maybe none of them would be good arguments *for* anyone. (Note again the possibility that a person might, when confronted with an arg he sees to be valid for a conclusion he deeply disbelieves from premises he know to be true, give up (some of) those premises: in this way you can reduce someone from knowledge to ignorance by giving him an argument he sees to be valid from premises he knows to be true.)

These arguments are not coercive in the sense that every person is obliged to accept their premises on pain of irrationality. Maybe just that some or many sensible people do accept their premises (oneself)

What are these arguments like, and what role do they play? They are probabilistic, either with respect to the premises, or with respect to the connection between the premises and conclusion, or both. They can serve to bolster and confirm ('helps' a la John Calvin); perhaps to convince.

Distinguish two considerations here: (1) you or someone else might just *find yourself* with these beliefs; so using them as premises get an effective theistic arg for the person in question. (2) The other question has to do with warrant, with conditional probability in epistemic sense: perhaps in at least some of these cases if our faculties are functioning properly and we consider the premises we are inclined to accept them; and (under those conditions) the conclusion has considerable epistemic probability (in the explained sense) on the premises.

add Aquinas' fifth way: this is really an argument from proper function, I think

I. Half a Dozen (or so) ontological (or metaphysical) arguments

(A) The Argument from Intentionality (or Aboutness)

Consider propositions: the things that are true or false, that are capable of being believed, and that stand in logical relations to one another. They also have another property:

aboutness or intentionality. (not intensionality, and not thinking of contexts in which coreferential terms are not substitutable *salva veritate*) *Represent* reality or some part of it *as being thus and so*. This crucially connected with their being true or false. Diff from, e.g., sets, (which is the real reason a proposition would not be a set of possible worlds, or of any other objects.)

Many have thought it incredible that propositions should exist apart from the activity of minds. How could they just *be* there, if never thought of? (Sellars, Rescher, Husserl, many others; probably no real Platonists besides Plato before Frege, if indeed Plato and Frege were Platonists.) (and Frege, that alleged arch-Platonist, referred to propositions as *gedanken*.) Connected with intentionality. *Representing things as being thus and so*, being about something or other--this seems to be a property or activity of *minds* or perhaps *thoughts* . So extremely tempting to think of propositions as ontologically dependent upon mental or intellectual activity in such a way that either they just are thoughts, or else at any rate couldn't exist if not thought of. (According to the idealistic tradition beginning with Kant, propositions are essentially *judgments*.) But if we are thinking of human thinkers, then there are far to many propositions: at least, for example, one for every real number that is distinct from the Taj Mahal. On the other hand, if they were divine thoughts, no problem here. So perhaps we should think of propositions as divine thoughts. Then in our thinking we would literally be thinking God's thoughts after him.

(Aquinas, *De Veritate* "Even if there were no human intellects, there could be truths because of their relation to the divine intellect. But if, *per impossibile*, there were no intellects at all, but things continued to exist, then there would be no such reality as truth.")

This argument will appeal to those who think that intentionality is a characteristic of propositions, that there are a lot of propositions, and that intentionality or aboutness is dependent upon mind in such a way that there couldn't be something **p** about something where **p** had never been thought of.

(B) The argument from collections.

Many think of sets as displaying the following characteristics (among others): (1) no set is a member of itself; (2) sets (unlike properties) have their extensions essentially; hence sets are contingent beings and no set could have existed if one of its members had not; (3) sets form an iterated structure: at the first level, sets whose members are nonsets, at the second, sets whose members are nonsets or first level sets, etc. Many (Cantor) also inclined to think of sets as *collections*--i.e., things whose existence depends upon a certain sort of intellectual activity--a collecting or "thinking together" (Cantor). If sets *were* collections, that would explain their having the first three features. But of course there are far to many sets for them to be a product of human thinking together; there are many sets such that no human being has ever thought their members together, many that are such that their members have not been thought together by any human being. That requires an infinite mind--one like God's.

A variant: perhaps a way to think together all the members of a set is to attend to a certain property and then consider all the things that have that property: e.g., all the natural numbers. Then many infinite sets are sets that could have been collected by human beings; but not nearly all--not, e.g., arbitrary collections of real numbers. (axiom of choice)

This argument will appeal to those who think there are lots of sets and either that sets have the above three properties or that sets are collections.

Charles Parsons, "What is the Iterative Conception of Set?" in *Mathematics in Philosophy* pp 268 ff.

Hao Wang *From Mathematics to Philosophy* chap. 6: iterative and constructivist (i.e., the basic idea is that sets are somehow constructed and are constructs) conception of set.

Note that on the iterative conception, the elements of a set are in an important sense prior to the set; that is why on this conception no set is a member of itself, and this disarms the Russell paradoxes in the set theoretical form, although of course it does nothing with respect to the property formulation of the paradoxes. (Does Chris Menzel's way of thinking bout propositions as somehow *constructed* by God bear here?)

Cantor's definition of set (1895):

By a "set" we understand any collection M into a whole of definite well-distinguished objects of our intuition or our thought (which will be called the "elements" of M) *Gesammelte Abhandlungen mathematischen und philosophischen*, ed. Ernst Zermelo, Berlin: Springer, 1932 p. 282.

Shoenfield (*Mathematical Logic*) l967 writes:

A closer examination of the (Russell) paradox shows that it does not really contradict the intuitive notion of a set. According to this notion, a set A is formed by gathering together certain objects to form a single object, which is the set A. Thus before the set A is formed, we must have available all of the objects which are to be members of A. (238)

Wang: "The set is a single object formed by collecting the members together." (238)

Wang: (182)

It is a basic feature of reality that there are many things. When a multitude of given objects can be collected together, we arrive at a set. For example, there are two tables in this room. We are ready to view them as given both separately and as a unity, and justify this by pointing to them or looking at them or thinking about them either one after the other or simultaneously. Somehow the viewing of certain objects together suggests a loose link which ties the objects together in our intuition.

(C) The argument From (Natural) numbers

(I once heard Tony Kenny attribute a particularly elegant version of this argument to Bob Adams.) It also seems plausible to think of *numbers* as dependent upon or even constituted by intellectual activity; indeed, students always seem to think of them as "ideas" or "concepts", as dependent, somehow, upon our intellectual activity. So if there were no minds, there would be no numbers. (According to Kroneker, God made the natural numbers and man made the rest--not quite right if the argument from sets is correct.) But again, there are too many of them for them to arise as a result of human intellectual activity. Consider, for example, the following series of functions: 2 lambda n is two to the second to the second .... to the second n times. The second member is ##2 (n); the third 3#2(n), etc. (See *The Mathematical Gardener*, the essay by Knuth.) 6**2(15), for example would be a number many times larger than any human being could grasp. , for example, is to the We should therefore think of them as among God's ideas. Perhaps, as Christopher Menzel suggests (special issue of Faith and Philosophy) they are properties of equinumerous sets, where properties are God's concepts.

There is also a similar argument re *properties* . Properties seem very similar to *concepts*. (Is there really a difference between thinking of the things that fall under the concept *horse* and considering the things that have the property of being a horse?) In fact many have found it natural to think of properties as reified concepts. But again, there are properties, one wants to say, that have never been entertained by any human being; and it also seems wrong to think that properties do not exist before human beings conceive them. But then (with respect to these considerations) it seems likely that properties are the concepts of an unlimited mind: a divine mind.

(D) The Argument From Counterfactuals

Consider such a counterfactual as

(1) If Neal had gone into law he would have been in jail by now.

It is plausible to suppose that such a counterfactual is true if and only if its consequent is true in the nearby (i.e., sufficiently similar) possible worlds in which its antecedent is true (Stalnaker, Lewis, Pollock, Nute). But of course for any pair of distinct possible worlds **W** and **W***, there will be infinitely many respects in which they resemble each other, and infinitely many in which they differ. Given agreement on these respects and on the degree of difference within the respects, there can still be disagreement about the resultant total similarity of the two situations. What you think here--which possible worlds you take to be similar to which others *uberhaupt* will depend upon how you *weight* the various respects.

Illustrative interlude: *Chicago Tribune*, June 15, l986:

"When it comes to the relationship between man, gorilla and chimpanzee, Morris Goodman doesn't monkey around.

"No matter where you look on the genetic chain the three of us are 98.3% identical" said Goodman, a Wayne State University professor in anatomy and cell biology.

"Other than walking on two feet and not being so hairy, the main different between us and a chimp is our big brain" said the professor. . . . . the genetic difference between humans and chimps is about 1.7 %.

"How can we be so close genetically if we look so different? There's only a .2 % difference between a dachshund and a Great Dane, yet both look quite different (sic)," Goodman said.

"He explained that if you look at the anatomies of humans and chimps, chimps get along better in trees than people, but humans get along better on the ground. (Or in subways, libraries and submarines.)

How similar *uberhaupt* you think chimps and humans are will depend upon how you rate the various respects in which they differ: composition of genetic material, hairiness, brain size, walking on two legs, appreciation of Mozart, grasp of moral distinctions, ability to play chess, ability to do philosophy, awareness of God, etc. End of Illustrative interlude

Some philosophers as a result argue that counterfactuals contain an irreducibly *subjective* element. E.g., consider this from van Fraassen:

Consider again statement (3) about the plant sprayed with defoliant. It is true in a given situation exactly if the 'all else' that is kept 'fixed' is such as to rule out the death of the plant for other reason. But who keeps what fixed? The speaker, in his mind. .... Is there an objective right or wrong about keeping one thing rather than another firmly in mind when uttering the antecedent? (*The Scientific Image* p. 116)

(This weighting of similarities) and therefore don't belong in serious, sober, objective science. The basic idea is that considerations as to which respects (of difference) are more important than which is not something that is given in *rerum natura*, but depends upon our interests and aims and plans. In nature apart from mind, there are no such differences in importance among respects of difference.

Now suppose you agree that such differences among respects of difference do in fact depend upon mind, but also think (as in fact most of us certainly do) that counterfactuals are objectively true or false: you can hold both of these if you think there is an unlimited mind such that the weightings it makes are then the objectively correct ones (its assignments of weights determine the correct weights). No human mind, clearly, could occupy this station. God's mind, however, could; what God sees as similar is similar.

Joseph Mondola, "The Indeterminacy of Options", *APQ* April l987 argues for the indeterminacy of many counterfactuals on the grounds that I cite here, substantially.

(E) The Argument from physical constants

(Look at Barrow and Tipler *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle)*

Carr and Rees ("The Anthropic Principle and the Structure of the Physical World" (*Nature*, l979)):

"The basic features of galaxies, stars, planets and the everyday world are essentially determined by a few microphysical constants and by the effects of gravitation. . . . several aspects of our Universe--some which seem to be prerequisites for the evolution of any form of life--depend rather delicately on apparent 'coincidences' among the physical constants" (p. 605).

If the force of gravity were even slightly stronger, all stars would be blue giants; if even slightly weaker, all would be red dwarfs. (Brandon Carter, "Large Number Coincidences and the Anthropic Principle in Cosmology", in M. S. Longair, ed, *Confrontation of Cosmological Theories with Observational Data* l979 p. 72 According to Carter, under these conditions there would probably be no life. So probably if the strength of gravity were even slightly different, habitable planets would not exist.

The existence of life also depends delicately upon the rate at which the universe is expanding. S. W. Hawking "The Anisotropy of the Universe at Large Times" in Longair p., 285:

"...reduction of the rate of expansion by one part in 1012 at the time when the temperature of the Universe was 10_{10} K would have resulted in the Universe's starting to recollapse when its radius was only 1/3000 of the present value and the temperature was still 10,000 K"--much too warm for comfort. He concludes that life is only possible because the Universe is expanding at just the rate required to avoid recollapse".

If the strong nuclear forces were different by about 5% life would not have been able to evolve.

The same goes for the weak interaction force.

So if the weakness of the gravitational force relative to the electromagnetic force, or the strength of either the strong or weak forces were altered even slightly one way or the other, the universe would have been largely different, so different in fact that life could not exist. Pat Wilson, "The Anthropic Cosmological Principle" unpublished.

Similarly for the number of neutrinos, and for the mass of the neutrino

Before doing much of anything with this (and for Oxford, maybe only mention it and work harder with others) look again at: "The SAP also Rises: . . . " *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Oct. l987

Davies, P. C. W., *The Accidental Universe*, l982:

All this prompts the question of why, from the infinite range of possible values that nature could have selected for the fundamental constants, and from the infinite variety of initial conditions that could have characterized the primeval universe, the actual values and conditions conspire to produce the particular range of very special features that we observe. For clearly the universe is a very special place: exceedingly uniform on a large scale, yet not so precisely uniform that galaxies could not form; ...an expansion rate tuned to the energy content to unbelievable accuracy; values for the strengths of its forces that permit nuclei to exist, yet do not burn up all the cosmic hydrogen, and many more apparent accidents of fortune. p. 111

And what is impressive about all these coincidences is that they are apparently required for the existence of life as we know it (as they say).

Some thinkers claim that none of this ought to be thought surprising or as requiring explanation: no matter how things had been, it would have been exceedingly improbable. (No matter what distribution of cards is dealt, the distribution dealt will be improbable.) This is perhaps right, but how does it work? and how is it relevant? We are playing poker; each time I deal I get all the aces; you get suspicious: I try to allay your suspicions by pointing out that my getting all the aces each time I deal is no more improbable than any other equally specific distribution over the relevant number of deals. Would that explanation play in Dodge City (or Tombstone)?

Others invoke the *Anthropic Principle*, which is exceedingly hard to understand but seems to point out that a necessary condition of these values of the physical constants being observed at all (by us or other living beings) is that they have very nearly the values they do have; we are here to observe these constants only because they have the values they do have. Again, this seems right, but how is it relevant? What does it explain? It still seems puzzling that these constants should have just the values they do. Why weren't they something quite different? This is not explained by pointing out that we are here. (a counterexample to Hempelian claims about explanation) Like "explaining" the fact that God has decided to create me (instead of passing me over in favor of someone else) by pointing out that I am in fact here, and that if God had not thus decided, I wouldn't have been here to raise the question.

Another approach:

Abstract:

We examine the question of whether the present isotropic state of the universe could have resulted from initial conditions which were "chaotic" in the sense of being arbitrary, any anisotropy dying away as the universe expanded. We show that the set of spatially homogeneous cosmological models which approach isotropy at infinite times is of measure zero in the space of all spatially homogenous models. This indicates that the isotropy of the Robertson-Walker models is unstable to homogeneous and anisotropic perturbations. It therefore seems that there is only a small set of initial conditions that would give rise to universal models which would be isotropic to within the observed

limits at the present time. One possible way out of this difficulty is to suppose that there is an infinite number of universes with all possible different initial conditions. Only those universes which are expanding just fast enough to avoid recollapsing would contain galaxies, and hence intelligent life. However, it seems that this subclass of universes which have just the escape velocity would in general approach isotropy. On this view, the fact that we observe the universe to be isotropic would simply be a reflection of our own existence.

We shall now put forward an idea which offers a possible way out of this difficulty. This idea is based on the discovery that homogeneous cosmological models do in general tend toward isotropy if they have exactly the same escape velocity. Of course, such "parabolic" homogeneous models form a set of measure zero among all homogeneous models. However, we can justify their consideration by adopting a philosophy which has been suggested by Dicke (1961) and Carter (1968). In this approach one postulates that there is not one universe, but a whole infinite ensemble of universes with all possible initial conditions. From the existence of the unstable anisotropic model it follows that nearly all of the universes become highly anisotropic. However, these universes would not be expected to contain galaxies, since condensations can grow only in universes in which the rate of expansion is just sufficient to avoid recollapse. The existence of galaxies would seem to be a necessary precondition for the development of any form of intelligent life. Thus there will be life only in those universes which tend toward isotropy at large times. The fact that we have observed the universe to be isotropic therefore only a consequence of our own existence. 319

Spatially homogeneous models can be divided into three classes: those which have less than the escape velocity (.e., those whose rate of expansion is insufficient to prevent them from recollapsing), those which have just the escape velocity, and those which have more than the escape velocity. Models of the first class exist only for a finite time, and therefore do not approach arbitrarily near to isotropy. We have shown that models of the third class do in general tend to isotropy at arbitrarily large times. Those models of the second class which are sufficiently near to the Robertson-Walker models do in general tend to isotropy, but this class is of measure zero in the space of all homogeneous models. It therefore seems that one cannot explain the isotropy of the universe without postulating special initial conditions.. . . .

The most attractive answer would seems to come from the Dickie-Carter idea that there is a very large number of universes, with all possible combinations of initial data and values of the fundamental constants. In those universes with less than the escape velocity small density perturbations will not have time to develop into galaxies and stars before the universe recollapses. In those universes with more than the escape velocity, small density perturbations would still have more than the escape velocity, and so would not form bound systems. It is only in those universes which have very nearly the escape velocity that one could expect galaxies to develop, and we have found that such universes will in general approach isotropy. Since it would seem that the existence of galaxies is a necessary condition for the development of intelligent life, the answer to the question "why is the universe isotropic?" is "because we are here". 334

C. B. Colling and S.W. Hawking, "Why is the Universe Isotropic?" *The Astrophysical Journal*, March 1, l973

Here you had better look up Alan Guth , "Inflationary Universes: A possible solution to the horizon and flatness problems, Physical Review D, 23, 1981 347-356, and some other pieces mentioned by John Earman, "The SAP also Rises: . . . " *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Oct. l987

From a theistic point of view, however, no mystery at all and an easy explanation.

(F) The Naive Teleological Argument

Swinburne:

The world is a complicated thing. There are lots and lots of different bits of matter, existing over endless time (or possibly beginning to exist at some finite time). The bits of it have finite and not particularly natural sizes, shapes, masses, etc; and they come together in finite, diverse and very far from natural conglomerations (viz. lumps of matter on planets and stars, and distributed throughout interstellar space). . . . . Matter is inert and has no powers which it can choose to exercise; it does what it has to do. yet each bit of matter behaves in exactly the same way as similar bits of matter throughout time and space, the way codified in natural laws. . . . . all electrons throughout endless time and space have exactly the same powers and properties as all other electrons (properties of attracting, repelling, interacting, emitting radiation, etc.), all photons have the same powers and properties as all other photons etc., etc. Matter is complex, diverse, but regular in its behaviour. Its existence and behaviour need explaining in just the kind of way that regular chemical combinations needed explaining; or it needs explaining when we find all the cards of a pack arranged in order. EG 288

Newton: Whence arises all this order and beauty and structure?

Hume *Dialogues*: Cleanthes: Consider, anatomize the eye. Survey its structure and contrivance, and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation. The most obvious conclusion, surely, is in favour of design, and it requires time, reflection and study to summon up those frivolous, though abstruse objections which can support infidelity.

The idea: the beauty, order and structure of the universe and the structure of its parts strongly suggest that it was designed; it seems absurd to think that such a universe should have just been there, that it wasn't designed and created but just happened. Contemplating these things can result in a strong impulse to believe that the universe was indeed designed--by God.

(Hume's version may be very close to a wholly different style of "argument": one where the arguer tries to help the arguee achieve the sort of situation in which the *Sensus Divinitatis* operates.)

(G) Tony Kenny's style of teleological argument

(h) The ontological argument

I. **Another argument thrown in for good measure**.

Why is there anything at all? That is, why are there any *contingent* beings at all? (Isn't that passing strange, as S says?) An answer or an explanation that appealed to any contingent being would of course raise the same question again. A good explanation would have to appeal to a being that could not fail to exist, and (unlike numbers, propositions, sets, properties and other abstract necessary beings) is capable of explaining the existence of contingent beings (by, for example, being able to create them). The only viable candidate for this post seems to be God, thought of as the bulk of the theistic tradition has thought of him: that is, as a necessary being, but also as a concrete being, a being capable of causal activity. (Difference from S's Cosmo Arg: on his view God a contingent being, so no answer to the question "Why are there anything (contingent) at all?"

II. Half a dozen Epistemological Arguments

(J) The argument from positive epistemic status

Clearly many of our beliefs do have positive epistemic status for us (at any rate most of us think so, most of us accept this premise). As we have seen, positive epistemic status is best thought of as a matter of a belief's being produced by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly in the sort of environment that is appropriate for them. The easiest and most natural way to think of proper functioning, however, is in terms of design: a machine or an organism is working properly when it is working in the way it was designed to work by the being that designed it. But clearly the best candidate for being the being who has designed our cognitive faculties would be God.

This premise of this argument is only a special case of a much broader premise: there are many natural (nonartifactual) things in the world besides our cognitive faculties such that they function properly or improperly: organs of our bodies and of other organisms, for example. (Tony Kenny's design argument)

Objection: perhaps there is indeed this initial tendency to see these things as the product of intelligent design; but there is a powerful defeater in evolutionary theory, which shows us a perfectly natural way in which all of these things might have come about without design.

Reply: (1) is it in fact plausible to think that human beings, for example, have arisen through the sorts of mechanisms (random genetic mutation and natural selection) in the time that according to contemporary science that has been available? The conference of biologists and mathematicians ("Mathematical Challenges to the NeoDarwinian Interpretation of Evolution", ed. Paul Morehead and Martin Kaplan, Philadelphia, Wistar

Institute Press); the piece by Houston Smith. The chief problem: most of the paths one might think of from the condition of not having eyes, for example, to the condition of having them will not work; each mutation along the way has to be adaptive, or appropriately connected with something adaptive. (2) There does not appear to be any decent naturalistic account of the origin of life, or of language.

(K) The Argument from the confluence of proper function and reliability

We ordinarily think that when our faculties are functioning properly in the right sort of environment, they are reliable. Theism, with the idea that God has created us in his image and in such a way that we can acquire truth over a wide range of topics and subjects, provides an easy, natural explanation of that fact. The only real competitor here is nontheistic evolutionism; but nontheistic evolution would at best explain our faculties' being reliable with respect to propositions which are such that having a true belief with respect to them has survival value. That does not obviously include moral beliefs, beliefs of the kind involved in completeness proofs for axiomatizations of various first order systems, and the like. (More poignantly, beliefs of the sort involved in science, or in thinking evolution is a plausible explanation of the flora a fauna we see.) Still further, true beliefs *as such* don't have much by way of survival value; they have to be linked with the right kind of dispositions to behavior. What evolution requires is that our *behavior* have survival value, not necessarily that our beliefs be true. (Sufficient that we be programmed to act in adaptive ways.) But there are many ways in which our behavior could be adaptive, even if our beliefs were for the most part false. Our whole belief structure might (a) be a sort of byproduct or epiphenomenon, having no real connection with truth, and no real connection with our action. Or (b) our beliefs might be connected in a regular way with our actions, and with our environment, but not in such as way that the beliefs would be for the most part true.

Can we define a notion of natural plausibility, so that we can say with Salmon that belief in God is just implausible, and hence needs a powerful argument from what is plausible? This would make a good section in the book. Here could argue that what you take to be naturally plausible depends upon whether you are a theist or not. (It doesn't have to do only with what seems plausible to you, or course) And here could put into this volume some of the stuff from the other one about these questions not being metaphysically or theologically neutral.

Patricia Churchland (JP LXXXIV Oct 87) argues that the most important thing about the human brain is that it has evolved; hence (548) its principle function is to enable the organism to move appropriately. "Boiled down to essentials, a nervous system enables the organism to succeed in the four F's: feeding fleeing, fighting and reproducing. The principle chore of nervous systems is to get the body parts where they should be in order that the organism may survive. . . . . Truth, whatever that is, definitely takes the hindmost." (Self-referential problems loom here.) She also makes the point that we can't expect perfect engineering from evolution; it can't go back to redesign the basics.

Note that there is an interesting piece by Paul Horwich "Three Forms of Realism", *Synthese*, 51, (1982) 181-201 where he argues that the very notion of mind independent truth implies that our claims to knowledge cannot be rationally justified. The difficulty "concerns the adequacy of the canons of justification implicit in scientific and ordinary linguistic practice--what reason is there to suppose that they guide us towards the truth? This question, given metaphysical realism, is substantial, and, I think, impossible to answer; and it is this gulf between truth and our ways of attempting to recognize it which constitutes the respect in which the facts are autonomous. Thus metaphysical realism involves to an unacceptable, indeed fatal, degree the autonomy of fact: there is from that perspective no reason to suppose that scientific practice provides even the slightest clue to what is true. 185 ff.

(L) The Argument from Simplicity

According to Swinburne, simplicity is a prime determinant of *intrinsic probability*. That seems to me doubtful, mainly because there is probably no such thing in general as intrinsic (logical) probability. Still we certainly do favor simplicity; and we are inclined to think that simple explanations and hypotheses are more likely to be true than complicated epicyclic ones. So suppose you think that simplicity is a mark of truth (for hypotheses). If theism is true, then some reason to think the more simple has a better chance of being true than the less simple; for God has created both us and our theoretical preferences and the world; and it is reasonable to think that he would adapt the one to the other. (If he himself favored anti-simplicity, then no doubt he would have created us in such a way that we would too.) If theism is not true, however, there would seem to be no reason to think that the simple is more likely to be true than the complex.

(M) The Argument from induction

Hume pointed out that human beings are inclined to accept inductive forms of reasoning and thus to take it for granted, in a way, that the future will relevantly resemble the past. (This may have been known even before Hume.) As Hume also pointed out, however, it is hard to think of a good (noncircular) reason for believing that indeed the future will be relevantly like the past. Theism, however, provides a reason: God has created us and our noetic capacities and has created the world; he has also created the former in such a way as to be adapted to the latter. It is likely, then, that he has created the world in such a way that in fact the future will indeed resemble the past in the relevant way). (And thus perhaps we do indeed have *a priori* knowledge of contingent truth: perhaps we know *a priori* that the future will resemble the past.) (Note here the piece by Aron Edidin: "Language Learning and A Priori Knowledge), *APQ* October l986 (Vol. 23/ 4); Aron argues that in any case of language learning a priori knowledge is involved.)

This argument and the last argument could be thought of as exploiting the fact that according to theism God has created us in such a way as to be at home in the world (Wolterstorff.)

(N) The Putnamian Argument (the Argument from the Rejection of Global Skepticism)

Hilary Putnam (*Reason Truth and History*) and others argue that if metaphysical realism is true (if "the world consists of a fixed totality of mind independent objects", or if "there is one true and complete description of the 'the way the world is'") then various intractable skeptical problems arise. For example, on that account we do not know that we are not brains in a vat. But clearly we do know that we are not brains in a vat; hence metaphysical realism is not true. But of course the argument overlooks the theistic claim that we could perfectly well know that we are not brains in a vat even if metaphysical realism is true: we can know that God would not deceive us in such a disgustingly wholesale manner. So you might be inclined to accept (1) the Putnamian proposition that we do know that we are not brains in a vat (2) the anti-Putnamian claim that metaphysical realism is true and antirealism a mere Kantian galimatias, and (3) the quasi-Putnamian proposition that if metaphysical realism is true and there is no such person God who has created us and our world, adapting the former to the latter, then we would not know that we are not brains in a vat; if so, then you have a theistic argument.

Variant: Putnam and others argue that if we think that there is no conceptual link between justification (conceived internalistically) and truth, then we should have to take global skepticism really seriously. If there is no connection between these two, then we have no reason to think that even our best theories are any more likely to be true than the worst theories we can think of. We do, however, know that our best theories are more likely to be true than our worst ones; hence. . . . You may be inclined to accept (1) the Putnamian thesis that it is false that we should take global skepticism with real seriousness, (2) the anti-Putnamian thesis that there is no *conceptual* link between justification and truth (at any rate if theism is false), and (3) the quasi-Putnamian thesis that if we think is no link between the two, then we should take global skepticism really seriously. Then you may conclude that there must be a link between the two, and you may see the link in the theistic idea that God has created us and the world in such a way that we can reflect something of his epistemic powers by virtue of being able to achieve knowledge, which we typically achieve when we hold justified beliefs.

Here in this neighborhood and in connection with anti-realist considerations of the Putnamian type, there is a splendid piece by Shelley Stillwell in the '89 *Synthese* entitled something like "Plantinga's Anti-realism" which nicely analyzes the situation and seems to contain the materials for a theistic argument.

(O) The Argument from Reference

Return to Putnam's brain in a vat. P argues that our thought has a certain *external* character: what we can think depends partly on what the world is like. Thus if there were no trees, we could not think the thought *there are no trees* ; the word 'tree' would not mean what it does mean if in fact there were no trees (and the same for other natural kind terms--water, air, horse, bug, fire, lemon, human being, and the like, and perhaps also artifactual kind terms--house, chair, airplane, computer, barometer, vat, and the like.) But

then, he says, we can discount brain in vat skepticism: it can't be right, because if we were brains in a vat, we would not have the sort of epistemic contact with vats that would permit our term 'vat' to mean what in fact it does. But then we could not so much as think the thought: we are brains in a vat. So if we were, we could not so much as think the thought that we were. But clearly we can think that thought (and if we couldn't we couldn't formulate brain in vat skepticism; so such skepticism must be mistaken.

But a different and more profound skepticism lurks in the neighborhood: we *think* we can think certain thoughts, where we can give general descriptions of the thoughts in question. Consider, for example, our thought that there are trees. We think there is a certain kind of large green living object, that grows and is related in a certain way to its environment; and we name this kind of thing 'tree'. But maybe as a matter of fact we are not in the sort of environment we think we are in. Maybe we are in a sort of environment of a totally different sort, of such a sort that in fact we can't form the sort of thoughts we think we can form. We think we can form thoughts of certain kind, but in fact we cannot. That could be the case. Then it isn't so much (or only) that our thoughts might be systematically and massively mistaken; instead it might be that we can't think the thoughts we think we can think. Now as a matter of fact we can't take this skepticism seriously; and, indeed, if we are created by God we need not take it seriously, for God would not permit us to be deceived in this massive way.

(P) The Kripke-Wittgenstein Argument From Plus and Quus (See Supplementary Handout)

(Q) The General Argument from Intuition.

We have many kinds of intuitions**:** (1) logical (narrow sense and broad sense):. the intuitions codified in propositional modal logic--if it could be the case that the moon is made of green cheese, then it is necessary that that could be so; moral, (2) arithmetical, set theoretical and mathematical generally, (3) moral, (4) philosophical (Leib's Law; there aren't any things that do not exist; sets don't have the property of representing things as being a certain way; neither trees nor numbers are neither true nor false; there are a great number of things that are either true or false; there is such a thing as positive epistemic status; there is such a property as being unpunctual; and so on.) You may be inclined to think that all or some of these ought to be taken with real seriousness, and give us real and important truth. It is much easier to see how this could be so on a theistic than on a nontheistic account of the nature of human beings.

At the Mississippi Philoso Association Meeting in Nov., l986, Robert Holyer read a paper nicely developing this argument, and referring to John Beversluis' book, who attacks the argument, but in a mean spirited way and not with much success. This argument along with Augustine's "Our hearts are restless til they rest in thee, O God."

A couple of more arguments: (1) the argument from the causal theory of knowledge: many philosophers think there is a problem with our alleged knowledge of abstract objects in that they think we can't know truths about an object with which we are not in

the appropriate causal relation. They then point out that we are not in much of any causal relation with abstract objects, and conclude, some of them, that there is a real problem with our knowing anything about abstract objects. (e.g., Paul Benacerraf.) But if we think of abstract objects as God's thoughts, then he is in causal relation with them, and also with us, so that there should be no problem as to how it is that we could know something about them. (On the causal theory of knowledge, if you think of abstract objects as just *there*, and as not standing in causal relations, then the problem should really be that it is hard to see how even God could have any knowledge of them.)

There is another realism anti-realism argument lurking here somewhere, indicated or suggested by Wolterstorff's piece in the Tomberlin metaphysics volume. It has to do with whether there are really any joints in reality, or whether it might not be instead that reality doesn't have any joints, and there are no essential properties of objects. Instead, there is only de dicto reality (this could be the argument from de re modality) with all classifications somehow being done by us. Interesting. Also another topic for Christian philosophy.

Another argument, brought to my attention by Nick Wolterstorff: the Chomsky argument from language learning. look this us. Where does C say any such thing? And where exactly does it go? Does it go with the KW plus quus argument?

Another argument… Thomas Nagel, the view from nowhere 78ff. Thinks it amazing that there should be any such thing as the sort of objective thinking or objective point of view that we do in fact have. Perhaps it is really amazing only from a naturalist point of view. He says he has no explanation. Maybe you find it amazing, maybe you don't. (I'm not sure I see why it is amazing yet.) He argues cogently that there is no good evolutionary explanation of this: first, what needs to b explained is the very possibility of this, and second, supposed that is explained, he goes on to argue that evolution gives us no good explanation of our higher mental abilities. The question is whether the mental powers necessary for the making of stone axes, and hunter-gatherer success are sufficient for the construction of theories about sub atomic particles, proofs of Gödel's theorem, the invention of the compact disc, and so on. He thinks not. So he is really on to something else: not so much 'objective thinking' as higher mental powers involved in these striking intellectual accomplishments.

The evolutionary explanation would be that intellectual powers got started by going along for the ride, so to speak, and then turned out to be useful, and were such that improvements in them got selected when we came down from the trees. (At that point a bigger brain became useful (Don't whales have an even bigger one?). A sort of two part affair, the first part being accidental. So then the second part would be selected for survival value or advantage. But of course the question is whether this gives the slightest reason to think these theories have any truth to them at all. And he fails to mention the fact that all that really gets selected is behavior; there are various combinations of desire and belief that can lead to adaptive actions even if the belief is completely mistaken.

III. Moral arguments

(R) moral arguments (actually R_1 to R_n)

There are many different versions of moral arguments, among the best being Bob Adams' favored version (in "Moral Arguments for Theistic Belief" in C. Delaney, *Rationality and Religious Belief* (Notre Dame). (1) One might find oneself utterly convinced (as I do) that morality is objective, not dependent upon what human beings know or think, and that it cannot be explained in terms of any "natural" facts about human beings or other things; that it can't ultimately be explained in terms of physical, chemical or biological facts. (2) One may also be convinced that there could not be such objective moral facts unless there were such a person as God who, in one way or another, legislates them.

Here consider George Mavrodes' argument that morality would be 'queer' in a Russellian or nontheistic universe (in "Religion and the Queerness of Morality" in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*, ed. Audi and Wainwright.)

Other important arguments here: A.E Taylor's (*The Faith of a Moralist*) version, and Clem Dore's (and Sidgwick's) Kantian argument from the confluence of morality with true self-interest, some of the other arguments considered by Bob Adams in the above mentioned paper, and arguments by Hastings Rashdall in *The Theory of Good and Evil* and by W.R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God* which we used to read in college.

(R*) The argument from evil.

Many philosophers offer an anti-theistic argument from evil, and perhaps they have some force. But there is also a theistic argument from evil. There is real and genuine evil in the world: evil such that it isn't just a matter of personal opinion that the thing in question is abhorrent, and furthermore it doesn't matter if those who perpetrate it think it is good, and could not be convinced by anything we said. And it is plausible to think that in a nontheistic or at any rate a naturalistic universe, there could be no such thing. So perhaps you think there is such a thing as genuine and horrifying evil, and that in a nontheistic universe, there could not be; then you have another theistic argument.

How to make this argument more specific? "what Pascal later called the 'triple abyss' into which mankind has fallen: the libidinal enslavement to the egotistical self: the *libido dominandi*, or lust for power over others and over nature; the *libido sentiendi*, or lust for intense sensation; and the *libido sciendi*, or lust for manipulative knowledge, knowledge that is primarily used to increase our own power, profit and pleasure." Michael D. Aeschliman "Discovering the Fall" *This World* Fall l988 p. 93.

How think about utterly appalling and horrifying evil? The christian understanding: it is indeed utterly appalling and horrifying; it is defying God, the source of all that is good and just. It has a sort of cosmic significance: in this way it is the other side of the coin from the argument from love. There we see that the deep significance of love can't be explained in terms of naturalistic categories; the same goes here. From a naturalistic perspective, there is nothing much more to evil--say the sheer horror of the holocaust, of

Pol Pot, or a thousand other villains--than there is to the way in which animals savage each other. A natural outgrowth of natural processes.

Hostility, hatred, hostility towards outsiders or even towards one's family is to be understood in terms simply of the genes' efforts (Dawkins) to ensure its survival. Nothing perverted or unnatural about it. (Maybe can't even have these categories.) But from a theistic pint of view, deeply perverted, and deeply horrifying. And maybe this is the way we naturally see it. The point here is that it is objectively horrifying. We find it horrifying: and that is part of its very nature, as opposed to the naturalistic way of thinking about it where there really can't be much of anything like objective horrifyingness.

In Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, around page 53, there is an argument that certain kinds of human wickedness are so appalling that they require something like hell.

The thing to do here: take an example of some really horrifying evil-- the Dostoyevsky thing from one of the visual aids.

On a naturalistic way of looking at the matter, it is hard to see how there can really be such a thing as evil: (though of course there could be things we don't like, prefer not to happen): how could there be something that was bad, worthy of disapproval, even if we and all other human beings were wildly enthusiastic about it? On naturalistic view, how make sense of (a) our intuition that what is right or wrong, good or evil does not depend upon what we like or think) and (b) our revulsion at evil--the story the prophet Nathan told David, at the sort of thing that went on in Argentina, Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany (*Sophie's Choice*); the case mention in Surin's book about the young child who was hanged and remained living for half an hour after he was hanged; the fact that the Nazis were purposely trying to be cruel, to induce despair, taunting their victims with the claim that no one would ever know of their fate and how they were treated; the thing from Dostoyevsky, who says that beasts wouldn't do this, they wouldn't be so artistic about it. compare dying from cancer to the sort of horror the Germans did: the second is much worse than the first, somehow, but not because it causes more pain. It is because of the wickedness involved, a wickedness we don't see in the cancer. An appalling wickedness.

There seems to be a lot more to it than there could be on a naturalistic account of the matter. So the naturalist says: evil is a problem for you: why would a good God permit evil, or all that evil? But evil also a problem for him: There really isn't any evil, (or isn't any of a certain sort, a sort such that in fact we think there is some of that sort) on a naturalistic perspective. (This needs working out, but I think there is something to it.)

IV. Other Arguments

(S) The Argument from Colors and Flavors (Adams and Swinburne)

What is the explanation of the correlation between physical and psychical properties? Presumably there *is* an explanation of it; but also it will have to be, as Adams and Swinburne say, a personal, nonscientific explanation. The most plausible suggestion would involve our being created that way by God.

(T) The argument from Love

Man-woman, parent-child, family, friendship, love of college, church, country--many different manifestations. Evolutionary explanation: these adaptive and have survival value. Evolutionarily useful for male and female human beings, like male and female hippopotami, to get together to have children colts) and stay together to raise them; and the same for the other manifestations of love. The theistic account: vastly more to it than that: reflects the basic structure and nature of reality; God himself is love.

(U) The Mozart Argument

On a naturalistic anthropology, our alleged grasp and appreciation of (alleged) beauty is to be explained in terms of evolution: somehow arose in the course of evolution, and something about its early manifestations had survival value. But miserable and disgusting cacophony (heavy metal rock?) could as well have been what we took to be beautiful. On the theistic view, God recognizes beauty; indeed, it is deeply involved in his very nature. To grasp the beauty of a Mozart's D Minor piano concerto is to grasp something that is objectively there; it is to appreciate what is objectively worthy of appreciation.

(V) The Argument from Play and enjoyment

Fun, pleasure, humor, play, enjoyment. (Maybe not all to be thought of in the same way.) Playing: evolution: an adaptive means of preparing for adult life (so that engaging in this sort of thing as an adult suggests a case of arrested development). But surely there is more to it than that. The joy one can take in humor, art, poetry, mountaineering, exploring, adventuring (the problem is not to explain how it would come about that human beings enjoyed mountaineering: no doubt evolution can do so. The problem is with its significance. Is it really true that all there is to this is enjoyment? Or is there a deeper significance? The Westminster Shorter Catechism: the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him (and his creation and gifts) forever.

(W) Arguments from providence and from miracles

(X) C.S. Lewis's Argument from Nostalgia

Lewis speaks of the *nostalgia* that often engulfs us upon beholding a splendid land or seascape; these somehow speak to us of their maker. Not sure just what the argument is; but suspect there is one there.

(Y) The argument from the meaning of life

How does thought about the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of life fit in? Sartre, Camus, Nagel.

(Z) The Argument from (a) to (Y)

These arguments import a great deal of unity into the philosophic endeavor, and the idea of God helps with an astonishingly wide variety of cases: epistemological, ontological, ethical, having to do with meaning, and the like of that.

Alvin Plantinga

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Alvin Carl Plantinga (born November 15, 1932) is an American analytic philosopher, the John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame and the inaugural holder of the Jellema Chair in Philosophy at Calvin College.

Plantinga is widely-known for his work in philosophy of religion, epistemology, metaphysics and Christian apologetics. He is the author of numerous books including *God and Other Minds* (1967), *The Nature of Necessity* (1974), and a trilogy of books on epistemology, culminating in *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000). He has delivered the Gifford Lectures three times and was described by *Time Magazine* as "America's leading orthodox Protestant philosopher of God".[1]

Alvin Carl Plantinga

Plantinga in 2009

Born	November 15, 1932 Ann Arbor, Michigan
Era	20th-century philosophy
Region	Western Philosophy
School	Analytic
Main interests	Epistemology, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion
Notable ideas	Reformed epistemology Free will defense Modal ontological argument Proper Function Reliabilism Evolutionary argument against naturalism
Influenced by	
Influenced	

Contents

Biography

Family

Plantinga was born on November 15, 1932 in Ann Arbor, Michigan to Cornelius A. Plantinga (1908–1994) and Lettie G. Bossenbroek (1908–2007). Plantinga's father was a first generation immigrant, born in the Netherlands.[2] His family is from the Dutch province of Friesland. Plantinga's father earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from Duke University and a Master's Degree in psychology, and taught several academic subjects

at different colleges over the years.[3] One of Plantinga's brothers, Cornelius "Neal" Plantinga, Jr., is a theologian and the former president of Calvin Theological Seminary. Another of his brothers, Leon, is an emeritus professor of musicology at Yale University.[3][4] His brother Terrell worked for CBS News.[5]

In 1955, Plantinga married Kathleen De Boer.[6] Plantinga and his wife have four children: Carl, Jane, Harry, and Ann.[7][8] Both of his sons are professors at Calvin College, Carl in Film Studies[9][10] and Harry in computer science.[11] Harry is also the director of the college's Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Plantinga's older daughter, Jane Plantinga Pauw, is a pastor at Rainier Beach Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Seattle, Washington,[12] and his younger daughter, Ann Kapteyn, is a missionary in Cameroon working for Wycliffe Bible Translators.[13]

Education

At the end of 11th grade, Plantinga's father urged Plantinga to skip his last year of high school and immediately enroll in college. Plantinga reluctantly followed his father's advice and in 1949, a few months before his 17th birthday, he enrolled in Jamestown College, in Jamestown, North Dakota.[14][15] During that same year, his father accepted a teaching job at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In January 1950, Plantinga moved to Grand Rapids with his family and enrolled in Calvin College. During his first semester at Calvin, Plantinga was awarded a scholarship to attend Harvard University.[16] Beginning in the fall of 1950, Plantinga spent two semesters at Harvard. In 1951, during Harvard's spring recess, Plantinga attended a few philosophy classes at Calvin College, and was so impressed with Calvin philosophy professor William Harry Jellema that he returned in 1951 to study philosophy under him.[17] In 1954, Plantinga began his graduate studies at the University of Michigan where he studied under William Alston, William Frankena, and Richard Cartwright, among others.[18] A year later, in 1955, he transferred to Yale University where he received his Ph.D. in 1958.[19]

Teaching career

Plantinga at the University of Notre Dame in 2004

Plantinga began his career as an instructor in the philosophy department at Yale in 1957, and then in 1958 he became a professor of philosophy at Wayne State University during its heyday as a major center for analytic philosophy. In 1963, he accepted a teaching job at Calvin College, where he replaced the retiring Jellema.[20] He then spent the next 19 years at Calvin before moving to the University of Notre Dame in 1982. He retired from the University of Notre Dame in 2010 and returned to Calvin College, where he serves as the first holder of the William Harry Jellema Chair in Philosophy. He has trained many prominent philosophers working in metaphysics and epistemology including Michael Bergmann at Purdue and Michael Rea at Notre Dame.

Awards and honors

Plantinga served as president of the American Philosophical Association, Western Division, 1981-1982.[21] and as President of the Society of Christian Philosophers 1983-1986.[15][22]

He has honorary degrees from Glasgow University (1982), Calvin College (1986), North Park College (1994), the Free University of Amsterdam (1995), Brigham Young University (1996), and Valparaiso University (1999).[22]

He was a Guggenheim Fellow, 1971–1972, and elected a Fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1975.[22]

In 2006, the University of Notre Dame's Center for Philosophy of Religion renamed its Distinguished Scholar Fellowship as the Alvin Plantinga Fellowship.[23] The fellowship includes an annual lecture by the current Plantinga Fellow.[24]

In 2012, the University of Pittsburgh's Philosophy Department, History and Philosophy of Science Department, and the Center for the History and Philosophy of Science awarded Plantinga the Rescher Prize, which he received with a talk titled, "Religion and Science: Where the Conflict Really Lies".

Philosophical views

Plantinga has argued that some people can know that God exists as a basic belief, requiring no argument. He has developed this argument in two different fashions: firstly, in *God and Other Minds*, by drawing an equivalence between the teleological argument and the common sense view that people have of other minds existing by analogy with their own minds.[25][26] Plantinga has also developed a more comprehensive epistemological account of the nature of warrant which allows for the existence of God as a basic belief.[27]

Plantinga has also argued that there is no logical inconsistency between the existence of evil and the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, wholly good God.[28]

Problem of evil

Main article: Plantinga's free will defense

Plantinga posited a "free will defense" in Max Black in 1965,[29] which attempts to refute the logical problem of evil, the argument that the existence of evil is logically incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good god.[30] Plantinga's argument (in a truncated form) is that "It is possible that God, even being omnipotent, could not create a world with free creatures who never choose evil. Furthermore, it is possible that God, even being omnibenevolent, would desire to create a world which contains evil if moral goodness requires free moral creatures."[31]

Plantinga's defense has received wide acceptance among contemporary philosophers when addressing moral evil.[32] However, the argument fails to address natural evil, and it presupposes a libertarianist, incompatibilist view of free will.[33] According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the argument also "conflicts with important theistic doctrines", including the notion of heaven and the idea that God has free will.[34] J.L. Mackie has argued that Plantinga's free will defense is incoherent.[35]

Reformed epistemology

Plantinga's contributions to epistemology include an argument which he dubs "Reformed epistemology". According to Reformed epistemology, belief in God can be rational and justified even without arguments or evidence for the existence of God. More specifically, Plantinga argues that belief in God is properly basic, and due to a religious externalist epistemology, he claims belief in God could be justified independently of evidence. His externalist epistemology, called "Proper functionalism", is a form of epistemological reliabilism.[36]

Plantinga discusses his view of Reformed epistemology and Proper functionalism in a three volume series. In the first book of the trilogy, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, Plantinga introduces, analyzes, and criticizes 20th century developments in analytic epistemology, particularly the works of Chisholm, BonJour, Alston,

Goldman, and others.[37]

In the second book, *Warrant and Proper Function*, he introduces the notion of warrant as an alternative to justification and discusses topics like self-knowledge, memories, perception, and probability. Plantinga's proper function account argues that as a necessary condition of having warrant is that one's "belief-forming and belief-maintaining apparatus of powers" are functioning properly—"working the way it ought to work".[38] Plantinga explains his argument for proper function with reference to a "design plan", as well as an environment in which one's cognitive equipment is optimal for use. Plantinga asserts that the design plan does not require a designer: "it is perhaps possible that evolution (undirected by God or anyone else) has somehow furnished us with our design plans",[39] but the paradigm case of a design plan is like a technological product designed by a human being (like a radio or a wheel).

Plantinga seeks to defend this view of proper function against alternative views of proper function proposed by other philosophers which he groups together as 'naturalistic' including the 'functional generalization' view of John Pollock, the evolutionary/etiological account provided by Ruth Millikan, and a dispositional view held by John Bigelow and Robert Pargetter.[40] Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism is also discussed in the later chapters of *Warrant and Proper Function*.[41]

In 2000, the third volume, *Warranted Christian Belief*, was published. Plantinga reintroduces his theory of warrant to ask whether Christian theistic belief can enjoy warrant. He argues that this is plausible. Notably, the book does not address whether or not Christian theism is true.

Modal ontological argument

Plantinga has expressed a modal logic version of the ontological argument in which he uses modal logic to develop, in a more rigorous and formal way, Norman Malcolm's and Charles Hartshorne's modal ontological arguments.

Evolutionary argument against naturalism

In Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism, he argues that the truth of evolution is an epistemic defeater for naturalism (i.e. if evolution is true, it undermines naturalism). His basic argument is that if evolution and naturalism are both true, human cognitive faculties evolved to produce beliefs that have survival value (maximizing one's success at the four F's: "feeding, fleeing, fighting, and reproducing"), not necessarily to produce beliefs that are true. Thus, since human cognitive faculties are tuned to survival rather than truth in the naturalism-evolution model, there is reason to doubt the veracity of the products of those same faculties, including naturalism and evolution themselves. On the other hand, if God created man "in his image" by way of an evolutionary process (or any other means), then Plantinga argues our faculties would probably be reliable.

The argument does not assume any necessary correlation (or uncorrelation) between true beliefs and survival. Making the contrary assumption—that there is in fact a relatively strong correlation between truth and survival—if human belief-forming apparatus evolved giving a survival advantage, then it ought to yield truth since true beliefs confer a survival advantage. Plantinga counters that, while there may be overlap between true beliefs and beliefs that contribute to survival, the two kinds of beliefs are not the same, and he gives the following example with a man named Paul:

> “ Perhaps Paul very much *likes* the idea of being eaten, but when he sees a tiger, always runs off looking for a better prospect, because he thinks it unlikely the tiger he sees will eat him. This will get his body parts in the right place so far as survival is concerned, without involving much by way of true belief... Or perhaps he thinks the tiger is a large, friendly, cuddly pussycat and wants to pet it; but he also believes that the best way to pet it is to run away from it... Clearly there are any number of belief-desire systems that equally fit a given ”

> bit of behaviour.[42]

Although the argument has been criticized by some philosophers, like Elliott Sober, it has received favorable notice from other atheist philosophers, such as Thomas Nagel.

Evolution and Christianity

In the past, Plantinga has lent support to the intelligent design movement.[43] He was a member of the 'Ad Hoc Origins Committee' that supported Philip E. Johnson's book *Darwin on Trial* against palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould's high profile scathing review in *Scientific American* in 1992.[44] Plantinga also provided a back-cover endorsement of Johnson's book.[45] He was a Fellow of the (now moribund) pro-intelligent design International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design,[46] and has presented at a number of intelligent design conferences.[47]

In a March 2010 article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, philosopher of science Michael Ruse claims that Plantinga is an "open enthusiast of intelligent design".[48] In a letter to the editor, Plantinga has the following response:

> Like any Christian (and indeed any theist), I believe that the world has been created by God, and hence "intelligently designed". The hallmark of intelligent design, however, is the claim that this can be shown scientifically; I'm dubious about that. ...As far as I can see, God certainly could have used Darwinian processes to create the living world and direct it as he wanted to go; hence evolution as such does not imply that there is no direction in the history of life. What does have that implication is not evolutionary theory itself, but *unguided* evolution, the idea that neither God nor any other person has taken a hand in guiding, directing or orchestrating the course of evolution. But the scientific theory of evolution, sensibly enough, says nothing one way or the other about divine guidance. It doesn't say that evolution is divinely guided; it also doesn't say that it isn't. Like almost any theist, I reject unguided evolution; but the contemporary scientific theory of evolution just as such—apart from philosophical or theological add-ons —doesn't say that evolution is unguided. Like science in general, it makes no pronouncements on the existence or activity of God.[49]

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See also

- American philosophy
- List of American philosophers

Notes

1. ^ "Modernizing the Case for God", *Time*, April 5th, 1980 (http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,921990-3,00.html)
2. ^ "Self-profile", p. 3.
3. ^ ***a b*** "Self-profile", p. 6.
4. ^ Yale Department of Music - Emeritus Faculty (http://www.yale.edu/yalemus/people/emeritus.html)
5. ^ "Self-profile", p. 7.
6. ^ "Self-profile", p. 14.
7. ^ "Introduction: Alvin Plantinga, God's Philosopher" in *Alvin Plantinga,* Deane-Peter Baker ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2007, p. 5.
8. ^ "Alvin Plantinga" (http://www.nnp.org/nni/Publications/Dutch-American/plantinga.html) , *Well-Known Dutch-Americans* at The New Netherland Institute website. Retrieved November 6, 2007
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15. ^ *a b* Deane-Peter Baker (2007). *Alvin Plantinga* (http://books.google.com/books?id=34FKFPB0TtkC) . Cambridge University Press. pp. 2–8. ISBN 978-0-521-85531-0. http://books.google.com/books?id=34FKFPB0TtkC. Retrieved 16 December 2010.
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17. ^ "Self-profile", pp. 9-16.
18. ^ "Self-profile", p. 16.
19. ^ "Self-profile", pp. 21-22.
20. ^ "Self-profile", p. 30.
21. ^ List of APA Presidents (http://americanphilosophy.net/dmap/apa_presidents.htm)
22. ^ *a b c* New Netherland Institute PLANTINGA, ALVIN (http://www.nnp.org/nni/Publications/Dutch-American/plantinga.html)
23. ^ Past News and Events (http://www.nd.edu/~cprelig/events/index.shtml) , Center for Philosophy of Religion, University of Notre Dame
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30. ^ Beebe 2005
31. ^ Meister 2009, p. 133
32. ^ "Most philosophers have agreed that the free will defense has defeated the logical problem of evil. [...] Because of [Plantinga's argument], it is now widely accepted that the logical problem of evil has been sufficiently rebutted." Meister 2009, p. 134
33. ^ Peterson et al. 1991, pp. 130–133
34. ^ "Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy".
35. ^ J.L. Mackie wrote: "[H]ow could there be logically contingent states of affairs, *prior to the creation and existence of any created beings with free will*, which an omnipotent god would have to accept and put up with? This suggestion is simply incoherent. Indeed, by bringing in the notion of individual essences which determine—presumably non-causally—how Curly Smith, Satan, and the rest of us would choose freely or would act in each hypothetical situation, Plantinga has not rescued the free will defence but made its weaknesses all too clear". Mackie 1982, p. 174.
36. ^ Cf. "*L'epistemologia riformata* (Plantinga)" (https://sites.google.com/site/filosofiariformata/descrizioni-di-scuole-di-pensiero-e-autori/epistemologia-riformata) , article on *Philosophia Reformata*.**(Italian)** Accessed 15 February 2012
37. ^ Cf."La filosofia della religione" (http://www.aifr.it/pagine/letture/041.html) , article by C. G. Di Gaetano.**(Italian)** Accessed 15 February 2012
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    - "a number of others like Alvin Plantinga are long-time Wedge allies" — Forrest & Gross 2004, pp. 212–213
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45. ^ *Unintelligent design*, Mark Perakh, p144
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47. ^ Forrest & Gross 2004, pp. 156, 191, 212, 269
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External links

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- Plantinga's Curriculum Vitae (http://www.veritas-ucsb.org/library/plantinga/cv.html)
- Virtual Library of Christian Philosophy (http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/plantinga_alvin.htm) a collection of some of Plantinga's papers
- Papers by Plantinga (http://www.andrewmbailey.com/ap/) Extensive collection of online papers.
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Categories: 1932 births | Living people | 20th-century philosophers | American philosophers | American Calvinist theologians | Analytic philosophers | Calvin College faculty | Calvinist philosophers | Christian philosophers | University of Notre Dame faculty | American people of Dutch descent | American people of Frisian descent | Guggenheim Fellows | Intelligent design advocates | Fellows of the International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design | American Calvinists | Philosophers of religion | Metaphysicians | Harvard University alumni | University of Michigan alumni | Calvin College alumni | Wayne State University faculty | American members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America | Gifford Lecturers | People from Ann Arbor, Michigan | Fellows of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences | Christian apologists

ALVIN PLANTINGA

Spiritual Autobiography

When Kelly Clark asked me to write a spiritual autobiography, my first impulse was to decline. That was also my second impulse, and my third. For I have at least three good reasons not to do such a thing. First, I have already written something called an "Intellectual Autobiography";[1] the rule *At most one to a customer* seems to me an excellent one for autobiographies; more than one is unseemly. Second, my spiritual life and its history isn't striking or of general interest: no dramatic conversions, no spiritual heroism, no internal life of great depth and power; not much spiritual sophistication or subtlety, little grasp of the various depths and nuances and shading and peculiar unexplored corners of the spiritual life: very much an ordinary meat and potatoes kind of life. (It is also, I regret to say, a life that hasn't progressed nearly as much as, by my age and given my opportunities, it should have.) Third, writing any kind of autobiography has its perils; but writing a spiritual autobiography is particularly perilous.[2] The main problem has to do with truthfulness and honesty: there are powerful temptations toward self-deception and hypocrisy. According to psalm 51, the Lord desires truth in our innermost being; but according to Jeremiah, "The human heart is deceitful above all things; it is desperately sick; who can understand it?" Truth in our innermost being is not easy to achieve. It is hard to see what the truth *is*; it is also hard to *tell* the truth, to say what you see without imposing some kind of self-justificatory and distorting framework. (For example, you find good or even just coherent motives where in fact there was really no discernible motive at all, or perhaps a confusing welter of motives you can't yourself really sort out, or don't *want* to sort out; or maybe you subtly slant and shift things for no better reason than that it makes a better tale.)

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[1]In *Alvin Plantinga*, ed, James Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1985) pp. 3-97.

[2]My thanks to Neal and Kathy Plantinga, Eleonore Stump, Trenton Merricks and Leonard Vander Zee for wise counsel and good advice on this dicey project.

Still further, there are elements of my life before the Lord that might be of interest and of use to others, and where I might even be able both to see and to say what is at least fairly close to the truth, that I don't propose to make public. For most of us, I'd guess, the whole truth about ourselves would be (from one perspective, anyway) a sorry spectacle we wouldn't want completely known even by our best friends--who in any event wouldn't particularly want to know. (Jeremiah is right, even if there is more to the story.) For most of us also, I suspect, there are sides of our lives with respect to which complete and public candor would cause others considerable pain. This is certainly so with me. I shall therefore make a compromise. Much of what follows is taken from the Intellectual Autobiography in the Profiles volume; I am interpolating comments here and there of a more personal nature. I do not propose to say everything that may be of possible interest, however I shall try (but probably fail) to be honest about what I do say. What follows, accordingly, is certain selections from the Profiles autobiography, along with some additions.

i. Roots and Early Days

I was born November 15, 1932, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where my father, Cornelius A. Plantinga, was then a graduate student in philosophy at the University of Michigan. My mother, Lettie Plantinga (neé Bossenbroek), was born near Alto, Wisconsin. On her mother's side her family had come to the US about the time of the Civil War; her father's family came some twenty years later. Both groups came from the villages of Elspeet and Nunspeet in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands, then distinguished for prosperous dairy farms and now also for the Kröller-Muller Museum. My father was born in Garijp, a small village in Friesland. The Dutch think of Friesland as their northwesternmost province. Frisians, however, know better. Friesland has its own culture, its own flag, and its own language closer to Old English than to Dutch (in fact of all the Germanic languages, Frisian is closest to English). Both sets of my grandparents--Andrew and Tietje Plantinga and Christian and Lena Bossenbroek--were reared in Calvinist churches originating in the so-called *Afscheiding* or secession of 1834. During the 1830s there was a religious reawakening ('The Reveille') in the Netherlands, as in much of the

rest of Europe. Thoroughly disgusted with the theological liberalism, empty formalism and absence of genuine piety in the Dutch state church (the *Hervormde Kerk*), many congregations seceded from it to create the *Gereformeerde Kerken,* dedicated to the practice of historic Calvinism. The Seceders underwent a good deal of punishment and persecution at the hands of the established authorities; they were ready to risk their livelihoods and even their freedom for what they believed to be right worship of God.

Participating in the life of the seceding churches was a strenuous matter. The idea that religion is relevant just to one's private life or to what one does on Sunday was foreign to these people. For them religion was the central reality of life; all aspects of life, they thought, should be lived in the light of Christianity. They also held (rightly, I think) that *education* is essentially religious; there is such a thing as *secular* education but no such thing as an education that is both reasonably full-orbed and religiously *neutral.* They therefore established separate grade schools and high schools that were explicitly Christian, schools in which the bearing of Christianity on the various disciplines could be carefully and explicitly spelled out. Later, under the leadership of the great theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (premier of the Netherlands from 1901-1905), they established a Calvinist university in Amsterdam: the Free University--so-called not, as one might expect, because it is free from the state, but because it is free from ecclesiastical control.

My mother's parents owned a farm in Wisconsin, between Waupun and Alto, and as a small boy I spent most of my summers there. Going to church, of course, was an extremely important part of life; there were two services on Sunday, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and in those days the afternoon service was in Dutch. Some of my earliest memories are of long, hot Sunday afternoons in church, dressed in my sweltering Sunday best, listening to the minister drone on in a language I could barely understand, counting the tiles in the ceiling, while all along the cicadas outside were setting up their characteristic summertime din. As I saw it then, just getting outside would have been heaven enough. After church, the main topic was often the minister's sermon; and woe unto the preacher who got his doctrine wrong or was guilty

of a "wrong emphasis"! Although most of the members of the church were rural folk who hadn't had the benefit of much formal education (my grandfather was lucky to finish the sixth grade), there was an astonishing amount of theological sophistication about. Many had read their Kuyper and Bavinck, and a few were considerably better at theology than some of the ministers in charge of the church.

What was preached, of course, was historic Calvinism. When I was 8 or 9 I began to understand and think seriously about some of the so-called "five points of Calvinism"[3] enshrined in the TULIP acronym: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and the Perseverance of the saints. I remember wondering in particular about total depravity. I do indeed subscribe to that doctrine which, as I understand it, quite properly points out that for most or all of us, every important area of our lives is distorted and compromised by sin. When I first began to think about it, however, I took it to mean that everyone was completely wicked, wholly bad, no better than a Hitler or a Judas. That seemed to me a bit confusing and hard to credit; was my grandmother (in fact a saintly woman) really completely wicked? Was there nothing good about her at all? That seemed a bit too much. True, I had heard her say "Shit" a couple of times: once when someone came stomping into the kitchen, causing three cakes in the oven to drop, and once when I threw a string of fire crackers into the 50 gallon drum in which she was curing dried beef (they began exploding in rapid fire succession just as she came to look into the drum). But was that really enough to make her a moral monster, particularly when so much else about her pointed in the opposite direction? I spent a good deal of time as a child thinking about these doctrines, and a couple of years later, when I was 10 or 11

[3] *Mistakenly* so-called in my opinion. These five points summarize the declarations of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619); they essentially distinguish one kind of 17th century Calvinist from another kind (and do not at all obviously represent what John Calvin himself had in mind). A number of the Reformed churches have adopted the Canons of Dort as one of their confessional standards; my own church, the Christian Reformed Church, takes the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism as well as the Canons as its standard. The former two can properly be said to embody what is essential to Calvinism, but the latter is really addressed to a 17th century internecine quarrel among Calvinists. It is by no means obvious that the right side won at the Synod of Dort; and even if the right side *did* win, is it not at best dubious to take as a standard for confessional unity, such highly specific and detailed pronouncements on matters of great difficulty about which the Bible itself is at best terse and enigmatic?

or so, I got involved in many very enthusiastic but undirected discussions of human freedom, determinism (theological or otherwise), divine foreknowledge, predestination, and allied topics.

During junior high and high school days we lived in Jamestown, North Dakota, where my father was a professor of Philosophy, Psychology, Latin, and Greek (with an occasional foray into Sociology and Religion) at Jamestown College. We attended the Presbyterian Church in Jamestown; but I heard about as many sermons from my father as from the minister of the church we belonged to. He often preached in vacant churches in nearby villages, and I often accompanied him. I went to church, Sunday School, a weekly catechism class my father organized, and weekly "Young People's" meetings. I also remember a series of midweek Lenten services that were deeply moving and were for me a source of spiritual awakening. In addition, we young people also went to summer Bible camps sponsored by the church. I'm sure these were spiritually useful for many and perhaps for me; and we were certainly stirred up emotionally. By and large, however, I found the girls more interesting than the sermons, and for me (and others) the stimulation was by no means exclusively spiritual. As I remember those camps, there was a sort of fervid, febrile atmosphere, shimmering and throbbing with energy and excitement that was as much sexual as spiritual.

Apart from my parents, perhaps the most important influence in high school was my association with Robert McKenzie (now a Presbyterian minister in the San Francisco Bay area). Bob was a couple of years my senior, and we spent an enormous amount of time together. For example we spent one summer working 12 hours a day six days a week (and 8 hours on Sunday) for a construction company, putting in a city water line in Westhope, North Dakota, a tiny village 6 miles or so from the Canadian border. Bob was (and is) enormously full of enthusiasm, idealism, and energy; he laughed often, infectiously, and loudly; he and I hatched a whole series of adolescent fantasies about how he would be a minister and I a professor in the same town and what great things we would accomplish. (At the same time we were also planning to run a construction company in the Colorado mountains; how this was supposed to mesh with our ministerial and professorial jobs is no longer clear to me.)

In the fall of 1949, a couple of months before my 17th birthday, I enrolled in Jamestown College. During that semester my father was invited to join the psychology department at Calvin College; he accepted the offer and took up his duties there in January of 1950. I reluctantly went along, having no desire at all to leave Jamestown and Jamestown College, where I had very strong attachments. During my first semester at Calvin I applied, just for the fun of it, for a scholarship at Harvard. To my considerable surprise I was awarded a nice fat scholarship; in the fall of 1950, therefore, I showed up in Cambridge. I found Harvard enormously impressive and very much to my liking. I took an introductory philosophy course from Raphael Demos in the fall and a course in Plato from him in the spring. I still remember the sense of wonder with which I read *Gorgias*--its graceful language, absorbing argumentative intricacy, and its serious moral tone relieved now and then by gentle, almost rueful witticisms at the expense of the Sophists. I also took a splendid course from the classicist I. M. Finley, and in a large Social Science course (as it was called) my section leader was Bernard Bailyn, now a distinguished Harvard historian. I attended a Methodist Church where the Sunday School class for people my age was conducted by Peter Bertocci, the philosopher from Boston University. (He was the last of the series of three great Boston personalists whose names began with 'B': Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Bordon Parker Bowne, and Bertocci.)

At Harvard I encountered serious non-Christian thought for the first time--for the first time in the flesh, that is; I had read animadversions on Christianity and theism by Bertrand Russell (*Why I am not a Christian*) and others. I was struck by the enormous variety of intellectual and spiritual opinion at Harvard, and spent a great deal of time arguing about whether there was such a person as God, whether Christianity as opposed to Judaism (my roommate Herbert Jacobs was the son of a St. Louis Rabbi) was right, and so on. I began to wonder whether what I had always believed could really be true. At Harvard, after all, there was such an enormous diversity of opinions about these matters, some of them held by highly intelligent and accomplished people who had little but contempt for what I believed. My attitude gradually became one of a mixture of doubt and bravado. On the one hand I began to think it questionable

that what I had been taught and had always believed could be right, given that there were all these others who thought so differently (and were so much more intellectually accomplished than I). On the other hand, I thought to myself, what really is so great about these people? Why should I believe *them*? True, they know much more than I and have thought much longer: but what, precisely, is the *substance* of their objections to Christianity? or theism? Do these objections really *have* much by way of substance? And if, as I strongly suspected, *not*, why should their taking the views they did be relevant to what *I* thought? The doubts (in that form anyway) didn't last long, but something like the bravado, I suppose, has remained.

During my second semester, however, there were two events that resolved these doubts and ambivalences for me. One gloomy evening (in January, perhaps) I was returning from dinner, walking past Widenar Library to my fifth floor room in Thayer Middle (there weren't any elevators, and scholarship boys occupied the cheaper rooms at the top of the building). It was dark, windy, raining, nasty. But suddenly it was as if the heavens opened; I heard, so it seemed, music of overwhelming power and grandeur and sweetness; there was light of unimaginable splendor and beauty; it seemed I could see into heaven itself; and I suddenly saw or perhaps felt with great clarity and persuasion and conviction that the Lord was really there and was all I had thought. The effects of this experience lingered for a long time; I was still caught up in arguments about the existence of God, but they often seemed to me merely academic, of little existential concern, as if one were to argue about whether there has really been a past, for example, or whether there really were other people, as opposed to cleverly constructed robots.

Such events have not been common subsequently, and there has been only one other occasion on which I felt the presence of God with as much immediacy and strength. That was when I once foolishly went hiking alone off-trail in really rugged country south of Mt. Shuksan in the North Cascades, getting lost when rain, snow and fog obscured all the peaks and landmarks. That night, while shivering under a stunted tree in a cold mixture of snow and rain, I felt as close to God as I ever have, before or since. I wasn't clear as to his intentions for me, and I wasn't sure I approved of what I thought his intentions might be (the statistics on people lost

alone in that area were not at all encouraging), but I felt very close to him; his presence was enormously palpable. On many other occasions I have felt the presence of God, sometimes very powerfully: in the mountains (the overwhelming grandeur of the night sky from a slope at 13,000 feet), at prayer, in church, when reading the Bible, listening to music, seeing the beauty of the sunshine on the leaves of a tree or on a blade of grass, being in the woods on a snowy night, and on other kinds of occasions. In particular I have often been overwhelmed with a sense of *gratitude*--sometimes for something specific like a glorious morning, but often with no particular focus. What I *ought* to be most grateful for--the life and death and resurrection of Christ, with the accompanying offer of eternal life--is harder, simply because of its stupendous and incomprehensible magnitude. One can say "Thank you" for a glorious morning, and even for your children's turning out well; what do you say in response to the suffering and death and resurrection of the son of God? to the offer of redemption from sin, and eternal life?

The second event that semester at Harvard was as follows. During spring recess that semester I returned to Grand Rapids to visit my parents; since Calvin's spring recess did not coincide with Harvard's, I had the opportunity to attend some classes at Calvin. I had often heard my father speak of William Harry Jellema, his philosophy professor at Calvin in the late twenties and early thirties. Accordingly I attended three of Jellema's classes that week--it was a course in ethics, I believe. That was a fateful week for me. Jellema was obviously in dead earnest about Christianity; he was also a magnificently thoughtful and reflective Christian. He was lecturing about modernity: its various departures from historic Christianity, the sorts of substitutes it proposes, how these substitutes are related to the real thing, and the like. Clearly he was profoundly familiar with the doubts and objections and alternative ways of thought cast up by modernity; indeed, he seemed to me to understand them better than those who offered them. But (and this is what I found enormously impressive) he was totally unawed. What especially struck me then in what he said (partly because it put into words something I felt at Harvard but couldn't articulate) was the thought that much of the intellectual opposition to Christianity and theism was really a sort of intellectual imperialism with little real basis. We are told that man come of age

has got beyond such primitive ways of thinking, that they are outmoded, or incompatible with a scientific mindset, or have been shown wanting by modern science, or made irrelevant by the march of history, or maybe by something else lurking in the neighborhood. (In this age of the wireless, Bultmann quaintly asks, who can accept them?) But why should a Christian believe any of these things? Are they more than mere claims? I found Jellema deeply impressive--so impressive that I decided then and there to leave Harvard, return to Calvin, and study philosophy with him. That was as important a decision, and as good a decision, as I've ever made. Calvin College has been for me an enormously powerful spiritual influence and in some ways the center and focus of my intellectual life. Had I not returned to Calvin from Harvard, I doubt (humanly speaking, anyway) that I would have remained a Christian at all; certainly Christianity or theism would not have been the focal point of my adult intellectual life.

ii Calvin

What I got from Jellema that week and later on was the limning of a certain kind of stance to take in the face of these objections; one could take them seriously, see what underlies them, see them as in some ways profound, understand them at that level, sympathize with the deeply human impulses they embody, and nonetheless note that they need have little or no real claim, either on a human being as such or on a Christian. All that chronological talk about man come of age and what modern science has shown is obviously, in the final analysis, little more than bluster. These claims and arguments are not the *source* of modern Enlightenment turning away from God; they are more like *symptoms* of it, or *ex post facto* justifications of it; at bottom they are really intellectual or philosophical developments of what is a fundamentally religious or spiritual commitment or stance. If so, of course, they don't come to much by way of objection to Christianity. They really proceed from a broadly religious commitment incompatible with Christian theism; taken as arguments against Christianity, therefore, they are wholly inconclusive, because clearly question begging. Jellema's way of thinking about these matters (as he said) goes back to Abraham Kuyper and other Dutch Calvinists and ultimately back through the Franciscan tradition of the middle ages, back at least to Augustine. Jellema's thought

was in many respects "post-modern" long before contemporary post-modernism announced itself with such cacophony and confusion (and foolishness); his thought was also incomparably deeper, more subtle, more mature than most of the current varieties.

Jellema was by all odds, I think, the most gifted teacher of philosophy I have ever encountered. When I studied with him in the early fifties, he was about sixty years old and at the height of his powers; and he was indeed impressive. First of all, he *looked* like a great man--iron gray hair, handsome, a vigorous, upright bearing bespeaking strength and confidence, a ready smile. Secondly, he *sounded* like a great man. Although he had grown up in the United States, there was a trace of European accent--Oxford, I thought, with perhaps a bit of the Continent thrown in. Jellema lectured in magisterial style, with the entire history of Western philosophy obviously at his fingertips. He seemed to display astonishing and profound insights into the inner dynamics of modern philosophy--the deep connections between the rationalists and the empiricists, for example, as well as the connections between them and Kant, and the contrast between their underlying presuppositions and those underlying earlier medieval and Christian thought. Although he was a man of razor-sharp intellect, Jellema wasn't first of all a close or exact thinker; his metier was the method of broad vistas, not that of the logical microscope. I came deeply under his spell; had he told me black was white I would have had a genuine intellectual struggle.

And of course I wasn't the only one. In the early days in particular, an extremely high proportion of the serious students at Calvin wound up either majoring or minoring in philosophy. This phenomenon was due in part to a widespread grass-roots interest in theology and theological argumentation. Many Christian Reformed students in those days came to college with an already highly developed taste for theological disputation and a strong interest in philosophical questions. But much was due to the intellectual power and magnetism of Harry Jellema. Given the size of Calvin--300 students when my father was there as a student, 1300 when I was--a remarkable number of graduates have gone on to careers in philosophy. Many had Frisian names ending in 'a': Bouswma, Frankena, Hoitenga, Hoekema, Hoekstra, Mellema, Pauzenga,

Plantinga, Postema, Strikwerda, Wierenga, and more. This has given rise to the law-like generalization that if an American philosopher's name ends in 'a' and is neither Castañeda, Cochiarella nor Sosa, then that philosopher is a graduate of Calvin college.

Calvin was a splendid place for a serious student of philosophy. At Calvin then (as now) the life of the mind was a serious matter. There was no toleration of intellectual sloppiness and little interest in the mindless fads (Deconstruction, Laconian/Freudian literary theory) that regularly sweep academia; rigor and seriousness were the order of the day. What was genuinely distinctive about Calvin, however, was the combination of intellectual rigor with profound interest in the bearing of Christianity on scholarship. There was a serious and determined effort to ask and answer the question of the relation between scholarship, academic endeavor and the life of the mind, on the one hand, and the Christian faith on the other. We students were confronted regularly and often with such questions as what form a distinctively Christian philosophy would take, whether there could be a Christian novel, how Christianity bore on poetry, art, music, psychology, history, and science. How would genuinely Christian literature differ from non-Christian? Obviously Christianity is relevant to such disciplines as psychology and sociology; but how does it bear on physics and chemistry? And what about mathematics itself, that austere bastion of rationality? What difference (if any) does being a Christian make to the theory and practice of mathematics? There were general convictions that Christianity is indeed profoundly relevant to the whole of the intellectual life including the various sciences (although not much agreement as to just *how* it is relevant). This conviction still animates Calvin College, and it is a conviction I share. Serious intellectual work and religious allegiance, I believe, are inevitably intertwined. There is no such thing as religiously neutral intellectual endeavor--or rather there is no such thing as serious, substantial and relatively complete intellectual endeavor that is religiously neutral. I endorse this claim, although it isn't easy to see how to establish it, or how to develop and articulate it in detail.

Harry Jellema (as well as Henry Stob, another gifted teacher of philosophy and also my philosophy teacher at Calvin) saw the history of philosophy as an arena for the articulation and

interplay of commitments and allegiances fundamentally religious in nature; in this they were following Kuyper and Augustine. Jellema spoke of four 'minds'--four fundamental perspectives or ways of viewing the world and assessing its significance, four fundamentally religious stances that have dominated Western intellectual and cultural life. There was the Ancient Mind, typified best by Plato, then the Medieval and Christian Mind, then the Modern Mind, and last and in his judgment certainly least, the Contemporary Mind, whose contours and lineaments, though not yet wholly clear, are fundamentally naturalistic. He therefore saw all philosophical endeavor--at any rate all serious and insightful philosophy---as at bottom an expression of religious commitment. This gave to philosophy, as we learned it from Jellema and Stob, a dimension of depth and seriousness. For them the history of philosophy was not a record of man's slow but inevitable approach to a truth now more or less firmly grasped by ourselves and our contemporaries, nor, certainly, a mere conversation with respect to which the question of truth does not seriously arise; for them the history of philosophy was at bottom an arena in which conflicting religious visions compete for human allegiance. Philosophy, as they saw it, was a matter of the greatest moment; for what it involved is both a struggle for men's souls and a fundamental expression of basic religious perspectives.

Jellema and Stob were my main professors in philosophy; I also majored in psychology, taking some six courses in that subject from my father, from whom I learned an enormous amount inside the classroom as well as out. My father was trained as a philosopher, although at Calvin he taught only psychology courses. (True to his Dakota form, however, he taught a large number of different psychology courses, in fact all the courses offered except the introductory course.) The sort of psychology course he taught, however, had a strong philosophical component. He was wholly disdainful of contemporary reductionistic attempts to make psychology 'scientific', to try to state laws of human behavior which more or less resembled those of physics, to study only that which can be quantified, to declare, with Watsonian behaviorists, that there really aren't any such things as consciousness or mental processes, on the grounds that if there were, it wouldn't be possible to study them scientifically. That was 40 years

ago; contemporary efforts along these lines don't do much better. One prominent example: we all think that a person's actions and behavior can be understood or explained in terms of her beliefs and desires, and in particular in terms of the *content* of those beliefs and desires. (It is the fact that I believe my office is south of my house that explains why I go south when I want to go to my office; that content enters essentially into the answer to the question "Why did he go south?") But contemporary naturalistic philosophy of mind has enormous difficulty seeing first, how it can be that my beliefs *have* content; how could that work, from a naturalistic perspective? How could a neural process of some kind wind up being the belief that the South won the Civil War? And second, there is if anything even greater difficulty in seeing how the content of a belief, or its having the content it does, should play some kind of causal or explanatory role in explaining behavior.[4]

There is another legacy of Calvin, from those days, however, that isn't quite so beneficent. This was a sort of tendency to denigrate or devalue other forms of Christianity, other emphases within serious Christianity. For example, there was a bit of an inclination to ridicule pietists and "fundamentalists." We Calvinists, we thought, were much more rigorous about the life of the mind than fundamentalists, and as a result we were inclined to look down our Reformed noses at them.[5] This took many forms; I remember, for example, attending the first of Wheaton College's remarkable series of philosophy conferences with the late Dirk Jellema (son of Harry Jellema and for many years professor of history at Calvin); this was in the fall of 1954,

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[4]See, for example, J. Fodor's "Methodological solipsism considered as a research strategy in cognitive psychology in *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (1980) vol. 3, p. 68, and Stephen Stich's *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983) chapter 8 and elsewhere. See also P. Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and Propositional Attitudes", *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), Fred Dretske, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), J. Fodor, *Psychosemantics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), B. Loar, *Mind and Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), and Z. Pylyshyn *Computation and Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984). Robert Cummins goes so far as to call this view--the view that representations have causal efficacy only with respect to their syntax, not with respect to their semantics or content--the 'received view' (*Meaning and Mental Representation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), p. 130. In *Explaining Behavior* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) Fred Dretske takes as his main project that of explaining how it could be that beliefs (and other representations) play a causal role by virtue of their contents.

[5]Of course we Calvinists didn't restrict our antipathies to fundamentalists. At Calvin, in those days, there was a wholly deplorable battle between the 'Dooyeweerdians', the largely Canadian followers of the Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (led by H. Evan Runner) and the rest of us. We were thus prepared to be evenhanded in our acrimony.

nearly a year after I had left Calvin, when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan. The conference seemed to us pretty weak tea after what we had been used to at Calvin (and in fact it wasn't anywhere nearly as good as the conferences later on, when they became an extremely distinguished and valuable part of the Christian philosophical community). Dirk and I found ourselves feeling smugly superior (that's really not the way to put it: we felt so smug and superior that we didn't know that we *were* feeling smug and superior); from our lofty heights we regarded these poor benighted fundamentalists with a certain amused but benevolent disdain. Further, Dirk and I were both smokers at the time; it was a point of honor among Calvinist types to sneer at fundamentalist prohibitions against smoking and drinking.[6] Smoking and drinking were forbidden on the Wheaton campus; every hour or so, therefore, Dirk and I had to dash over to his car, drive off the campus, and smoke a cigarette. After the conference ended, we went barhopping in Chicago, listening to Dixieland jazz and amusing ourselves by sneering at fundamentalists, and dreaming up various scurrilous fantasies about Wheaton and Wheatonians. Not our finest hour.

Since the Enlightenment, we Christians have had *real* enemies to fight and real battles to win; why then do we expend so much time and energy despising or fighting each other? Why don't we treat each other like the brothers and sisters in Christ we are? This is something the Christian community will have to answer for, and it is not going to be pleasant. Indeed, the whole of modern apostasy in the West is due (so I think) in considerable part to the unedifying and indeed appalling spectacle of Christians at each other's throats in the 16th and 17th centuries. We aren't now literally at each others throats, but we still have nothing to boast of along these lines. Evangelicals in South and Central America claim that Catholics aren't really Christians at

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[6]In fact there was current among the older generation the idea that smoking was not only permissible, but quasi-obligatory, an attitude summed up in the Dutch verse

Die niet roken kan,
Dat is geen man.

(Loosely translated: he who can't smoke is not a real man.) My father was offered a job at Wheaton in the 40's or 50's; he replied that while he could easily enough give up the occasional beer, he couldn't even consider giving up cigars; the whole idea was unthinkable.

all; some Catholics return the favor. Many fundamentalist Christians deeply disapprove of those Christians who accept some form of theistic evolution and propose to read them out of the whole Christian community; those on the other side return the favor by joining the secular scientific establishment in declaring those of the first part ignorant, stupid, dishonest, or all of the above.[7] Not a pretty picture.

In the fall of 1953 I met Kathleen DeBoer. She was then a Calvin senior and had grown up on a farm near Lynden, Washington, a village 15 miles from Puget sound and just four miles south of the Canadian border. Her family, like mine, was of Dutch Christian Reformed immigrant stock, having come to northwest Washington in the early days of the twentieth century. I'm not sure what she saw in me, but I was captivated by her generous spirit and mischievous, elfin sense of humor. The following spring we were engaged and in June of 1955 married. She has had need of that sense of humor. Over the years she has had to put up with my idiosyncrasies (and worse), and also a rather nomadic life-style: during the 36 years of our married life we have moved more than 20 times. She has also had to bear a great deal of the burden of rearing our four children,[8] particularly when they were small; my idea of a marriage in those days, I regret to say, involved *my* having a career and spending what I now see as an inordinate amount of time on my work, and *her* taking care of the children and family.[9] (But that isn't exactly right either, although it contains a lot of truth; this is another of those places where it is hard to see the truth straight. I also loved (and love) the children with a passion, and did spend a lot of time caring for them; and I immensely enjoyed playing, talking, arguing, wrestling, singing, hiking and just being with them. Our dinner times were often a kind of rich but whacky discussion of ideas ranging over theology, philosophy, psychology, physics, mathematics,

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[7]See my "Evolution, Neutrality, and Antecedent Probability: A Reply to Van Till and McMullin", *Christian Scholar's Review*, XXI:1 (September, 1991) p. 90.

[8]I speak of the 'burden' of rearing our four children; in fact these children--Carl, about to be married to Cindy Kok and now a professor of film at Hollins college, Jane, married to John Pauw and an associate pastor of a Presbyterian church in Seattle, Harry, married to Pamela van Harn and a professor of computer studies at the University of Pittsburgh, and Ann, married to Raymond Kaptyn and presently a student at Calvin Seminary--are for us a source of enormous joy and satisfaction.

[9]I hope I have since learned better, in part from the example of younger people, including in particular some graduate students at Notre Dame.

literature and what dumb thing someone's teacher had said today. (Since all of our children took courses from me at Calvin, the teacher in question was sometimes me.))

My wife Kathleen has been a wonderful mother and for me a wonderful wife and a wonderful ally and support. Some will see this as a monumentally banal sentiment, a conventional cliche; furthermore, of course, in many quarters being a wonderful wife and mother is not a recommendation but a condemnation, something she should perhaps shamefacedly confess, with the earnest intention of doing better. I say they are dead wrong. I was myself dead wrong in assuming early in our marriage that men had careers outside the home and women were to stay home and be housewives; that was unjust and unfair. Nevertheless being a housewife (or househusband) is as important and honorable a career as there is. Can anything we do really be more important, more weighty, than rearing our children?

Kathleen has gone willingly with me to all sorts of places she had no real interest in, often with several small children. During the decade of the 60's, for example, I taught at Wayne State University in Detroit, Calvin, Harvard, and the University of Illinois; I also spent a year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, California. A couple of years later we spent the academic year 1971-72 in Los Angeles, while I was a visitor at UCLA. All of these moves were for my benefit, or for the benefit of my career, or at any rate for doing something I thought I needed to do. All of this was also despite her sometimes being less than overwhelmed with the worth of some of my philosophical projects. (I remember that on first hearing she thought the thesis of *God and Other Minds*--which might be summarized as the idea that belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat--was one of the sillier things she had heard.)

She has also had to put up with my relationship with mountains and mountaineering. In the summer of 1954 I accompanied her and her parents to Lynden, Washington, where her parents lived. I had never been west of Minot, North Dakota, and my first sight of the mountains--the Big Horns of Wyoming, the Montana Rockies, the Washington Cascades--struck me with the force of a revelation from on high. Splendidly beautiful, mysterious, awe-inspiring,

tinged with peril and more than a hint of menace--there was nothing I had ever seen to compare with them, and thus began a lifelong love affair with mountains. Mountains have been an important part of my life ever since. I've climbed in many of the main ranges of the United States, perhaps concentrating on the Tetons and the Cascades and Sierras; I've also climbed a bit in Europe (the Matterhorn, Mt. Blanc, a bit of rock climbing in Great Britain.) The last few years I have turned more to rock climbing, which is less prodigal of time and energy than mountaineering, and in each of the last few summers have climbed with my friend Ric Otte in Yosemite. Among my favorite rock climbs would be the Black Quacker on Mt. Lemmon (just north of Tucson), the Exum route on the Grand Teton, and Guide's Wall, also in the Tetons; in Yosemite my favorites are the Nutcracker, a beginner's set piece; Snake Dike, the easiest (5.7) technical route on Half Dome; and Crest Jewel, a long (ten pitches or so) and splendid moderately difficult route on North Dome.

Mountains have been a blessing: for many years anyway, the Sensus Divinitatis seemed to work most strongly, for me, in the mountains. I mentioned above the time I was lost in the mountains; but on dozens of other occasions I have strongly felt the presence of God in the mountains--although on some occasions what I also felt was guilt and divine disapproval. For if mountains were a blessing for me, they were also a bane. The problem was that (particularly during the first couple of decades of our marriage), I was positively obsessed with mountains. At home in Grand Rapids during the close, humid Michigan summer, I would think of the dry, cool, delicious air of the Tetons; that marvelously blue sky pierced by those splendid towers; the wind, the rough feel of Teton granite, the sweep of a steep, exposed ridge below my feet--and I would almost weep. *Why* was I in Grand Rapids rather than in the mountains? I would be overcome with a sort of yearning, a desperate longing, a *Sehnsucht* for which the only remedy was going to the mountains. So to the mountains I went. Kathleen had two choices: she could stay home in Grand Rapids and take care of the children alone, or she and the children could come along. The only accommodation we could afford in the Tetons (or for that matter anywhere else away from home) was camping: so she and the children camped in a tent while I assaulted the heights. This

was not her idea of a good time; and once more, it was wholly unfair. Her reaction to all this was one of Christian grace; but my part would have to be judged as self-centered. Fortunately, this sort of thing no longer happens; but it isn't as if I can take much credit for it. With the passage of the years (and the cooling of the hot blood of youth) my obsession with the mountains has gradually dissipated, leaving behind a more reasonable if less fierce love for them.

iii Michigan and Yale

In January of 1954 I left Calvin for graduate work at the University of Michigan, where I studied with William P. Alston, Richard Cartwright and William K. Frankena. The first semester I enrolled in a seminar in the philosophy of Whitehead and a course in philosophy of religion, both taught by Alston; his careful, clear and painstaking course became a model for the courses I was later to teach in the same subject. Coming from Calvin, however, I was struck and puzzled by the diffidence he displayed towards the essential elements of the Christian faith.[10] I also learned much from William Frankena--much at the time and much later on. I admired his patient, thoughtful and considerate way of dealing with students almost as much as his analytical powers. Again, however, I was puzzled by the extremely low profile of his faith.

At Michigan, as earlier on, I was very much interested in the sorts of philosophical attacks mounted against traditional theism--the ancient claim that it was incompatible with the existence of evil, the Freudian claim that it arose out of wish fulfillment, the positivistic claim that talk about God was literally meaningless, the Bultmannian claim that traditional belief in God was an outmoded relic of a pre-scientific age, and the like. These objections (except for evil) seemed to me not merely specious, but deceptive, deceitful, in a way: they paraded themselves as something like discoveries, something we moderns (or at any rate the more perceptive among us) had finally seen, after all those centuries of darkness. All but the first, I thought, were totally question begging if taken as arguments against theism.

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[10]A diffidence he of course shed some 17 years ago; since then he has become an inspiring and peerlessly valuable leader among Christian philosophers.

I conceived a particular dislike for the dreaded Verifiability Criterion of Meaning; it seemed to me that many believers in God paid entirely too much attention to it. Although I wasn't then aware of the enormous difficulties in stating that criterion,[11] I could never see the slightest reason for accepting it. The positivists seemed to trumpet this criterion as a *discovery* of some sort; at long last we had learned that the sorts of things theists had been saying for centuries were entirely without sense. We had all been the victims, it seems, of a cruel hoax--perpetrated, perhaps, by ambitious priests or foisted upon us by our own credulous natures; they had somehow got us to think we believed what was in sober fact sheer nonsense. At the same time, however, the positivists seemed to regard their criterion as a *definition*--in which case, apparently, it was either a proposal to use the term 'meaningful' in a certain way, or else an account of how that term is in fact used. Taken the second way, the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning was clearly wide of the mark; none of the people I knew, anyway, used the term in question in accord with it. And taken the first way it seemed even less successful. Clearly the positivists had the right to use the term 'meaningful' in any way they chose; but how could their using that term in some way or other show anything so momentous as that all those who took themselves to be believers in God were fundamentally deluded? If I proposed to use 'positivist' to mean 'unmitigated scoundrel', would it follow that positivists everywhere ought to hang their heads in shame? I still find it hard to see how the positivists could have thought their criterion would be of any *polemical* use. It might have a sort of *pastoral* use; it might be useful for bucking up a formerly committed but now flagging empiricist; but what sort of claim would the verifiability criterion have on anyone who had no inclination to accept it in the first place?

This interest continued at Yale, to which I went from Michigan because I wanted to study metaphysics in the grand style. I have little to add to what I say in the Profiles volume about life at Yale, except that already then some of the habits of mind that led to the demise of that

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[11]See my *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, New York: 1967, 1991), chapter VII "Verificationism and Other Atheologica".

department were evident.[12] Already then, there was that sort of paranoia with respect to the rest of the philosophical world, coupled with the self-serving idea that Yale was the last bastion of proper diversity; and already then there were the beginnings of the sorts of personal animosities and the turning of all of one's energies to internecine warfare that eventually destroyed the department.

iv Wayne Days

I left Yale, shiny new Ph. D. in hand (or nearly in hand), in the fall of 1957 for Wayne State University. The philosophy department at Wayne in Detroit in the late 50's and early 60's was a real phenomenon and for me enormously valuable; I have already said most of what I have to say about it in the Profiles volume. Here I add a couple of further reflections. At Wayne, the late Hector Castañeda, George Nakhnikian, and Edmund Gettier confronted me with antitheistic arguments of a depth and philosophical sophistication and persistence I had never encountered before. Both Gettier and Nakhnikian were sons of the clergy; both had resolutely turned their backs upon Christianity; and both attacked my Christianity with great verve and power. They were joined by Castañeda, who was raised as a Catholic in Guatemala, but had long since given up the religion of his youth (and indeed displayed a sort of bitter resentment against it). Nakhnikian was our chairman; he thought well of my powers as a budding young philosopher, but also thought that no intelligent person could possibly be a Christian. He would announce this sentiment in his usual stentorian tones, whereupon Robert Sleigh would say, "But what about Al, George? Don't you think he's an intelligent person?" George would have to admit, reluctantly, that he thought I probably was, but he still thought there had to be a screw loose in there somewhere.

This sort of atmosphere at Wayne was in one way extremely good for me. My colleagues were people I loved and for whom I had enormous respect; there was among us a close and happy camaraderie unmatched in my experience of philosophy departments. It was us against

[12]At present the Yale philosophy department is in receivership; the administration has appointed a member of the statistics department as its head, and a committee of faculty members not including members of the philosophy department is overseeing the attempt to rebuild it.

the world, and the world was in real trouble. We worked closely together, forging a kind of common mind. My Christianity, however, didn't fit into this common mind at all. As a result, my thought was influenced in two ways. On the one hand, I encountered antitheistic argument at a level and of a caliber unequalled by anything I've seen published (with the possible exception of parts of the late John Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism*); this was a great stimulus to rigor and penetration in my own work. In those days I was writing *God and Other Minds*; I still remember the winter evening in a dingy parking lot at Wayne when the central idea of the Free Will Defense--that even if God is omnipotent, there are nonetheless possible worlds he could not have actualized--struck me. (It literally *struck* me; it felt like a blow.) I also remember the first seminar in which I presented this idea; it was subjected to merciless criticism by Larry Powers, then the most philosophically gifted sophomore (or maybe junior) I have ever seen. (As an undergraduate Powers was regularly the best student in our graduate seminars.)

This stimulation was enormously valuable; on the other hand, however, I was never able to get beyond a sort of defensive posture. I concentrated on arguing (contrary to my colleague's claims) that theism was not wholly irrational--that, for example, there wasn't, contrary to received philosophical opinion, any contradiction in the propositions *God is omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good,* and *There is evil*. I often felt beleaguered and, with respect only to my Christianity, alone, isolated, nonstandard, a bit peculiar or weird, a somewhat strange specimen in which my colleagues displayed an interest that was friendly, and for the most part uncensorious, but also incredulous and uncomprehending. It wasn't that this atmosphere induced doubt about the central elements of Christianity; it was more that my philosophical horizons were heavily formed by my colleagues and friends at Wayne. It was hard indeed to go beyond interests that we shared; it seemed out of the question, for example, to take it for granted that Christianity or theism is true and proceed from there. That requires the support of a Christian philosophical community; and that, for all the benefits I received from the Old Wayne department, was something wholly unavailable there.

In 1963 at the age of 70 Harry Jellema retired from Calvin's philosophy department. I was invited to replace him. I was flattered to be asked to be his successor but timorous at stepping into shoes as large as his; after considerable agony I decided to leave Wayne for Calvin. Many of my non-Calvin friends found it hard to see this as a rational decision. Wayne had a splendid philosophy department; I had found it educational and stimulating *in excelsis;* I immensely liked the department and my place in it and had rejected several attractive offers in order to stay there; why, then, was I now proposing to leave it for a small college in Western Michigan? In point of fact, however, that decision, from my point of view, was eminently sensible. I was and had been since childhood a Christian; I endorsed the Calvinist contention that neither scholarship nor education is religiously neutral; I was therefore convinced of the importance of Christian colleges and universities. I wanted to contribute to that enterprise, and Calvin seemed an excellent place to do so. Calvin, furthermore, is the college of the Christian Reformed church, a church of which I am a committed member; so there was an element of ecclesiastical loyalty at work. Most important, perhaps, I realized that scholarship in general and philosophy in particular is in large part a communal enterprise: promising insights, interesting connections, subtle difficulties--these come more easily and rapidly in a group of like-minded people than for the solitary thinker. The topics I wanted to work on were the topics to which I'd been introduced in college: the connection between the Christian faith and philosophy (as well as the other disciplines) and the question how best to be a Christian in philosophy. Calvin was the best place I knew to work on these questions; nowhere else, so far as I knew, were they as central a focus of interest and nowhere else were they pursued with the same persistent tenacity. I therefore went to Calvin.

Apart from frequent leaves I spent the next 19 years there. There is much to be said about Calvin and about the marvelously stimulating and formative years I spent as a faculty member there, and the people, in particular Paul Zwier and Nicholas Wolterstorff, from whom I learned; I say some of it in the Profiles volume. Here I want to add a couple of things. I went to Calvin in part because of a long-term interest in Christian scholarship and Christian philosophy,

the sorts of topics and questions raised at Calvin when I was a student there. And at Calvin, in one way, I found the very sort of communal Christian scholarship I was hoping for, as I say in the Profiles volume. In another way, though, what I say there is much too rosy; we certainly didn't make nearly as much progress, for example, on the question how in fact to be a Christian philosopher, as could reasonably be hoped. Partly this was due, of course, to the fact that this question of how to be a Christian philosopher, the question of the bearing of one's Christianity on one's philosophy, is extraordinarily difficult, and there isn't much by way of guidance or precedent or (recent) tradition with respect to it. In my own case, furthermore, during most of the first decade of my stay at Calvin, I was working on the metaphysics of modality, writing parts and versions and drafts of *The Nature of Necessity*. Then, third, after finishing *The Nature of Necessity* I returned to the topics and concerns of *God and Other Minds*; (although that isn't how I thought of the matter then); if there aren't strong arguments either for belief in God or for belief in other minds, how is it that we are justified in believing as we do? My answer was that both are properly basic (which in a way isn't much of an answer: it is simply the declaration that one doesn't need propositional evidence in order to be justified in believing propositions of this sort). This project culminated in "Reason and Belief in God";[13] it occupied much of my time during the second decade of my time at Calvin. (I wish to remark parenthetically that I regret having referred to this project, half in jest, as "Reformed Epistemology" or "Calvinist Epistemology"; some didn't realize this was supposed to be just a clever title, not a gauntlet thrown at the feet of Catholic philosophers.)

v. Calvin again and Notre Dame

In 1982 we left Calvin for Notre Dame (and it is at this point that the Profiles Intellectual Autobiography stops). And what can I say about my spiritual life since leaving Calvin? For me, as, I suppose, for most others, spiritual life is an up and down proposition, with what one hopes are the consolidation of small but genuine gains. Sometimes I wake in the wee hours of the

[13]In *Faith and Rationality*, ed. A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, l983).

morning and find myself wondering: can all this really be true? Can this whole wonderful Christian story really be more than a wonderful fairy tale? At other times I find myself as convinced of its main lineaments as that I live in South Bend. For me, church and Sunday school play a very important role in the life of faith. Again, this is no doubt insipid, boring, banal, bourgeois, and conventional; I wish I could report something more exciting; when I was in college, the idea that at some future time (at any rate prior to complete senility) Sunday school and church would be the high point of my week (even the spiritual high point) would have seemed laughable; but there it is: what can I say? When I was growing up, Sunday school was the sort of thing one did only because one's elders insisted on it. I remember almost nothing about any Sunday school from my childhood and youth, except that I once had a teacher whose name was "Ethel"; with typically incisive fifth grade wit we called her "High Test", which in those days was the way one referred to premium gasoline. As an adult, on the other hand, I was astonished, one year, to find Sunday school a genuine occasion for learning and spiritual growth; this was an adult Sunday school class in the Christian Reformed Church in Palo Alto, California (where in l968-69 I was a fellow in the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences). This class was led by Glen vander Sluis, whose decision to become an architect deprived the world of a terrific theologian. More recently, Sunday school in our present church (the South Bend Christian Reformed Church), often led by John Van Engen, a professor of medieval history at Notre Dame, has played the same role for me--as it did, not so surprisingly, the years I led it myself.

I've gone on at length, oddly enough, about Sunday school; but I have also benefitted enormously from the rest of what goes on in our church. First, from regular church services and wonderful preaching. Preaching has always been a matter of paramount importance in Reformed Christianity. This emphasis has its downside: what do you do when you have a really poor preacher? The kind who, like one of the preachers I heard as a child in Waupun, spends about 15 minutes explaining that the blind man Christ healed could not, as a matter of fact, see? By the

same token, however, excellent preaching can be, and at my church has been and is, of absolutely enormous value.

And second, I must mention, of course, people: the people in my church and more generally other Christians I know--colleagues, friends, students--who in a thousand ways, ways far too numerous to tell, have offered spiritual support and upbuilding. Here I must also mention especially my mother, from whom in some ways I have learned as much recently as when I was a child. My father has suffered from manic-depressive psychosis[14] for 50 years and more; and of course this has placed enormous burden on my mother, who has cared for him and helped him with magnificent generosity and unstinting devotion. She has done this day after day, year after year, decade after decade; and she has done so, furthermore, with (for the most part) a sort of cheerful courage that is wonderful to behold. And I must also mention specially my youngest brother (fourteen years younger) Neal. As we all know, relationships with parents constantly change; eventually the parent becomes the child and the child the parent. Something similar can go on with relationships between siblings; and in recent years I am sure I have learned more from Neal than he from me.

vi. Evil

One of my chief interests over the years has been in philosophical theology and in apologetics: the attempt to defend Christianity (or more broadly, theism) against the various sorts of attacks brought against it. Christian apologetics, of course, has a long history, going back at least to the Patristics of the second century A.D.; perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that, from a philosophical point of view, Christians and other theists have nothing whatever for which to apologize. I can scarcely remember a time when I wasn't aware of and interested in objections to Christianity and arguments against it. Christianity, for me, has always involved a substantial intellectual element. I can't claim to have had a great deal by way of unusual religious experience (although on a fair number of occasions I have had a profound sense of God's presence) but for nearly my entire life I have been convinced of the *truth* of Christianity.

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[14]As it used to be called; now, I gather, it is called 'bi-polar affective disorder'.

Of course the contemporary world contains much that is hostile to Christian faith: according to much of the intellectual establishment of the Western World, Christianity is intellectually bankrupt, not worthy of a rational person's credence. Many of these claims strike me as merely fatuous--the claim, for example, that "man come of age" can no longer accept supernaturalism, or the suggestion of Bultmann's I mentioned above to the effect that traditional Christian belief is impossible in this age of "electric light and the wireless." (One can imagine an earlier village skeptic taking a similarly altitudinous view of, say, the tallow candle and the printing press.) Three sorts of considerations, however, have troubled me, with respect to belief in God, and have been a source of genuine perplexity: the existence of certain kinds of evil, the fact that many people for whom I have deep respect do not accept belief in God, and the fact that it is difficult to find much by way of noncircular argument or evidence for the existence of God. The last, I think, is least impressive and no longer disturbed me after I had worked out the main line of argument of *God and Other Minds*. The second has remained mildly disquieting; its force is mitigated, however, by the fact that there are many issues of profound importance -- profound *practical* as well as theoretical importance--where such disagreement abounds.

But the first remains deeply baffling, and has remained a focus of my thought after moving to Notre Dame.[15] Evil comes in many kinds; and some are particularly perplexing. A talented young woman is invaded by a slow and horrifying disease--so long-lasting that she gets to explore each step down in excruciating detail; a young man of twenty-five, in the flood tide of vigor and full of bright promise, is killed in a senseless climbing accident; a radiant young wife and mother, loved and needed by her family, is attacked by a deadly cancer; a sparkling and lovely child is struck down by leukemia and dies a painful and lingering death: what could be the point of these things? As I said, my father has suffered from manic-depressive psychosis for the last 50 years; in his case the manic but not the depressive phase is satisfactorily controlled by

[15]Though with respect to the *probabilistic* atheological argument from evil, as opposed to the claim that the existence of evil is logically incompatible with the existence of an almighty, all-knowing and perfectly good God; the probabilistic argument is vastly more difficult to deal with, if only because probability is such a confusing and ill-understood morass. (See chapters 8 and 9 of my *Warrant and Proper Function*.)

drugs; and the suffering involved in serious clinical depression is almost beyond belief. What is supposed to be the good in that? Why does God permit these things? The sheer *extent* of suffering and evil in the world is appalling. In one extended battle during the Chinese Civil War, 6,000,000 people were killed. There are Hitler and Stalin and Pol Pot and a thousand lesser villains. Why does God permit so *much* evil in his world?

Sometimes evil displays a cruelly ironic twist. I recall a story in the local paper a few years ago about a man who drove a cement mixer truck. He came home one day for lunch; his three-year-old daughter was playing in the yard, and after lunch, when he jumped into his truck and backed out, he failed to notice that she was playing behind it; she was killed beneath the great dual wheels. One can imagine this man's broken-hearted anguish. And if he was a believer in God, he may have become furiously angry with God--who after all, could have forestalled this calamity in a thousand different ways. So why *didn't* he? And sometimes we get a sense of the demonic--of evil naked and pure. Those with power over others may derive great pleasure from devising exquisite tortures for their victims: a woman in a Nazi concentration camp is forced to choose which of her children shall be sent to the ovens and which preserved. Why does God permit all this evil, and evil of these horrifying kinds, in his world? How can it be seen as fitting in with his loving and providential care for his creatures?

The Christian must concede she doesn't know. That is, she doesn't know in any detail. On a quite general level, she may know that God permits evil because he can achieve a world he sees as better by permitting evil than by preventing it; and what God sees as better is, of course, better. But we cannot see *why* our world with all its ills, would be better than others we think we can conceive, or *what,* in any detail, is God's reason for permitting a given specific and appalling evil. Not only can we not see this, we often can't think of any very good possibilities. A Christian must therefore admit that he doesn't know why God permits the evils this world displays. This can be deeply perplexing, and deeply disturbing. It can lead a believer to take towards God an attitude he himself deplores; it can tempt us to be angry with God, to mistrust God, like Job, to accuse him of injustice, to adopt an attitude of bitterness and rebellion. No

doubt there isn't any logical incompatibility between God's power and knowledge and goodness, on the one hand, and the existence of the evils we see on the other; and no doubt the latter doesn't provide a good probabilistic argument against the former. No doubt; but this is cold and abstract comfort when faced with the shocking concreteness of a particularly appalling exemplification of evil. What the believer in the grip of this sort of spiritual perplexity needs, of course, is not philosophy, but comfort, and spiritual counsel. There is much to be said here and it is neither my place nor within my competence to say it.

I should like, however, to mention two points that I believe are of special significance. First, as the Christian sees things, God does not stand idly by, coolly observing the suffering of his creatures. He enters into and shares our suffering. He endures the anguish of seeing his son, the second person of the Trinity, consigned to the bitterly cruel and shameful death of the cross. Some theologians claim that God cannot suffer. I believe they are wrong. God's capacity for suffering, I believe, is proportional to his greatness; it exceeds our capacity for suffering in the same measure as his capacity for knowledge exceeds ours. Christ was prepared to endure the agonies of hell itself; and God, the first being and Lord of the universe, was prepared to endure the suffering consequent upon his son's humiliation and death. He was prepared to accept this suffering in order to overcome sin, and death, and the evils that afflict our world, and to confer on us a life more glorious than we can imagine. So we don't know why God permits evil; we do know, however, that he was prepared to suffer on our behalf, to accept suffering of which we can form no conception.

The chief difference between Christianity and the other theistic religions lies just here: according to the Christian gospel, God is willing to enter into and share the sufferings of his creatures, in order to redeem them and his world. Of course this doesn't answer the question *why does God permit evil?* But it helps the Christian trust God as a loving father, no matter what ills befall him. Otherwise it would be easy to see God as remote and detached, permitting all these evils, himself untouched, in order to achieve ends that are no doubt exalted but have little to do with us, and little power to assuage our griefs. It would be easy to see him as cold and unfeeling-

-or if loving, then such that his love for us has little to do with our perception of our own welfare. But God, as Christians see him, is neither remote nor detached. His aims and goals may be beyond our ken and may require our suffering; but he is himself prepared to accept much greater suffering in the pursuit of those ends. In this regard Christianity contains a resource for dealing with this existential problem of evil--a resource denied the other theistic religions.

Second: it is indeed true that suffering and evil can occasion spiritual perplexity and discouragement; and of all the anti-theistic arguments, only the argument from evil deserves to be taken really seriously. But I also believe, paradoxically enough, that there is a *theistic* argument *from* evil; and it is at least as strong as the *antitheistic* argument from evil. (Here I can only sketch the argument and leave it at an intuitive level.) What is so deeply disturbing about horrifying kinds of evil? The most appalling kinds of evil involve human cruelty and wickedness: Stalin and Pol Pot, Hitler and his henchmen, and the thousands of small vignettes of evil that make up such a whole. What is genuinely abhorrent is the callousness and perversion and cruelty of the concentration camp guard, taking pleasure in the sufferings of others; what is really odious is taking advantage of one's position of trust (as a parent or counsellor, perhaps) in order to betray and corrupt someone: what is genuinely appalling, in other words, is not really human suffering as such so much as human wickedness. This wickedness strikes us as deeply perverse, wholly wrong, warranting not just quarantine and the attempt to overcome it, but blame and punishment.

But could there really be any such thing as horrifying wickedness if naturalism were true? I don't see how. A naturalistic way of looking at the world, so it seems to me, has no place for genuine moral obligation of any sort; *a fortiori*, then, it has no place for such a category as horrifying wickedness. It is hard enough, from a naturalistic perspective, to see how it could be that we human beings can be so related to propositions (contents) that we believe them; and harder yet, as I said above, to explain how that content could enter into a causal explanation of someone's actions. But these difficulties are as nothing compared with seeing how, in a naturalistic universe, there could be such a thing as genuine and appalling wickedness. There can

be such a thing only if there is a way rational creatures are *supposed* to live, *obliged* to live; and the *force* of that normativity--its strength, so to speak--is such that the appalling and horrifying nature of genuine wickedness is its inverse. But naturalism cannot make room for that kind of normativity; that requires a divine lawgiver, one whose very nature it is to abhor wickedness. Naturalism can perhaps accommodate foolishness and irrationality, acting contrary to what are or what you take to be your own interests; it can't accommodate appalling wickedness. Accordingly, if you think there really *is* such a thing as horrifying wickedness (that our sense that there is, is not a mere illusion of some sort), and if you also think the main options are theism and naturalism, then you have a powerful theistic argument from evil.

vii. Evidence and theistic belief

One focus of my thought since moving to Notre Dame has been evil; a second has been continued concern with the issues surrounding the evidentialist objection to theistic belief--the issues that were the focus of *God and Other Minds.* The atheologian claims that belief in God is *irrational*--because he thinks it conflicts with such obvious facts as the existence of evil, perhaps, or because there is evidence against it, or because there is no evidence for it. When he makes this claim, just what property is it that he is ascribing to theistic belief? What is rationality and what is rational justification? What does it mean to say that a belief is irrational? The central topic of *God and Other Minds* is "the rational justification of belief in the existence of God as he is conceived in the Hebrew-Christian tradition" (vii). I was really considering the evidential objection to theistic belief, without explicitly considering or formulating it. I argued, in brief, that belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat; since belief in other minds is clearly rational, the same goes for belief in God. What I wrote there still seems to me to be substantially true, although now I see the issues in a broader context and (I hope) more clearly. But even though the topic of the book is the rational justification of theistic belief, there is almost no consideration of the protean, confusing, many-sided notion of rationality.

In *God and Other Minds,* I assumed that the proper way to approach the question of the rationality of theistic belief is in terms of argument for and against the existence of God.

Following contemporary fashion, furthermore, I thought a *good* argument (either theistic or antitheistic) would have to be more or less conclusive, appealing to premises and procedures hardly any sensible person could reject. This assumption is part of a larger picture, total way of thinking of the main questions of epistemology, that has come to be called 'Classical Foundationalism'. Like everyone else, I imbibed this picture with my mother's milk; and the conclusion of *God and Other Minds* is really that from the perspective of classical foundationalism, belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat.

Returning to the topics of *God and Other Minds* after an excursis into the topics of *The Nature of Necessity,* I began to consider more explicitly the evidentialist objection to theistic belief--the objection that theistic belief is irrational just because there is no evidence or at any rate insufficient evidence for it. (This objection, of course, has been enormously influential. In the 1950's and 60's I heard it a thousand times.) In 1974 I wrote 'Is it Rational to Believe in God?', where I argued that belief in God can be perfectly rational even if none of the theistic arguments works and even if there is no non-circular evidence for it; my main aim was to argue that it is perfectly rational to take belief in God as *basic*--to accept it, that is, without accepting it on the basis of argument or evidence from other propositions one believes. Again, I didn't look at all deeply into the question of what this notion of rationality *is.* Just what is it the objector is objecting to when he claims that belief in God is irrational? This question had and has received little attention, either from the detractors or the defenders of theism. But by the time I wrote "Reason and Belief in God" (note 12) in 1979-80 it was becoming clear that the evidentialist objector should be construed as holding that the theist who believes without evidence thereby violates an intellectual *obligation,* flouts some epistemic *duty*, is unjustified in the core sense of having done something she has no right to do. This, once more, is just another facet of classical foundationalism; for according to this picture one has an intellectual obligation, of some sort, to believe a proposition only if it is at least probable with respect to what is certain for you (and according to the (modern) classical foundationalist, the propositions that are certain for you are

those that are self-evident or incorrigible for you).[16] Once one sees clearly that this is really the issue--that is, the issue is really whether the theist without propositional evidence is violating an intellectual duty or obligation--the evidentialist objection no longer looks at all formidable; for why suppose there is any such obligation, an obligation to believe such propositions only on the basis of evidence from other propositions?

In *God and Other Minds* and "Is it Rational to Believe in God" I failed to distinguish rationality in the sense of justification--being within one's intellectual rights, flouting no intellectual duties or obligations--from rationality in the sense of warrant: that property, whatever precisely it is, that distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief;[17] and in "Rationality and Belief in God" I was groping for this distinction. (It is one of the achievements of contemporary epistemology to rediscover a clear distinction between justification and warrant--a distinction known to some of the medievals but lost later on in the triumph of modern classical foundationalism.) If we take rationality as *warrant*, an entirely different galaxy of considerations becomes relevant to the question whether belief in God is rational. Indeed, so taken, this epistemological question is not ontologically or theologically neutral; pursued far enough, it transforms itself into an ontological or theological question.

Reformed thinkers such as John Calvin have held that God has implanted in us a tendency or nisus towards accepting belief in God under certain widely realized conditions. Calvin speaks, in this connection, of a "sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all." Just as we have a natural tendency to form perceptual beliefs under certain conditions, so, says Calvin, we have a natural tendency to form such beliefs as *God is speaking to me* or *God has created all this* or *God disapproves of what I've done* under certain widely realized conditions. And a person who in these conditions forms one of these beliefs is (typically) both within her epistemic rights (justified) and also such that the belief has warrant for her; indeed, Calvin thinks (and I agree)

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[16]See my "Justification in the Twentieth Century" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. L, Supplement, Fall, 1990. In *God and Other Minds*, then, I was implicitly rejecting classical foundationalism as well as accepting it; for obviously a person flouts no epistemic duty in believing that there are other minds, whether or not there is good argumentative support for that belief.

[17]Another name for warrant is Chisholm's 'positive epistemic status'.

that such a person may *know* the proposition in question. In sum, on the Reformed or Calvinist way of looking at the matter, a person who accepts belief in God as basic may be entirely within his epistemic rights, may thereby display no defect or blemish in his noetic structure, and indeed, under those conditions he may *know* that God exists. This still seems to me correct; over the last few years, I have been thinking about the same question, but trying to put it into the framework of a broader theory of justification, rationality and warrant. I began to explore these matters in Gifford Lectures given at the University of Aberdeen in 1987.[18] Since then I have been working on the written version of these lectures, and have now just finished the first two volumes (*Warrant: the Current Debate* and *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, l992)) of what looks like a three volume project.

viii. Christian Philosophy

In the Profiles volume, I say

> Notre Dame, paradoxically enough, has a large concentration of orthodox or conservative Protestant graduate students in philosophy--the largest concentration in the United States and for all I know the largest concentration in the world. During my 19 years at Calvin perhaps my central concern has been with the question how best to be a Christian in philosophy; and during that time my colleagues and I have learned at least something about that topic. I hope to be able to pass on some of what we've learned to the students at Notre Dame.

This is another case where it is hard *in excelsis* to determine what your motives for a given action really are and of the ambiguity and difficulty of seeing and speaking the truth on such matters (didn't that fat salary have anything to do with it?). However, I should like to think that passage describes my motives; and if, as Robert Nozick suggests, one can choose which motives to act from (or in this case to *have* acted from) then I choose these. But part of this passage is seriously misleading: "During my 19 years at Calvin perhaps my central concern has been with the question how best to be a Christian in philosophy; and during that time my colleagues and I have learned at least something about that topic." This isn't really true (as became clear to me when

[18]As well as Payton Lectures at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1987, Norton Lectures at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1988, and Wilde Lectures given at Oxford in 1988.

rereading and rethinking the Profiles autobiography); I spent the bulk of my time at Calvin thinking about the metaphysics of modality, the problem of evil, and "Reformed epistemology". It is true that my colleagues and I learned *something* about this topic of being a Christian philosopher; how little, however, became apparent to me when at Notre Dame I began to teach a course entitled (immodestly enough) "How to be a Christian Philosopher". This topic wasn't often something we thought about explicitly and in a focused way, at Calvin; it was more like a constant background condition. In fact we didn't make a lot of progress with it, although we did make *some* progress, and were able at least to figure out some of the right questions. However there is nothing like teaching a course or seminar in an area as a stimulus to learning something about it; I have, I think, made a bit of progress in this area since teaching courses in it at Notre Dame. (I also taught a course on this topic at Calvin, some 7 years or so after I left Calvin for Notre Dame; neither I nor anyone else taught a course of that sort at Calvin during the 19 years I was there as a faculty member.)

This question has come to assume an increasingly large proportion of my time and attention. At Calvin, we learned from Jellema and others that the popular contemporary myth of science as a cool, reasoned, wholly dispassionate attempt to figure out the truth about ourselves and our world, entirely independent of religion, or ideology, or moral convictions, or theological commitments--is just that: a myth. And since the term 'myth' is often used in such a way as not to imply falsehood, let me add that this myth is also deeply mistaken. Following Augustine (and Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, Harry Jellema, and many others), I believe that there is indeed a conflict, a battle between the *Civitas Dei*, the City of God, and the City of the World. As a matter of fact, what we have, I think, is a three-way contest. On the one hand there is Perennial Naturalism, a view going back to the ancient world, a view according to which there is no God, nature is all there is, and mankind is to be understood as a part of nature. Second, there is what I shall call 'Enlightenment Humanism': we could also call it 'Enlightenment Subjectivism' or 'Enlightenment Antirealism': this way of thinking goes back substantially to Immanuel Kant. According to its central tenet, it is really we human beings, we men and women, who structure

the world, who are responsible for its fundamental outline and lineaments--its fundamental structure and value. Of course I don't have the space, here, to go into this matter properly; my point, however, is this: serious intellectual endeavor--including science--is by no means neutral with respect to this conflict. Science, philosophy, and intellectual endeavor generally, the attempt to understand us and our world--enters into this conflict in a thousand ways. And the closer the science in question is to what is distinctively human, the deeper the involvement.[19]

If Augustine is right about the conflict between the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas Mundi*, and about the involvement of philosophy and scholarship generally in this conflict, then that is a matter of considerable importance, something very much worth knowing. As a matter of fact, his diagnosis has important implications for the question how Christian philosophers should carry out their business. I've said most of what I have to say about these matters in the pieces mentioned in note 18; here I want only to emphasize one point together with a corollary. Christian philosophers are members of *several* communities: the Christian community, a local church community, the community of Christian scholars, the professional community of philosophers, the modern Western intellectual community, and of course many others. The point I want to make is that Christian philosophers should *explicitly* and *self-consciously* think of themselves as belonging to the Christian community (and the community of Christian intellectuals); perhaps they should think of themselves *primarily* or *first of all* as members of the

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[19]See my "Advice to Christian Philosophers" published by the University of Notre Dame and in *Faith and Philosophy* I, 3 (July, 1984), my Stob Lectures *The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship*, delivered at Calvin in November, 1989 (and available in pamphlet form from Calvin College) and also "When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible" and "Evolution, Neutrality and Antecedent Probability: a Reply to Van Till and McMullin" both in *Christian Scholar's Review* XXI:1 (September, 1991) for a development of these ideas. (I hope to write a book on Christian philosophy, if I ever get finished with the books I'm currently writing.) Here I mention just one example of the way in which current science may run clearly contrary to Christianity: according to Herbert Simon (*Science*, vol 250 (December, l990) pp. 1665 ff.) the *rational* thing for a person to do is to act so as to increase her personal fitness, i.e., so as to maximize the probability that her genes will be widely disseminated. (Thus a paradigm of rational behavior would be that of Dr. Cecil Jacobson, a specialist in fertility problems who was convicted in 1992 of fraud for using his own sperm to inseminate some 75 women who came to him for treatment. True; this behavior landed him in jail and disgrace; but it certainly increased his fitness.) But people like Mother Teresa or The Little Sisters of the Poor, says Simon, raise a problem: why do they act as they do, going so clearly counter to the rational way to behave? Simon's answer: 'bounded rationality' (i.e., not to put too fine a point on it, stupidity) together with docility. I should think no Christian could even for a moment take seriously either the proposed account of rationality or the proferred explanation of the behavior of people like Mother Teresa. See pages 83 and 98 of "Evolution, Neutrality and Antecedent Probability."

Christian community, and only secondarily as members of, say, the philosophical community at large, or the contemporary academic community. Our first responsibility is to the Lord and to the Christian community, not first of all to the philosophical community at large--although, of course that is also a very serious responsibility, and a serious responsibility in part because of its connection with the first responsibility. In some cases this orientation may require a certain courage, or Christian boldness or confidence;[20] in the philosophical and academic world at large there is a good deal of disapproval and disdain for Christianity and Christians, in particular for those who publicly identify themselves as Christians (private Christianity is more likely to be indulgently regarded as a relatively harmless peccadillo or weakness, like being addicted to television or computer games) and propose to practice their scholarly craft in the light of their faith.

The corollary is this. A *successful* Christian philosopher is not first of all one who has won the approval and acclaim of the philosophical world generally, not someone who is 'distinguished'; it is rather one who has faithfully served the Lord in the ways put before her. We philosophers are brought up to practice our craft in a sort of individualistic, competitive, even egotistical style; there is enormous interest, among philosophers, in ranking each other with respect to dialectical and philosophical ability, deciding who is really terrific, who is pretty good, who is OK, who is really lousy, and so on. (Those who do well in this derby sometimes remind me of Daniel 8: 8 "And the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly.") Your worth, at any rate *qua* philosopher, tends to depend on your ranking, as if your main job is to try to achieve as high a ranking as possible. (Just as a politician's main job, obviously, is to get reelected.) There is a corresponding tendency to value students in proportion to their philosophical ability, thinking that our best efforts ought to be reserved for our ablest students, and that weaker students aren't

[20]Of course, I don't mean to hold up myself as a model here: quite the contrary. A few years back I several times found myself thinking about a certain person, and feeling obliged to call him and speak with him about Christianity; this was a person for whom I had a lot of respect but who, I thought, had nothing but disdain for Christianity. I felt obliged to call this person, but always did my best to put the thought out of my mind, being impeded by fear and embarrassment: what would I say? "Hello, have you found Jesus?" And wouldn't this person think I was completely out of my mind, not to mention really weird? Then later I heard that during this very time the person in question was in the process of becoming a Christian. I had been invited to take part in something of real importance and refused the invitation out of cowardice and stupidity.

really worthy or as worthy of our attention. It's as if we were training a stable of would-be professional boxers, or potential Olympic competitors.

But all this is flummery, a snare and delusion. Philosophy is not an athletic competition; and success as a Christian philosopher is not an individualistic matter of doing well in the intellectual equivalent of a tennis tournament. This is not to say that a Christian philosopher ought not to hope to gain the respect of other philosophers; of course not. Recognition for one's work is a blessing to be enjoyed, and may furthermore be useful in doing the job Christian philosophers need to do. But reputation and recognition is a mixed blessing, one which contains real spiritual pitfalls and traps; it is no measure of the success of a Christian philosopher, and the quest for it is vain foolishness. Christian philosophers are successful, not when they achieve a 'reputation' but when they properly play their role in the Christian community.

This is of course a multi-faceted role, but what I want to emphasize here is its *communal* side. Christian philosophers are engaged in a *common* project: a project they have in common with other Christian philosophers, but also and more generally other Christian intellectuals and academics. This project has several different sides: there is apologetics, both positive and negative; there is philosophical theology; there is what we might call philosophical consciousness raising, where the aim is to see how current cultural products (contemporary science, philosophy, literature, etc.) look from a Christian perspective; there is working at the sorts of questions philosophers ask and answer, and there is working at these questions from a Christian perspective, where that perspective is relevant (and it is relevant in more places than one might think). All of this and more constitutes the task of the Christian philosophical community. Part of the ground of this task (its justification, we might say) lies in the fact that it is necessary for the spiritual and intellectual health and flourishing of that community; another part of its justification, however, is just that it is part of the task of developing a community of persons in which the image of God is communally displayed. This multi-sided project, then, is a *communal* project in which the whole Christian philosophical community must be engaged.

Of course this means thinking of other philosophers not as competitors for a scarce or limited commodity, but as colleagues, or teammates, or cooperators, or perhaps coconspirators joined in a common task. (The main idea isn't always to see what's *wrong* with someone's paper, e.g., but to see how you can help.) But then the attitude that what really counts--in institutions, as well as people--is philosophical excellence (whatever precisely that is) or, worse, prestige and reputation, is foolish and shortsighted; what really counts, of course, is the performance of the function Christian philosophers must fulfill in and out of the Christian community. (That involves philosophical excellence, but it involves much more.) Then success is to be measured in terms of contribution to the proper performance of those functions. You carry out this project by way of teaching, writing, conversation and many other ways; it is a complex, multifarious task, and it is by no means clear that you contribute to it in proportion to the strength of your CV.

Another part of the corollary: teaching must be taken really seriously. Teaching, for a Christian philosopher, isn't just a meal ticket, a tradeoff whereby you give up some of your time so that you can spend the rest of it doing 'your own work'; it is a central and essential part of the task. At the undergraduate level, where students will not for the most part become professional philosophers, the teacher can contribute directly, so to say, to the common task I mentioned. At the graduate level, the aim is to help train our successors, those who will carry on the task in the next generation. It is hard to think of anything more important (or more baffling!) than bringing up your children properly; it is also hard to think of any task more important, for a Christian philosopher, than doing what one can to train and equip the next generation of Christian philosophers. This means seeing younger philosophers, fledgling philosophers and graduate students as of immense value; their well-being and development as members of the community of Christian philosophers is a source of real concern; it requires our best efforts; it requires any encouragement and help we can give; for it is they, after all, who will carry on this task of Christian philosophy after the current generation has left the scene.

When I left graduate school in 1957, there were few Christian philosophers in the United States, and even fewer Christian philosophers willing to identify themselves as such. Had there

been such a thing as the Society of Christian Philosophers, it would have had few members. Positivism was very much in the ascendency; and the general attitude among professional philosophers was something like George Nakhnikian's: an intelligent and serious philosopher couldn't possibly be a Christian. It looked as if Christianity would have an increasingly smaller part to play in the academy generally and in philosophy specifically; perhaps it would dwindle away altogether. This was of course discouraging. One does one's best and leaves the results to the Lord; but the demise of Christian philosophy is not a happy prospect for someone who hopes to devote himself to it. Now, some 35 years later, things look different indeed. There are hundreds of young Christian philosophers in the United States, many of them people of great philosophical power; there is much first-rate work going on in Christian or theistic philosophy and allied topics; there are many who have accepted the challenge to try to see precisely what being a Christian means for being a philosopher, who have tried to see what the Christian community must do in philosophy, and then tried to do precisely that. (A fair number of these people are or have been graduate students at Notre Dame, and I consider it a privilege to be involved in their growth and development.) Many of them are not only philosophers of real ability; they are also absolutely first-rate people--people with a deep loyalty to the Christian faith, and people who know how to treat each other with Christian love. Of course one never knows what the future will bring; but it looks as if Christian philosophy, for the next generation or two, will be in good hands indeed. For me personally this is a source of amazement, delight, and gratitude.

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