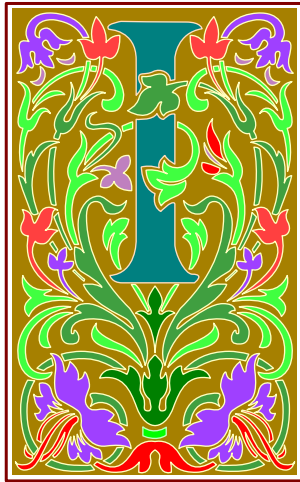


CHAPTER TWO—DARWIN AND DESIGN

THE CLASSICAL PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD



It is possible to argue on an *a priori* basis for the existence of God. Thomas Aquinas, in discussing whether the existence of God is self-evident, cites this proof:

...as soon as the meaning of the word “God” is understood, it is at once seen that God exists. For by this word is signified that thing than which nothing greater can be conceived. But which exists actually and in the intellect is greater than that which exists only in the intellect. Therefore, since as soon as the word “God” is understood it exists in the intellect, it also follows that it exists actually. Therefore the proposition “God exists” is self-evident.¹



Thomas Aquinas

This is the ontological argument, and argues from the nature of being itself that God exists. Aquinas refutes the argument in his reply to it.

Yet, granted that everyone understands that by the word “God” is signified something than which nothing greater can be thought, nevertheless, it does not therefore follow that he understands that what the word signifies exists actually, but only that it exists in the intellect. Nor can it be argued that it actually exists, unless it be admitted that there actually exists something than which nothing greater can be thought. And this is what is not admitted by those who hold that God does not exist. (Pt 1., Q II., art 1.)

Aquinas here asserts that understanding of a word as a word is divorced from the comprehension of the thing described by the word. The word is thus divorced from any underlying reality. Post-structuralist linguistics would describe this as the separation of the signifier (the word, or the lexical item) from the signified. The signified is that which is pointed to by the word. Because the relation of the signifier (*felis*, *chat*, *kitty*) to the signified (a furry domestic master) is purely arbitrary any word can mean anything. The object posed by Aquinas, however, is not specifically linguistic, but the assertion that because something exists in the intellect it is not necessary for it to exist. Everyone, for example, has seen pictures of unicorns, and they know what unicorns are, but that does not mean that unicorns have an actual existence. Aquinas asserts that God cannot be known by *a priori* reasoning, but must be known by reasoning backwards from effect to cause, that is by *a posteriori* reasoning. When he tries to prove the existence of God, Aquinas gives five proofs, which are based on this *a posteriori* reasoning. Briefly these proofs are:

1. The argument from motion—Motion is the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. That which reduces to actuality is that which is already in a state of actuality. Thus fire releases the potential for heat in wood. There cannot be an infinite chain of movers, so there must be a prime mover. The prime mover is God.

1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Great Books of the Western World, vol. 19. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952) 10. Hereafter cited in text by Part, Question, and Article, thus, Pt 1, Q II, art 1.

2. Efficient causation—Nothing can be the efficient cause of itself. There cannot be an infinity of efficient causes. The first cause is God.
3. Possibility and necessity—There are in nature things that are generated and which are corrupted. This means that it is possible for things to be and not to be. “But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible to be at some time is not.” Since it is possible for everything not to be, then at some time it was not, i.e., it did not exist. In order to come into existence, however, it must have been brought into existence by some being who is necessary but does not receive his existence from anything else. This is God.
4. Gradation—There is a gradation in things from less good, noble, and so on to more good, more noble, and so on. The lesser and the greater are predicated of something which exists at a maximum. The maximum in any genus, meaning type of thing, is the cause of everything in the genus. The maximum of being, goodness, and other things is God.
5. Governance—Natural bodies act for an end, which is proved by the fact that they act in the same way to achieve the best result. “Hence it is plain that they achieve their end not by chance but by design.” Since inanimate objects and animal entities lower than man lack intelligence they must be directed by a higher intelligence to achieve their ends. This is God. (Pt. 1., Q 2., art. 3)

The criticisms of these proofs will be considered later, of immediate interest, however, are proofs 3 and 5. The third proof posits that the creation of the universe is a movement from non-being into being, and that this could only come about through the agency of a being who is pure being. This is the argument that modern cosmologists face as they study the “big bang.” The postulate of a beginning to the universe means that there was a movement from non-existence to existence, or that there was a time before the laws of physics existed. Stephen Hawking has postulated space-time may be finite but have no boundary, that there is “no moment of creation.”² This would effectively restore the eternity of the laws of physics, and leave theologians looking for another method to prove the existence of God.

The fifth argument asserts a providential guidance to the courses of nature, and it is most in line with the projects of those who sought to assert the benevolence of the deity. It is also the argument that puts mind into the universe, and imbues creation with purpose.

CRITICISMS OF THE PROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE—HUME AND KANT



David Hume

David Hume's posthumous *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* gives a proof for the existence of God. The interlocutors, Demea and Philo, are invited to contemplate the world. The universe is described as “one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines.” The listeners, and the reader, are then informed that all of the machines that make up the world “are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which ravishes into admiration all men...” The effects represented in nature are such that the causes must also correspond, therefore “the Author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man.”³ The only difference between the two is supposed to be the proportion of the faculties, man's being finite, and God's infinite (143).

The reply of Philo, the sceptic, to this assertion is to assert that we know things are ordered based on our experience of them, but that it is equally possible that natural objects have an order inherent in them: “For

2. Hawking, 116.

3. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith, (Indianapolis: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1947) 143. Hereafter cited in the text

ought we know a priori, matter may contain the source or spring of order originally, within itself, as well as mind does" (146). The assertion that matter is inherently ordered is one step in removing the necessity for God's existence.

Philo later on notes that Cleanthes arguments "renounce all claim to infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity." The effects which are cited as evidence of the existence of God are not infinite, therefore the cause cannot be infinite because "the cause ought only to be proportioned to the effect, and the effect...is not infinite" (166). Another disproof is the imperfection of nature. It is possible that God is a bungler and that "Many worlds might have been botched and bungled throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out" (167). Philo returns to the idea of an order that is inherent in the world, and accepts the idea that there is "an original, inherent principle of order somewhere in thought or matter" (174).

Analogies are inherently imperfect, and Philo suggests that a better analogy to the world is an animal or a vegetable, "The world plainly resembles more an animal or a vegetable, than it does a watch or a knitting-loom" (176). He attributes the cause of the world to be "some thing similar or analogous to generation or vegetation" (177).⁴ Generation, rather than design is capable of imposing order, "A tree bestows order and organization on that tree which springs from it, without knowing the order..." (179). To Philo it must be proved on an a priori basis "that order is...inseparably attached to thought," and further that "it can never, of itself, or from original unknown principles, belong to matter" (179).

At this point it seems reasonable to ask two questions of Hume. Is the process of generation an ordered process, or inherently a disordered process? It would seem that Hume would reply that generation is an inherently ordered process, since it would not be possible to bring about reproduction without an inherent order. Philo, in fact asserts that "vegetation and generation... are experienced to be principles of order in nature" (179). Second, whether by postulating order as inherent in matter, he has not implicitly postulated either pantheism or panentheism. Since order would appear to be inherent in matter, Hume could reply that he rejects the idea that order has to be consciously ordered. There does not have to be a conscious entity operating within the universe for there to be order.

Philo suggests that it is possible that universe been created and recreated an unlimited number of times. The description given appears to anticipate the Nietzschean concept of the eternal return. Demea objects that this would mean "that matter can acquire motion without any voluntary agent or first mover." Philo sees no difficulty with that objection since gravity, elasticity, or electricity can arise in matter "without any known voluntary agent" (182). The unknown voluntary agent is dismissed as a mere hypothesis that confers no advantages. Motion also could "have been propagated by impulse through all eternity and the same stock of it, or nearly the same, be still upheld in the universe" (183). In order for this to be true there would have be no force behind that impulse, and the force would have to be coeval with the universe.

Demea raises an objection that is based on the chain of causation and asserts that there cannot be an infinity of causes. Cleanthes replies to Demea's description of a "necessarily existent Being" by asserting that "Nothing is demonstrable, unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent." There is no being, however, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Therefore "there is no Being, whose existence is demonstrable" (188-9).

Philo further attacks the concept of natural theology, and of a benevolent God, by stating the world "as it appears to us in this life" is "different from what a man...would, beforehand, expect from a very powerful, wise, and benevolent Deity" (205). He asserts that there are four "circumstances" on which evil depends. The first of these is the existence of pain a means of exciting creatures into action. The second is the existence of general

4. See page 63 above. Erasmus Darwin fails to see that Hume's idea was to totally remove the concept of God by postulating a vegetative or generative process in matter. Erasmus Darwin apparently sees the vegetative or generative as another cause in the chain of causation. Therefore, he restores the deity that Hume had so carefully removed from existence.

laws. The Deity could “exterminate all ill, wherever it were to be found; and produce all good without any preparation or long progress of causes and effects” (206). A benevolent Deity would always ensure good winds for shipping, and grant good princes a long life. The third circumstance is “the great frugality with which all powers and faculties are distributed.” The organs and capacities of animals and other creatures are “So well adjusted” that “as far as history or tradition reaches, there appears not to be any single species which has yet been extinguished in the universe” (207).⁵ Any decrease in the creature's endowments would necessarily destroy the creature, i.e., the species. The fourth circumstance, which Philo describes as the source of “the misery and il of the universe” is “the inaccurate workmanship of all the springs and principles of the great machine of nature” (209). Philo cites as an example of this inaccuracy the fact that wind often becomes “tempests and hurricanes” and the variation in the amount of rain.

The second and fourth circumstances are in some ways the weakest part of Philo's argument. Philo assumes that what is good is that which is good from the point of view of man. It is no doubt true that it is good for mankind that smallpox has been exterminated, however, from the viewpoint of the smallpox bacillus, which is now, I believe, extinct, this is not good. From a systemic viewpoint, the ill winds that ship wreck travellers or cause disasters, may benefit the coasts of another land, or may distribute food more evenly in the ocean. Philo, in asserting the second circumstance, has put man into the center of moral measure, a position that is tenable only as long as man is a privileged creature. The same holds true for the fourth circumstance, the alleged inaccuracy of the workmanship of the universe. That is true from the perspective that regards man as the ultimate or only judge of good and evil. It does not hold true for a universe that is morally indifferent in how it regards man, e.g., the sun shines on good and evil alike. Further, it assumes that the “tempests and hurricanes” are random events without human participation in their causation. This assumption is not altogether true. The introduction of sheep, for example, into an area can cause the grass to be eaten to the root. This lessens the erosion resistance of the soil, and can lead to things such as the dust bowl of the 1930's. The role of the construction of levees, the replacement of prairie by farm land, the possible deforestation, and the conversion of sites into roads, buildings, and offices in causing the floods along the Mississippi valley region in 1993 is a point that needs to be determined. These things are not random acts of nature but part of a chain of causation.

The assertion that evil disproves the existence of God, rests on the assumption that the things called evil are evil in some objective sense. It is certainly evil for a man to be eaten by a tiger—for the man; for the tiger he might be a very good meal. It also postulates to some extent that one is not responsible for the results of one's actions. To say that it is the fault of God that one is sick, say with lung cancer, and attribute evil to God, is to deny that one's behavior, smoking, for instance contributed to the disease. Of course, one could say that God should not have invented carcinogens and put them in a highly addictive plant. Still, the knowledge of the ill effects of smoking have been known for thirty or more years, and the habit had been condemned for years before that. Underlying the objection is the desire to live a state of infantile bliss in which the satisfaction of desire is independent of the consequences of action.

The attack upon the possibility of proving the existence of God was continued by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant put the ontological proof, which Aquinas regarded as proving the self-evidence of the existence of God, into the category of a proof.⁶ He recognizes two other proofs, the cosmological proof, and the physico-theological proof. The ontological proof looks for the existence of some being whose existence is necessary. Kant gives a description of the necessary being:

5. Hume, in a note on the manuscript, which has been crossed out, notes that classical sources may record some extinct species. The knowledge of extinctions, however, was greater than that indicated in Hume's manuscript note. For details see the table “Fossil Discoveries and Other Events Related to the History of Geology” on page 31.

6. See the discussion of “The Classical Proofs for the Existence of God” on page 75



Immanuel Kant

If we admit the existence of some one thing, whatever it may be, we must also admit that there is something which exists necessarily. For what is contingent exists only under the condition of some other thing, which is its cause; and from this we must go on to conclude the existence of a cause which is not contingent, and which consequently exist necessarily and unconditionally.⁷

A triangle has three angles, but the three angles do not necessarily exist. In fact they cease to exist, if the triangle ceases to exist. Kant puts the proposition about the triangle into the realm of judgement as opposed to the realm of things. The three angles in the triangle are conditioned upon the existence of the triangle. Now because God is conceived of as existing, and as being that entity whose existence was an absolute necessity, the being posited necessarily exist. Kant points out, however, that by destroying the predicate and retaining the subject a contradiction occurs. If the subject is eradicated, in thought, as well as the predicate, there is no contradiction because

the thing has ceased to exist. It is a self-contradiction to conceive of a triangle and not its three angles. But if neither the triangle nor the angles arise, there is no contradiction. If the conception of an absolutely necessary being is annihilated “in thought, and you annihilate the thing itself with all its predicates; how can there be any room for a contradiction?” In order to talk about the thing at all the philosopher is driven to declare “There are certain subjects which cannot be annihilated in thought.” This however, is saying that there are certain subjects whose existence is necessary. This is the proposition that is being proved, so a circular reasoning is in place.⁸ The reasoning of the cosmological argument is given in this way: “If Something exists, and absolutely necessary being must likewise exist. Now I, at least exist. Consequently, there exists an absolutely necessary being.”⁹ Kant summarizes the proof as postulating that a necessary being is determined by one and only one of the group of “all possible opposed predicates.” The being must be “completely determined in and by its conception.” The only conception which completely determines the thing on an a priori basis is the *ens realissimum*. Therefore, since this is the only conception that enables us to think of a necessary being, the Supreme Being exists.¹⁰

This is subject to criticism because reason “presuppose[s] that the conception of an *ens realissimum* is perfectly adequate to the conception of a being of absolute necessity. This, however, “formed the basis of the ontological argument.” The argument contains, according to Kant, a number of fallacies. First, it includes the

7. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Great Books of the Western World, ed. Robert Hutchins, vol. 42, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952) 177.

8. Kant, 180.

9. Kant, 182–3.

10. Kant, 183.

“transcendental principle” that all contingent things have a cause. This principle is operative only in the “sensual world.” A “purely intellectual conception of the contingent cannot produce any synthetical proposition.” The causal is operative in the “phenomenal world.” Second, he denies that “the impossibility of an infinite ascending series of causes” means that there is an ultimate first cause. Third, reason is satisfied without sufficient evidence that the series of causation is completed. It removes “all conditions,” and accepts this as a completion of the its conception of the series. Fourth, “The logical possibility of a conception of the total of reality (the criterion of this possibility being the absence of contradiction) is confounded with transcendental...” This refers back to the world of experience.¹¹

Kant detects a “dialectical illusion” in the transcendental arguments for a necessary being. His counter argument is that although he can form a conception of a thing, he cannot think of the thing as absolutely necessary. He can think, in other words of a unicorn, but he cannot think of the unicorn as a necessary being. He can also think of the things, the unicorn's, nonexistence. He affirms he “can never complete the regress through the conditions of existence, without admitting the existence of a necessary being,” but he cannot make a “commencement from this being.”¹² He concludes that contingency and necessity are not part of the properties of things. The qualities of contingency and necessity are “merely subjective principles of reason.” If matter has an independent existence, so that it is not contingent upon anything, the idea of the absolute necessity of an independent cause would disappear.

The physico-theological argument corresponds to what we have called the argument from design. This is based on no transcendental principles, but on our “determinate experience of the phenomena of the present world,” and “their constitution.” The Supreme Being, in order to form “a link in the chain of empirical conditions” must belong to the “empirical series” and “have its origin in some higher members of the series.” If the Supreme Being is disengaged from that empirical chain, there is an abyss separating it from the empirical.¹³ Kant describes the impression of the world:

Everywhere around us we observe a chain of causes and effects, of means and ends, of death and birth; and, as nothing has entered of itself into the condition in which we find it, we are constantly referred to some other thing, which itself suggests the same inquiry regarding its cause, and thus the universe must sink into the abyss of nothingness, unless we admit that besides this infinite chain of contingencies, there exists something that is primal and self-existent—something which, as the cause of this phenomenal world, secures its continuance and preservation.¹⁴

Kant breaks the argument down into four parts. First, the world is imbued with purpose and order. Second, the arrangement of things is not in itself natural, and the purpose is imparted to them by an exterior agency. Third, a cause exists “which is not merely a blind, all powerful nature” that produces things in an “unconscious fecundity,” but a being that is free and intelligent. Fourth, the unity of the cause can be inferred because of “the unity of the reciprocal relation existing between the parts of the world, as portions of an artistic edifice.”¹⁵ The argument supposes that there exists an analogy between the products of the human mind and the products of the divine mind. The argument asserts “connection and harmony” in the world provides evidence that not only is the form of things contingent, but also the matter. Now if matter is eternally existing, but is shaped into some organic form by another entity, the argument only demonstrates the “existence of an architect of the world.” The capabilities of the architect are limited by the material with which he works. The argument, in short, does not establish the existence of a creator. Further, an effect has a cause

11. Kant, 184

12. Kant, 185–6

13. Kant, 187.

14. Kant, 187.

15. Kant, 188.

that is proportionate to it. Finite effects have finite causes in other words. It is impossible for one to establish "the relation which the magnitude of the world he contemplates bears...to omnipotence."¹⁶ The physico-theological argument thus includes the cosmological, and since the cosmological includes the ontological argument, which has been shown to include the very item it is supposed to prove, there is no valid proof, within the realm of pure reason, for the existence of God.¹⁷

NATURAL THEOLOGY OF PALEY



William Paley

Kant's definition of natural theology is, as is true of most of Kant, difficult to grasp. He defines theology as "the cognition of a primal being." Within that group he recognizes theology based up reason alone, which he calls "theologia rationalis," and that based upon revelation, "theologia revelata." The first branch uses either pure transcendental conceptions, such as the ens realissimum, and is described as "transcendental theology," or else it reasons from "the nature of our own mind," and is described as "natural theology."¹⁸

William Paley is perhaps the best known of the late 18th and early 19th century divines who engaged in the pursuit of and the development of "natural theology." The project of the natural theologians, as noted, involved moving from the observable and created to the unobservable and uncreated, i.e., God. Now it should be noted at the outset that even assuming the existence of God can be proven, and hence His attributes described, the project does not do anything to further the belief in Christianity, which still remains the subject of revelation. Rather than examining

Paley's theology in detail it should be necessary only to examine his proof of the existence of God, and some of his discussion of the attributes of God.

Paley begins his theology by postulating that if he is walking in country and stumbles against a stone that there is no objection to supposing that the stone had been there ever since the beginning of time.¹⁹ Paley then changes the object to a watch:

But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given,—that, for anything I know, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone?...For this reason, and for no other, viz., that, when we come to inspect the watch we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are famed put together for a purpose....[Description of watch omitted.] This mechanism being observed... the inference, we think, is

16. Kant, 189.

17. Kant, 189.

18. Kant, 190

19. William Paley, *Paley's Natural Theology With Selections From the Illustrative Notes and the Supplementary Dissertations of Sir Charles Bell, and Lord Brougham*, vol. I (1839) 49.

inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker....who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.²⁰

Paley gives numerous instances of the design of the various animal species, which will be passed over, but he then goes on to a discussion of the attributes of the deity. He asserts that "No animal, for instance, can have contrived its own limbs and senses; can have been the author to itself of the design with which they were constructed."²¹

This will be expressly controverted by Darwinian doctrine, which shows how an animal, or more accurately a species, can be "author to itself." It is Paley's basic assertion that contrivance shows the presence of a designing intelligence.²² The Deity's attributes, once His existence has been proved, "must be adequate to the magnitude, extent, and multiplicity of his operations."²³ He finds proof of the unity of the Deity in "the uniformity of plan observable in the universe."²⁴ He also notes the resemblance of "all large terrestrial animals" in their structure.²⁵

The goodness of the Deity is proved by two things. The first of these is the beneficial nature of the contrivances designed by Him. The second is the fact that pleasure has been added to animal sensations.²⁶ Paley does not go on to give extended proofs of the other attributes of God, such as beauty, omnipresence, and so on.

FALLACIES OF PALEY'S ARGUMENT

What is wrong with Paley's argument? Take his method of getting at the attributes of God from existing objects. What is wrong with that argument?

An object conveys a very limited amount of information about itself. If we are perceptive, we may be able to deduce a certain amount of information about the owner of an object. To continue with Paley's example of the watch, when Dr. Watson asks Sherlock Holmes to examine a watch, Holmes is able to deduce that the watch was made for Watson's father, that it passed to Watson's eldest brother, who was of "untidy habits," that he was an alcoholic who had alternate periods of poverty and prosperity, and that the brother had died.²⁷ These, however, are marks that are left on the object after its manufacture, and they do not refer to the maker of the object.

What information can be gleaned from a real watch? Take, for example, a wristwatch. The watch is an Omega, hence it is of Swiss manufacture. The crystal is made of sapphire, but it is clear, and not marked with the star of the gem, so it is probably of artificial manufacture. The hours are marked by raised tick marks, and the minutes, by flat tick marks. There is a calendar, which must be set by hand when the month is shorter than 31 days. The band is black and gold enamel. The back of the mechanism has an engraving of a city, and the words "De Ville" and "Quartz" engraved on it. The back of the case is held on by four screws that are about a millimeter or two in diameter.

20. Paley, I, 50-1

21. William Paley, *Paley's Natural Theology With Selections From the Illustrative Notes and the Supplementary Dissertations of Sir Charles Bell, and Lord Brougham*, vol. II (1839) 99.

22. Paley, II, 100.

23. Paley, II, 116.

24. Paley, II, 121.

25. Paley, II, 123.

26. Paley, II, 125.

27. Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet and The Sign of Four*, (New York: Berkley Publishing, 1963),

I know that the watch was presumably made in Switzerland. That the mechanism is quartz, and therefore requires a battery. That the screws were put in by someone who may have used a jeweler's loupe and who possessed a degree of manual dexterity sufficient to be able to work with small objects. I can not, however, assert that the jeweler who assembled the watch was the designer, nor can I assert that the individual pieces were made by the same jeweler, or even the same manufacturer. Since the quartz movement is a piece of electronic equipment it may have been manufactured by someone else at a different company specializing in electronics. It could have been manufactured by Siemens, or even Nippon Electric Corporation, and supplied to Omega. I can not assert that the engraving on the back was done by the jeweler who put the screws in the case, nor can I even assert that it was engraved individually. The back of the case could have been stamped out by a machine, or the engraving put on after the blank case was made. The individual parts could have been made by different people, and then assembled by one jeweler.

There could, in any real object, be a separation from the designer and the artificer. Applied to religion this would lead to a variation of gnosticism in which one entity designed the world, and another, subordinate to the first, actually made it. There could be a multiplicity of designers and manufacturers. The watch could have a designer for the quartz movement, and a designer who integrates the movement into the overall mechanism of gears and other things that make up the watch. This would lead to polytheism in which one entity is responsible for the creation of part of the world, and another, or multiple others, responsible for the design and creation of others. It is also not necessary for the designer of the overall mechanism to be present. He could be dead, and others could be following his instructions in the form of blueprints or diagrams. None of this leads to a discovery of unity in the originator of the watch.

When Paley discovers the unity of God from the similarity of "all large terrestrial animals," he conveniently ignores two things, the many differences between the various species, and the numerical preponderance of non-mammalian species. He also, very conveniently, ignores the geographical dominance of the marine environment. The differences, accepting Paley's kind of reasoning, could just as easily be accounted for by postulating a polytheistic creation in which one entity creates mammals, another cockroaches and insects, another sea life, and so on. The creation, in other words, can not be used to prove God's unity.

When Paley asserts the goodness of the Deity based on the beneficial nature of the arrangements in species, he takes something that exists, assigns it a value, and then projects that value back to the designer of the object. This first assumes that the arrangements of nature are beneficial, but this is not necessarily the case. Childbirth, in the human female, for instance, would be easier if the arrangement of the pelvis and the birth canal were different. Nor is the limited degree of rotation of the shoulder beneficial, or the arrangement of joints and tendons. The calcaneus, or heel, for example can be subject to minute tears that over time develop into a spur, or bony protrusion that causes pain. The patella, in another example, fits loosely over the joint where the femur (thigh bone) and tibia (shin bone) meet. It is attached by ligaments and tendons that can pull pieces of the cartilage off of the patella. The result, called chondromalacia, or runner's knee, is a painful condition that can inhibit knee flexion. Paley has taken something, the arrangement of organs, the development of the eye, and assigned it the value of "good." A person coming from the opposite side of the argument could take the same arrangements, the inappropriate relations of pelvis and birth canal, the deficiency of the eye, or its tendency to astigmatism, macula degeneration, presbyopia, and other things, and perceiving its inadequacy, give it the label "bad." Paley has taken his perceptions and valuations of the existing world and assigned it to the Deity.

Kant's criticism of the physico-theological proof for the existence of God is especially telling with regards to Paley's proof. First, Paley has assumed the unity of God because he senses an artistic relation between the parts. Of course, artistic endeavors, can be collaborative efforts. This is particularly true in fields such as music, theater, architecture, and similar fields. Second, it assumes that the watch exists because of an exterior maker, and that the watch could have come into existence by the effort of the maker. But assuming the

existence of the maker brings his existence into the argument for his existence. Paley has assumed the analogy between the human and the divine, but the divine, if it exists, is separated from the human by an impassible abyss. This abyss is that separating entities of two different species.

Kant's criticisms of the physico-theological proof thus remain in place in relation to Paley's argument. The criticism can be carried further by pointing out that in arguing from design Paley has taken his interpretation of the purpose of a being, and made it the purpose of the being. The watchmaker makes the watch in order for the watch to tell time. This is true. The watch buyer buys the watch in order to tell time, or to give to someone else who wishes to tell time. This too is true. The watchmaker's purpose in making the watch, however, is more complex than simply making an instrument to tell time. The watchmaker makes the watch in a social setting in which the watch is a commodity. As such the watch is offered to all comers in a market, and the watchmaker makes it in order to exchange it for something else. In a society that uses money, it is exchanged for the money. The money itself, however, is not, ordinarily, a means in itself, it is a means towards the fulfillment of desires that are not connected to the watch. So the watchmaker's immediate purpose is to make a watch as an instrument for the measurement of time. His ultimate purpose, or purposes, however, may vary on a continuous basis, so that he offers the watch in order to obtain money for food, clothing, a horse and carriage, or anything whatsoever. This can be reduced to saying that he offers the watch as means of obtaining a commodity that can be used in the satisfaction of his wants, needs, and desires.

If the existence of God is postulated, His immediate purpose in the creative act may appear evident. It could be just as elusive as the watchmaker's purpose, who today wants to buy a nice house for his wife and children, and the day after wants to pay his son's tuition at Oxford or Cambridge. The ultimate purpose, even given the postulate of God's existence, cannot be reached on the basis of natural theology.

Kant's critique of the reasons for God's existence imposed a split between logic, or dialectic, and religion. This cannot be remedied on the basis of logic alone, because even assuming that it were possible to prove the existence of God, it is still not possible to get to Christianity, which is dependent not on nature, but on revelation. Further, if the existence of God were proven, would it be possible to get to any proof of the attributes of God? Paley's commentary on the attributes of God is flawed because he has inserted his own valuations of existing visible things and taken them as proof of the very quality which he wants to prove. Since "goodness," "beauty," and so on are value laden terms, the person making the assertion reveals that he values something and simultaneously asserts that God values as he does. There is no reason, however, why God's values should match those of human beings. God, in Paley's system, could have created the world and then just left it to run.

Is there any way across the chasm created by Hume's empiricist critique of natural theology, and Kant's destruction of the possibility of proving the existence of God? The empiricist critique confines our knowledge to the external world, and the Kantian critique imposes the split between logic and religion. There are at least three ways of crossing the chasm. One is that given by Kierkegaard, who chose to leap into the absurd and postulated that truth was not something objective, but something that is subjective. A second way is to cross over from Kierkegaardian isolation and worship into mystical experience in which the believer seeks, within the Western Christian tradition, to become God by participation.²⁸ The third way, which we will cover in detail later, is to postulate that reason and faith are two separate things, but that reason, including science, can never conflict with religion, when both are properly understood.

28. This is not an attempt to become God in terms of power, attributes, and so on, but to participate in the life of God. Essentially God enters into the believer, and the believer becomes divinized by participating in the life of God.

A KIERKEGAARDIAN RESPONSE



Søren Kierkegaard. 1813-1855.

Søren Kierkegaard's response to the challenge posed by Kant and by empiricism is complex and voluminous, but some idea of that response can be gleaned from his ethical and religious writings. As Johannes Climacus, in *Philosophical Fragments*, he recognizes the insertion of the idea of God into the supposed physico-theological proof.

If one wanted to demonstrate Napoleon's existence from Napoleon's works, would it not be most curious, since his existence certainly explains his works but the works do not demonstrate his existence, unless I have already in advance interpreted the word "his" in such a way as to have assumed that he exists. But Napoleon is only an individual, and to that extent there is no absolute relation between him and his works—this someone else could have done the same works. Perhaps that is why I cannot reason from the works to existence. If I call the work's Napoleon's works, then the demonstration is superfluous, since I have already mentioned his name. If I ignore this, I can

never demonstrate from the works that they are Napoleon's but demonstrate (purely ideally) that such works are the works of a great general etc. However, between the god and his works there is an absolute relation. God is not a name but a concept, and perhaps because of that his *essentia involvit existentiam*.²⁹

Climacus asserts that the existence of God cannot be proven from His works. The attempt to do so involves a continual suspension, and the idea of God can never be arrived at. How then is the chasm between one's inability to prove the existence of God, and religious belief to be bridged. Briefly put, the answer is it can't be bridged, but one can leap across the chasm into religious faith. This leap forms the subject of the following work, *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Here Climacus presents and develops the idea of the paradox.

Climacus gives the paradox very succinctly, "that God, the eternal, has entered into time as an individual human being."³⁰ There is an absolute conflict between the eternal and the time-bound, and it is this conflict that constitutes the paradox and the offensiveness, that the eternal became time-bound and the infinite finite. This is what the believer is asked to believe. Can it be proved that this historical incident, the insertion of the divine into the world, took place? Climacus looks at four methods of proving the objective truth of Christianity. Three of these appeal to evidence from history, and one takes a speculative approach to the truth of Christianity.

The first approach looks at the Bible as an historical document. Climacus makes the assumption that the canon is in order, that every word and every letter can be defended as inspired, and that there is no contradi-

29. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 40–1. Kierkegaard insisted, at the end of *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, that his pseudonyms be regarded as the authors of their works. (See *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, vol. I, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 627. The pseudonymous authors referred to here are Johannes Climacus, for *Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus*, and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and Anti-Climacus for *Practice in Christianity* (Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)). These works are cited in the notes as Kierkegaard, *Fragments*; Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, and Kierkegaard, *Practice*. The editors of the Kierkegaard series have inserted bracketed translations of foreign phrases, or the Danish originals in the case of word play. I find the first practice insulting, for the most part, and the second pointless, so I have quietly eliminated the bracketed insertions without indicating an ellipsis. Any bracketed insertions are my own.

30. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 596.

tion in any of the books. He then asks “Has the person who did not believe come a single step closer to faith?” The answer given is “No, not a single step.” Faith is not the result of scholarly operation but the result of an “infinite, personal, impassioned interestedness.”³¹ Climacus puts faith into a subjective relationship with Christianity, so that the pursuit of Biblical scholarship, becomes an appendage to it, but not a cause. The “dialectical difficulty” of the Bible is “that it is a historical document, that as soon as it is made the stronghold [of faith] an introductory approximation commences.” This approximation involves a continual suspension in which nothing is ever concluded, something that Climacus describes as “a parenthesis, the conclusion of which one awaits for all eternity.” The essential paradox is still the insertion of the divine into the human, and this cannot be resolved by historical research.

Another method is to relate Christianity to the Church “the Living Word in the Church, the Creed, and the Word with the sacraments.”³² The present existence of the Church is certain, but not its essential continuity or identity with the Church of history.³³ The Church theory is not sufficient for an individual to base his eternal happiness on. If the Creed, for example, is to be the decisive instrument for bringing the individual into a relationship of faith, “then every iota must be infinitely insisted upon, and since this can be attained only *approximando*, the individual finds himself in the contradiction of tying, that is, wanting to tie his eternal happiness to it.” The individual is unable to do this “because the approximation is never finished.”³⁴

The third historical method is the evidence of the centuries. Climacus points out that this cannot be decisive because other religions can also claim considerable extension in time. The example he gives is Mohammedanism,³⁵ but he could also have included Judaism, Hinduism, or Buddhism, or any of the great living religions, all of which have an even longer history than Christianity.

These methods do not provide a means of prompting a person to choose faith and belief. Historical science and scholarship is thus put into the category of something interesting, but not vital to choosing that relationship. Even if the results of historical scholarship are used to attack the Bible, no essential harm is done to the believer. “Because these books are not by these authors, are not authentic, are not integri, are not inspired (this cannot be disproved, since it is an object of faith), it does not follow that these author have not existed and, above all, that Christ has not existed.”³⁶

Briefly put, this means that the two source theory, or the denial of Mosaic authorship is irrelevant to faith. Climacus, in this way asserts that the object of faith is Christ, not a set of doctrines or opinions about Biblical issues. Climacus gives the object of faith as “the actuality of another person, its relation is an infinite interestedness.” The object of faith cannot be a doctrine, because that relegates it to an “intellectual relation’ at the maximum. The object is also not a teacher who has a doctrine, because the doctrine is more important than the teacher, i.e., the doctrines of Plato are more important than the person of Plato. Again the relation is an intellectual relation. The object of faith, for Climacus, is “the actuality of the teacher, that the teacher [Christ] actually exists.” Faith is then marked off into a separate sphere from the intellectual.³⁷

The speculative thinker, in Climacus' view, thinks of Christianity as an objective, historical phenomenon, but Climacus finds Christianity to be a subjective relationship in which the believer finds his relationship to the paradox of the incarnation of the divine within the human, of the eternal within the time-bound. The relationship of the believer, Climacus had asserted in *Fragments*, was the same as that of the contemporary

31. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 29.

32. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 37.

33. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 39–40.

34. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 43.

35. This is the term used by Climacus. The present author recognizes that this is incorrect and offensive to the believer in Islam. See Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 47.

36. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 30.

37. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 326–7.

who received the news of the paradox. The historical, i.e., the objective, is essentially eliminated, and the believer situates himself, or herself, existentially in relation to the that paradox.

The chasm represented by history and by the various dialectical, philosophical approaches remains essentially intact. What is left is the decision to either believe, or not believe. This existential decision is personal and subjective. Climacus therefore devotes the remaining pages of the Postscript to a discussion of subjectivity and what is involved in becoming subjective.

All communication between the divine and the human is what Climacus characterizes as “indirect.” This results from the inwardness that is the truth of the believer’s relationship to Christ. Truth is defined as “the self-activity of appropriation.” This is the process whereby the believer relates himself in inwardness and subjectivity to the paradox of the God-man. There can be no direct communication with God, which is characterized as paganism. Nor there can there be any relationship mediated through nature as the work of God. Climacus sees “only the work” as “directly present.” God is not present within the natural world in such a way that his existence and attributes can be gleaned from nature. God is “illusive” because as truth He “seeks to keep a person from untruth.”³⁸ Climacus describes the relationship of nature and God in these words:

Nature, the totality of creation, is God’s work, and yet God is not there, but within the individual human being there is a possibility (he is spirit according to his possibility) that in inwardness is awakened to a God-relationship, and then it is possible to see God everywhere.³⁹

The sight of nature is not the cause of the establishment of a relationship with the divine. One first is situated within the relationship, by choosing the relationship, and then the relationship affects one’s perception of the external world. To try to move from the contemplation of the external world to the contemplation of the divine is to reverse the relationship which in fact occurs existentially before the contemplation takes place. Climacus, in an aphorism, gives this distinction between the divine and the human:

God does not think, he creates; God does not exist, he is eternal. A human being thinks and exists, and existence separates thinking and being, holds them apart from each other in succession.⁴⁰

There is posited here an absolute disjunction between the modes of being of the human and the divine. Climacus makes the affirmation that “Worship is the maximum for a human being’s relationship with God, and thereby for his likeness to God, since the qualities are absolutely different.”⁴¹ This would preclude crossing over the abyss between God and man by love, into mystical experience and divine union. He addresses this issue a little further on in Postscript:

It is commonly said that love is able to make the two equal. Yes, that is correct if one is speaking about the relationship of two human beings, because essentially they stand on the same level, and the difference is accidental. But since there is an absolute difference between God and man, this direct equality is a presumptuous, giddy thought, but that this is so is no comparative human release from the utmost effort.⁴²

What mystical writers would affirm is a possibility because of the Incarnation, God lowering himself to equality with man, and thereby making it possible for man to be divinized. is a position that Climacus rejects.

In Practice in Christianity, the pseudonymous author Anti-Climacus imagines the individual as receiving an invitation. The invitation takes the form of “Come here, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give

38. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 242–4.

39. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 246.

40. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 332.

41. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 413.

42. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 492.

you rest.”⁴³ The individual may respond to the invitation through the leap into Christianity, or be offended by the speaker. The offense lies in the consideration that the eternal has inserted itself into the temporal, that it has become human. Anti-Climacus rules out the possibility of knowing Christ through history, because “he is the paradox, the object of faith, exists only for faith.”⁴⁴ Nor can his divinity be demonstrated from history. For an individual to claim to be God is the very essence of the offence. It conflicts with human reason, which is supposed to attempt to prove that a man, and a particular man is God, who specifically transcends that which is immanent. God being, in post-modernist parlance, the transcendental signifier. The miracles are something that only hold within the realm of faith. The Resurrection is significant only to believers, it does not, by itself create faith, so it must be not an agent of faith but an object of faith. If one accepts the Resurrection, then one has already made the leap into faith, but the Resurrection cannot be used to demonstrate the reasonableness of faith.⁴⁵

For Anti-Climacus the distance in time between the Christ of history and the person of today is annulled. The invitation does not come through mediators, but is direct, and the person accepts or rejects the invitation.⁴⁶

The Kierkegaardian faith relation stands in sharp contrast to the project of natural theology. The natural theologians sought to move from the things of the world, or from history, to the divine. The proofs sought were the objective truths of logic and inference based on observations of the material world, and of the world as history. From there one is supposed to somehow, assuming that one is not a polite deist or theist, to move into accepting Christianity. The Kierkegaardian response, in the works discussed here, is to move into a subjective relationship with the transcendent. One cannot prove the existence of God, or the divinity of Christ by appealing to nature, or to history. If one believes, then one enters into a subjective relationship with Christ. It is in this relationship that faith has its realm, and it is not the province of either science or history.

The nineteenth century, however, was not an age of faith, and there is very little to show an increase in religious fervour, or an embrace of religious passion.

THE VIA NEGATIVA

Kierkegaard, or Climacus, as noted in discussing *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, says that the gulf between man and God is too absolute for love to bridge it. There is, however, a tradition that love can bridge the gap between the transcendent and the immanent. This is the mystical tradition, and it has several representatives within the 14th century in England, though its greatest representatives, within the modern era, have been Spanish (John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila) and French (Therese of Lisieux). Thomas Merton notes that a friend once remarked that he did not know that there were any English mystics.⁴⁷

Merton, in fact, comments on the abandonment, during the English Reformation, of the mystical tradition, and finds that,

...with the loss of the earthy and humorous naturalness of medieval English piety, has been a slow smothering of the English religious instinct, and its final reduction to a lay and despairing state of tongue-tied agnosticism.⁴⁸

43. Matt. 11:28. Anti-Climacus is not against Climacus, but is higher than, more advanced than Climacus. Kierkegaard is using “anti” in its sense of prior to, rather than in its oppositional meaning.

44. Kierkegaard, *Practice*, 25.

45. Kierkegaard, *Practice*, 26–31.

46. See Kierkegaard, *Practice*, 36–53.

47. Thomas Merton, “The English Mystics,” *Mystics & Zen Masters*, (NY: Dell, 1967) 128.

48. Merton, 130.

Part of our concern here is why England, and the nineteenth century generally, chose the path that led to that “despairing state of agnosticism. There is in some of the English mystics, such as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an emphasis upon “dark contemplation.” This dark contemplation contrasts sharply with the emphasis upon fire and light of someone like Richard Rolle. This is a contrast between the mysticism of apophysis and that of cataphysis, or that of darkness and light.⁴⁹

Frederic Copleston, in his discussion of the Pseudo-Dionysius, describes the differences between the affirmative way and the negative way. The affirmative way begins with universal statements, “God is good,” and then proceeds to “particular titles.” Names such as Goodness, Life, Wisdom and so forth are applied to God “in a transcendental manner.” Their application to creatures derives solely from the fact that the creatures derive from God and participate in those qualities. The example given by Copleston is “None is good save one, that is, God.”⁵⁰ In short, the affirmative way ascribes to God those perfections which it finds in creatures. So it proceeds from the contemplation of some quality in a creature to the contemplation of that quality in God. The theologian then would notice that something has a quality, such as goodness, or beauty, and then attempt to relate that goodness or beauty to those qualities as they exist in God.

As already noted though, this is open to objection on the grounds that it is a projection of our interpretation of phenomena, i.e., a flower as beautiful, a toad as ugly, upon the phenomenon or entity under consideration. A second, and more theological objection, is that God is utterly transcendent so everything that can be said of Him is utterly inadequate. So we proceed by means of negating certain qualities and recognizing that they are not God. The anthropomorphic conceptions of God are stripped away. This is referred to as the via remotionis, but this does not result in a clear view of the nature of God. It is at this point that the mind enters into the “Darkness of Unknowing.” Here the mind becomes “wrapped in that which is wholly intangible and invisible.”⁵¹

John Scotus Eriugena maintained that in the affirmative way “one predicates of God those things ‘which are’ in the sense that the cause is manifested in the effect.”⁵² In the negative way, however, one denies that such predication is possible. God is, accordingly, not Truth, which belongs to the sphere of immanence, but Super-Truth, super-Essence, because the names that come from creatures cannot be applied to the Creator. The affirmative way becomes for him a metaphorical way of speaking so that we posit a similitude between the beauty of the creature and the beauty of God. The only qualities of which we have experience are those that belong to the created order, i.e., the only wisdom we know is human wisdom, so it is clearly impermissible to posit wisdom as an attribute of God. Calling God super-Wisdom, however, avoids this impermissible concept. This seems to make an affirmation, but there is “no content, no idea, corresponding to the word ‘super,’ so it really belongs in the via negativa. We have no idea what the super in super-Wisdom consists of, simply that it indicates something that is beyond and above wisdom.”⁵³

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, continues the tradition of the negative way by pointing out that we assign an object to its genus, for example, tree, and then add the difference by which we know it apart from other things, so that we distinguish a blue spruce from a Douglas fir. God, however, is an entity which cannot be assigned to a genus because “He transcends all genera.”⁵⁴ Positive differences then cannot be assigned to God. We can say that God is not accident, and thus distinguish him from all accidents.⁵⁵ Eventu-

49. Merton, 137, 148.

50. Copleston, *Medieval*, 93. Copleston gives the source from Pseudo-Dionysius as *Divine Names*, 2. 1, and its corresponding Biblical source as Matt. 19:17

51. Copleston, *Medieval*, 94--5.

52. Copleston, *Medieval*, 118, citing the *De Divisione Naturae*, I. 13, of John Scotus Eriugena.

53. Copleston, *Medieval*, 118--20.

54. Copleston, *Medieval*, 348. Copleston cites *Contra Gentiles*, I. 14.

ally we should arrive at some idea which distinguishes God from everything else. This denial is not because God does not have these qualities but because “He infinitely exceeds that perfection in richness.”⁵⁶

Thomas postulates that the qualities we ascribe to God cannot be said to belong to Him either univocally or equivocally, but only analogically. In an analogy the relationship is either between two things by way of their relationship to a third thing, or by way of the relation of one to the other. The quality healthy, for example, is predicated of different things in different ways. An animal, medicine, or a complexion are said to be healthy in three different ways. First, the animal participates in health. Second, the medicine causes a restoration of healthy. Third, the complexion is a sign or indicator of health. The predication of “healthy” to each of these terms is different, but not equivocal because each “bears some real relation to health.” Our predication of the attributes of God and creatures is not in this manner, because there is no third term or entity existing between God and creatures. (Every existing entity must, assuming the existence of God, be either created, hence a creature, or be God Himself.) The relationship must be between God and creature, and we predicate attributes of both “in so far as the creature has a real relation to God.”⁵⁷

The negative tradition was continued by men such as Denis the Carthusian⁵⁸ and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. To Pico della Mirandola God “is above being rather than being.”⁵⁹ For Nicholas of Cusa God is the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the synthesis of all opposites so that He is at once greatest and least, circumference and diameter. He is therefore not knowable by discursive reason. The absence of knowledge of God through discursive reason, this “ignorance” is not to be confused with that which results from apathy or laziness, but rather the result of the limitations of the finite as it confronts the infinite. It is “learned,” or “instructed ignorance,” and it is based on this concept that Nicholas entitles one of his works *De docta ignorantia*.⁶⁰ Even Giordano Bruno is said to have felt that what can be said of God is best said not by way of affirmation, but by the *via negativa*.⁶¹

The greatest name associated with apophatic mysticism, in the West, is that of St. John of the Cross. John is also acknowledged as one of the greatest of Spanish poets, and his prose works are commentaries upon some of his poems. While *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame of Love* are recommended for aspirants entering either secular or clerical Carmelite communities, the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night* are the best known of John's works.⁶² The poem of the *Dark Night*, or *Noche Oscura*, begins as follows:

*En una Noche Oscura
Con ansias en amores inflamada
—j Oh dichosa ventura!
Salí sin notada,
Estando ya mi casa sosegada.*

55. Copleston, *Medieval*, 348. Copleston cites the *Summa Theologica*, Ia, 12, 12. Accident, as used here, refers to qualities which are not part of the essence, or substance, of a thing. In beer, for example, the color of a green beer, such as might be served by some people on St. Patrick's day, is separate from, and apart from, its nature as beer, which is to say its beeriness.

56. Copleston, *Medieval*, 348.

57. Copleston, *Medieval*, 350–1.

58. Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy: Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, vol. 3. (NY: Doubleday, 1953) 200. Hereafter cited as “Copleston, *Renaissance*.”

59. Copleston, *Renaissance*, 213. Copleston cites *De ente et uno*, 4.

60. Copleston, *Renaissance*, 235–6.

61. Copleston, *Renaissance*, 261.

62. A secular Carmelite community is a community of lay men and women associated with the Carmelite order, and enjoying canonical status within that order. They live ordinary lives in the world, but are supposed to adhere to a modified version of the order's rule.

One dark night,
 Fired with love's urgent longings,
 —Ah, the sheer grace!
 I went out unseen,
 My house being now all stilled.⁶³

John explains the nature of the dark night by saying that it is “a privation and purgation of all sensible appetites for the external things of the world, the delights of the flesh, and the gratification of the will” The setting forth takes place in the context of the purgation of the senses, hence the metaphor of the stilled houses. John justifies calling the journey toward divine union a night by asserting three things: “the denial and privation is like a night for all his senses;” it is a night for the intellect because faith is the road to divine union, and “for the intellect faith is also like a dark night;” the goal of the journey is God, “And God is also a dark night to man in this life” (74-5).

The second point, the darkness of faith to the intellect, is similar in both John and Kierkegaard. Reason, which is to say logic and knowledge, cannot bring a person to faith. So both writers start off from the standpoint of belief, but where Kierkegaard ends in philosophy, John ends in love. So that his comment on the second line of the first stanza is:

A love of pleasure, and attachment to it, usually fires the will toward the enjoyment of things that give pleasure. A more intense enkindling of another, better love (love of one's heavenly Bridegroom) is necessary for the vanquishing of the appetites and the denial of this pleasure (105).

It is in John's commentary on the second stanza that he explains the nature of the darkness to the intellect:

*A oscuras, y segura
 Por la secreta escala disfrazada —
 ¡Oh dichosa ventura!
 A oscuras y en celada
 Estando ya mi casa sosegada.*

In darkness, and secure,
 By the secret ladder, disguised,
 —Ah, the sheer grace!
 In darkness and concealment,
 My house being now all stilled.

To John the “secret ladder” is faith. All of the “rungs or articles of faith” are “secret to and hidden from both the senses and the intellect.” So the soul is described as “living in darkness” (107). Taking up from the definition of faith as “a certain and obscure habit of the soul,” John explains the obscurity by saying that it, faith, “brings us to believe divinely revealed truths which transcends every natural light and infinitely exceed all human understanding” (108). Here John doesn't so much anticipate the Kierkegaardian response to the post-Kantian collapse of natural theology, as declare that the project is nonsensical from the outset. The light of faith, in John's view, is brighter than that of intellect and so is eclipsed and darkened by the light of faith. The intellect is limited solely to natural knowledge, though it can be raised to “supernatural act whenever our Lord wishes” (108).

John, as stated earlier, had forecast the failure of natural theology as a means divine union.⁶⁴ John postulates that no creature can be a means to divine union because there is no creature that “bears a proximate like-

63. St. John, 711.

64. See page 6 above.

ness to God and unites with Him" (126). Further, since God is not apprehensible by the senses, they cannot serve as a means to divine union (127).

The intent here is not to give an exhaustive exposition of John's mystical doctrine, but to point out the similarity in the starting point for Kierkegaard and John. Both postulate that reason cannot of itself lead to faith. Both come to this conclusion from a confrontation with the inadequacies of various attempts to reason to a position of faith. Where Kierkegaard sees an enormous gulf, which cannot be bridged, John sees the possibility of divine union through a faith which starting out from the darkness of the intellect seeks its fulfillment in the transcendent.

DARWIN AND THE REMOVAL OF DESIGN

The ordinary man, even the ordinary intellectual, does not respond to the problem posed by the apparent split between science and faith by Kierkegaardian leaps of faith or Sanjuanist mysticism. Too much time is occupied by the problem of earning a living, or of coping with children and spouses, in short with everyday life, for the problem to receive much more consideration than a possibly obligatory hour in church on Sunday. Even here any opinion is likely to be the opinions passed on from minister or priest.

Darwin's contribution, unintentional though it may have been, to the problem of reconciling belief and science is in the perception that his work removes and eliminates the possibility of a designing God, one who, in his providence, watches over every sparrow and microbe and virus. Darwin draws a parallel between the way in which varieties, or breeds, such as dachshunds, Saint Bernards, beagles, and others are produced by human manipulation, and the way in which varieties and species are produced naturally. The difference, however, is that the breeder of dogs produces the variations intentionally, in conformity with an ideal design, while natural selection produces such results without conscious intention. Darwin states this more or less explicitly as follows:

Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should occur in the course of many successive generations? If such do occur, can we doubt, (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and procreating their kind? (XLIX, 40)

Darwin's assertion rests on the belief that favorable variations are preserved, and unfavorable variations contribute to destruction. Those variations that are "neither useful nor injurious" are not affected by natural selection, and would be left either in a state of flux, or "would ultimately become fixed, owing to the nature of the organisms and the nature of the conditions" (XLIX, 40). Darwin is at pains to deny that Natural Selection induces variability. The action of natural selection is both preservative, towards those variations that confer an advantage, and eliminative, towards those variations that lead to injury or death. It is the accumulation of variation that induces the distinctions between species. The difference between human and natural selection is neatly encapsulated, "Man selects only for his own good: Nature only for that of the being which she tends" (XLIX, 41).

What in Paley's hands might have been turned to as proof of the providence of a Divine and beneficent God, is, in Darwin's hands, an instance of the preservative power of Natural Selection.

When we see leaf-eating insects green, and bark-feeders mottled-grey; the alpine ptarmigan white in winter, the red grouse the colour of heather, we must believe that these tints are of service to these birds and insects in preserving them from danger (XLIX, 42).

This is true enough. The question though is whether the preservative effect comes about as the result of an intelligent design that is peculiar to each species, i.e., providential design, or whether it comes about because leaf-eaters that are not green and bark-feeders that are not mottled grey get eaten before they can reproduce. Paley's answer was to assert the providential nature of each accommodation. Darwin's answer was to posit the variation of species through the "going away," or death, of the unfit members of the species.

Darwin does not see his theory as hindering anyone's religious beliefs:

I see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one. It is satisfactory, as showing how transient such impressions are, to remember that the greatest discovery ever made by man, namely, the law of the attraction of gravity, was also attacked by Leibnitz, 'as subversive of natural, and inferentially of revealed, religion.' A celebrated author and divine has written to me that 'he had gradually learnt to see that it is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws' (XLIX, 239).

The theory of evolution, or more precisely the doctrine of natural selection, is thus linked with gravity. Both are implicitly assumed to be true, and an instance of religious opposition to the latter doctrine, gravity, is cited. The mistaken notion of Leibnitz that gravity in some way impugns both natural and revealed religion is thus used to ridicule the idea that the doctrine of natural selection in some way impeaches either natural or revealed religion or both. The anonymous citation of the "celebrated author and divine," however, reasserts the relevance of the tradition of natural theology by asserting that it is the result of laws that are laid down by God, or that it can be taken as the result of such laws that were laid down at the beginning of time.

The effect, however, is still the same. God is removed from the province of intimate interaction with His creatures. This has the result of making Him less immanent. It does not, however, compensate by making Him more transcendent. He is still in the position of the clock-maker who starts up things, but rather than having to interfere periodically, as Newton thought, He is simply there in the background with nothing much to do.

The overall effect of evolution, and of the doctrine of natural selection was to remove Mind, the transcendent, designing, purposive Mind of God from the universe. This despite Darwin's assertions to the contrary, such as:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved (XLIX, 243).

Darwin harkens back to the first chapter of Genesis with his "breathed by the Creator," but his Creator is immediately relegated to the background with the invocation of "the fixed law of gravity." The fixity of gravity is implicitly contrasted with continuing processes, those things which have a beginning, and hence are subject to change in time. The change is emphasized by the shift in tense from "have been" to "are being" which asserts the continuity of change. The continuing flux of life is thus a permanent condition, much like gravity, and all that was necessary was for the Creator to put a few laws into motion, and then rest.

The steps from believing in a God who creates eternal and unvarying laws in a beginning moment of creation to believing in only the eternal and unvarying laws themselves, while either relegating belief in a Creator to the background, maintaining a position of agnosticism, or asserting an outright denial, are small steps. To some Darwinism would come as a supreme liberation. Some, such as Nietzsche, would see it as a tragedy, and criticize its defenders for not realizing that it did, in fact, displace God from the universe, leaving Him, in

effect, dead. Some, like Samuel Butler and George Bernard Shaw would not see this death as a metaphysical tragedy, but would go on, nonetheless, to formulate their own personal and idiosyncratic variants of Lamarckian doctrine. Shaw, in fact, goes on to term his evolutionary beliefs a new religion.

The effect of the relegation of God to a position of permanent rest, a relegation that starts in the project of the natural theologians, can still be seen in the recurrent debates over evolution in the schools, and in the heated debates over “young earth” and “old earth” beliefs that continue in a variety of print and electronic media. From here on, we will be concerned with how this idea worked out, and how several major figures reacted to the what they felt was the result of the Darwinian removal of mind from the universe.

RELIGIOUS REACTION TO DARWINISM

THE ANTI-DARWINIAN PREACHERS, HODGE ET AL.

THE PRO-DARWINIANS, KINGSLEY ET AL.

THE TWO BOOKS OF NATURE AND THEOLOGY

THE EMOTIONAL INADEQUACY OF NATURAL SELECTION