

THE DEFENSE OF THEISM IN SCHUBERT OGDEN AND HANS KÜNG

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SCHUBERT OGDEN AND HANS KÜNG

By  
RODNEY NEIL BOYD, B.Sc., B.A.

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AUTHOR: Rodney Neil Boyd, B.Sc. (Memorial University)

B.A. (Memorial University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor John C. Robertson

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine the responses given by Hans K ng and Schubert Ogden to the "problem of God", or the question of whether there is an objectively existing divine reality. K ng and Ogden employ the "transcendental method" in their defenses of theism in as much as they argue that belief in God is the condition for rationally maintaining the attitude of trust or confidence. Belief in God is realized in the context of the conviction, opposing nihilism, that life is worthwhile and opens up possibilities for fruitful existence (K ng) or that what one does really matters (Ogden). Reflective faith in God has the function of articulating this more basic faith, expressing in concrete terms the rational ground or basis for trust, and providing reassurance.

Despite their similarities, I found that there exist some significant differences between the positions of K ng and Ogden. In particular, it seems to me that K ng develops the idea of trust in a more positive way than does Ogden, in that he speaks of trust as a conscious and reflective reaction to the world. Consequently K ng presents a deeper understanding of faith in God by describing it in terms of answering the question about the uncertainty of reality--"Why is there anything at all and not nothing?".

A number of critical questions may be put to K ng and Ogden. I will argue that they have failed to provide an adequate connection between the idea of a "ground or basis for trust" and "God", an identification on which their defenses of theism depend. I conclude that the phenomenon of "trust"

or "confidence" would more rationally be given a secular understanding, and that Kūng and Ogden indirectly help to make the case for atheism rather than theism.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This thesis is my attempt to approach the question of God through a discussion, comparison, and critique of the ideas of two representatives of a particular way of thinking about this question. Hans Küng and Schubert Ogden employ what is known as the 'transcendental method' in their defenses of theism. This method had as its precursors the insights of Anselm of Canterbury in the Proslogion and Immanuel Kant in the Critique of Practical Reason. Anselm's idea was that belief in God (as an hypothesis yet to be proved) was logically contained in an innate or a priori idea, the idea of a greatest conceivable being. Kant argued that God is a practically necessary adjunct to the human moral sense. In each case, God is understood as a presupposition of an already-held idea or attitude, which, when fully articulated, reveals God as its precondition. God is established, not through direct argumentation based on 'his' attributes, but through a demonstration of how God necessarily completes human ways of being in the world. In the case of Anselm, God is necessary if we are to uphold logic, or, indeed, thinking at all; in the case of Kant, if the moral sense is to agree with the longing for justice and happiness.

The transcendental argument has it that God is the condition for some aspect of human being-in-the-world, for example, thinking, freedom, trust, or morality. Proponents of this method present theism or belief in God as not so much a matter of possessing certain convictions about a divine being, or even a way of acting or living in the world, but as rather a way



of being, which is to say, reflecting, acting, and judging or evaluating. In a sense, belief in God is shown in assigning value to things.

This way of attempting to defend theism contrasts with the rationalistic option of trying to uphold the existence of God as an empirical-scientific proposition, or the fideistic defense of God as revealed through Scripture and confirmed through faith itself. As Wolfhart Pannenberg said in his essay Anthropology and the Question of God, modern philosophical theology sees no sure way of arguing from nature to God, consequently it reasons now upon an understanding of man.[1]

Specifically, in the case of Ogden and Klüng, God is understood as the condition for a particular attitude toward the world and one's life, an attitude called "fundamental trust" by Klüng, and 'basic confidence' by Ogden, referring to a conviction opposing nihilism and contending that the world constitutes a unity rather than chaos, that what one does really matters, that there is cause for hope rather than despair.[2] Since this attitude of trust is one which is in no sense theoretically provable, but which one may reasonably continue in, it is suggested by Klüng and Ogden that this basic trust indicates a further trust or faith in a objectively existing ground for trust. This they call God. Both see God as an objectification of the radical rationality of trust--if we believe that trust is ultimately not groundless and irrational, then we must believe in a ground for trust.

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[1] Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom (R.A. Wilson, tr.), Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1973, p.82.

[2] As far as I know, neither Ogden nor Klüng apply the name 'transcendental method' to their approach. Nevertheless, they do employ this type of argument by arguing that God is the condition for confidence or trust.

Even though they wrote several years apart, each writes from the presupposition that it is principally on account of the challenge of natural science that theism is in a bad way. Consequently they come out in favor of a theory of knowledge that is not dependent on the scientific paradigm. K ng espouses a position of rationality, which demands that assertions at least be supported by good reasons (so adjudged in the light of generally reasonable standards) and not contain absurdities. Rationalism, on the other hand, is the ideologizing of the scientific method and demands empirical falsifiability. Paralleling these distinctions, Ogden bases his ideas on a position of secularity, or the recognition of the irreducible worth of the secular, over against secularism, the conviction that the secular is all and in no way points beyond itself, a position which he sees as implying scientism. Despite these cautions against over-reliance on science, both wish to make clear that the modern decision for science has not been a wrong turn or a disaster for religion.

In this thesis I will first explicate the positions of K ng and Ogden, then provide a comparison of their ideas, and finally subject their positions to a critical analysis. Chapter 2 will deal with K ng's defense of theism as found in his book Does God Exist? (1980). K ng begins with an epistemological discussion, using Pascal and Descartes as points of departure for discussing the possibility of acquiring knowledge of God. After a discussion of the classical atheistic thinkers (not reviewed here), K ng moves on to Friedrich Nietzsche, whose philosophy of nihilism provides the counter-position to his own. I then outline K ng's statement on fundamental trust, and how he sees this trust as pointing toward God. In

Chapter 3 I provide an explication of Ogden's treatment of the question of God, especially as contained in his collection of essays The Reality of God (1966). Ogden describes two types of faith, reflective and existential, and argues that the latter type is a possession of all human beings, as evidenced by their 'basic confidence' in reality. Ogden argues that the traditional positivistic criticisms of theology ultimately fail, that there is a distinctively religious way of knowing, and that God can be made intelligible in such a way that this idea does not succumb to scientific criticism. Chapter 4 contains a comparison of the positions of the two theologians, in which a number of important differences are pointed out, particularly on the questions of the nature of trust and the relationship of trust to faith in God. In the fifth and concluding chapter of this thesis I evaluate the arguments in favor of theism given by Ogden and Küng, from a viewpoint which one might say lies outside theology itself. Here it is appropriate to call into question the 'transcendental method' to ask whether, in fact, it truly leads to a knowledge of an objectively existing divine reality.

## CHAPTER 2

### Hans K ng: Fundamental trust and faith in God

My exposition of K ng's arguments will organize his presentation into three parts. In doing so, I will cover some portions of the book Does God Exist? only briefly, if at all. While these sections are in themselves valuable, being necessary for the balance and comprehensiveness of K ng's treatment of the problem of God, a discussion of them is not essential to the explication of K ng's defence of belief in God.

Does God Exist? strikingly displays K ng's erudition and familiarity with a huge body of writing in Western (and some Eastern) theology, philosophy, and science. This poses special problems for the investigator. Throughout this thesis little emphasis is put on independent consideration of K ng's sources. The primary concern is, rather, with the use and importance to K ng of various writings, not the accuracy of his reading. It is not to K ng's discredit that he employed as points of focus certain classical writings which he felt highlighted the pertinent issues with great clarity.

K ng does not attempt to write a history of unbelief; more important than knowing the genesis and progress of atheism, one must recognize it as a crucial fact of one's own time. Is it then of no importance to K ng how we came to be unbelievers? By no means; but his argument does not fail if his reading of Pascal, Nietzsche, or Descartes is shown to be somewhat inaccurate.

The first topic for discussion will be K ng's reflections on the theory of knowledge; these set the stage for his later consideration of the problem of God. Here K ng attempts to show that the problem of God is one worthy of investigation for profound existential reasons. He also contends that the modern person, informed by natural science, is still in a position to ask the most important question about God. I then consider K ng's posing of the two alternatives with respect to this question. The first of these is atheism following mistrust, exemplified in the nihilism of Friedrich Nietzsche. Its opposite is belief in God, in the context of fundamental trust.

### 2.1. The Problem of God and Theories of Knowledge

K ng's book is an exploration of the circumstances or conditions that habituate one to answer the question about God. The question today is 'How can faith in God be justified in light of modern science, and of philosophy which has been influenced by that science?'. After all, God's existence has never been proved by theoretical reason, nor established by way of empirical evidence. It would seem that belief in God is the result of stubbornness, immaturity, credulity, and weakness. To be sure, there are still those who profess belief in the Christian God, but they seem to be in conflict with the spirit of their time. In some cases, belief in God may persist, but it is no longer a religious belief, which is to say, belief in a 'higher being' is often of little importance to how one lives one's life or views the world. God and religion no longer pervade culture; God has nothing to do with our science or most other academic activities. K ng sees atheism to be, to a large extent, the result of the Church's failure to attune itself to

the scientific age.[1] He considers the Church's refusal to be partner to natural science since the time of Galileo to have been one of the greatest disasters in the history of Christianity. As a result there arose an opposition between the Church and the scientific community, and a perception of the incompatibility of theological reason and scientific reason. Of course, there was as well genuine scientific progress that could, in certain areas, legitimately call for dispensing with the "hypothesis of God"; as Bonhoeffer said, the world came of age.

The chasm between science and religion did not open exclusively as a result of scientific advances, however. Today, for example, it is no longer necessary for the Church to oppose the heliocentric world-view of Galileo, or even Darwin's evolutionary theory; faith can live very well with these views. The real division occurred when science absolutized its own method and way of knowing as the only mode of knowing.[2] This attitude had its most overt manifestation in the twentieth-century movement of logical positivism, which had it that only analytic or empirical synthetic propositions are meaningful. K ng terms this belief a form of "ideological rationalism".[3] As a philosophical movement, logical positivism has been superseded, but its prejudices linger on in popular, professional, and academic forms, and as such, contends K ng, constitutes the greatest obstacle to the realization of faith.

Quite early in the book Does God Exist? K ng recognizes and approves the essentially scientific nature of the twentieth-century Weltanschauung.

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[1] Hans K ng, Does God Exist? (E. Quinn, tr.), Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1980, p.9.

[2] K ng, pp.123-125.

[3] K ng, p.124.

The development which K ng does not support is the change from being habitually scientific to being ideologically scientific. We not only recognize the enormous potential of science for answering questions about the universe, but now also tend to regard the only answerable questions to be scientific questions. K ng proposes, in response, not that our world-view should become essentially 'religious' or theological, but that no method, no way of asking and answering questions, should be absolutized. He calls quite clearly also for a collaboration of Church and science. Obviously the Church cannot afford to have science as its adversary: science will continue to succeed in its explanations of reality, and if the Church opposes itself to the way of science then surely it will quickly be downgraded to the level of superstition. The reconciliation that K ng suggests is no mere tactical move, however; it is not a suggestion for an unholy alliance of ecclesiastical and scientific establishments for the sake of the survival of the Church as an institution. Rather, the nature and methods of each institution should dictate that the two not be in conflict.[4]

Theology would have to admit rational procedure as a legitimate tool of theological inquiry, i.e., theological conclusions could not contradict those of science. But just as theology has to admit the foundational nature of the scientific world-view, science must admit the claims of theology to legitimacy. These entail its claim to deal competently with its own subject matter, which involves maintaining that other modes of knowing than scientific knowing are equally valid.

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[4] K ng, pp. 119-125.

It is clear that the question about God must be answered in a way that accounts both for modern developments in the theory of knowledge and popular modern views on knowing. Today that requirement means accepting that the thought-world of the West is influenced most profoundly by natural science and scientific methods of verification. Sensitivity to this world-view also involves an awareness not only of attitudes on knowing, but also of attitudes toward the data or subject-matter itself, insofar as these two types of attitude can be distinguished.

Küng presents the question of God primarily as an epistemological question, and as an issue existing at the heart of our personal understanding of the world. Küng attempts to make belief in God reasonable and intelligible to the person of today. Doing so obliges him to present the case for God in such a way that belief in God appears as necessary to one holding a typically modern view of things.

Through his consideration of Descartes, Küng attempts to find one of the focal points for the discussion about the question of knowing, particularly as it relates to the question of God. To Küng, Descartes exemplifies the tendency to demand rational certainty before accepting a belief, which entails the reduction of consciousness to rational thinking.[5] The ideal most honoured by Descartes is that of the mathematician. This ideal is different from that of the natural scientist who at least accepts the perceived world as real. The mathematician is obliged to found knowledge upon himself and on thinking itself, i.e., on what he knows about himself as thinking subject, and the relations between ideas.

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[5] Küng, p.39.



The product of this approach to knowing can be observed in the nature of mathematics today; mathematicians possess certainty, but relative certainty only--there is not even the certainty about the relationship between universally accepted axioms and their consequences. The axioms themselves are now subject to dispute. [6] There may, then, be some similarity between the intellectual attitude appropriate to doing mathematics and that appropriate to faith. It does take some courage, after all, some kind of intellectual leap, to say 'if--then', to base one's actions upon a presupposition which is justifiable but never rationally provable.

Despite this parallel, the method of Descartes yields serious difficulties when carried over into the existential realm. As K ng notes, this method, like any form of reductionism, takes no account of the other cognitive faculties possessed by human beings. K ng lists "willing and feeling, imagination and temperament, emotions and passions". [7] What K ng is arguing for is an extension of our conception of 'knowing'. Is it not 'ideological rationalism' to assert that the conclusions of these other mental activities cannot be regarded as knowledge? For example, David Hume contended that sentiment, not reason, was the source of moral knowledge. [8] Reliance on reason clearly removes any possibility of trust, (an idea which, as we shall see, becomes so important later in K ng's presentation).

The validity of reason within its own realm is not being disputed here. What is being questioned is the efficacy of reason--

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[6] K ng, p.32.

[7] K ng, p.39.

[8] Ethel M. Albert, et al., (eds.), Great Traditions in Ethics, (4th ed.), New York, Van Nostrand, 1980, pp.211-212.

dialectics, induction, and deduction--as a direct avenue to truth. Dispassionate reflection will clear up much confused and prejudiced thinking but it is not a guarantor of truth. This is a question which must be faced not only in situations where absolute certainty is called for. Even in everyday discourse there exists a tension between inference and imagination, system and intuition. Philosophical discourse is not always a matter of systematic proof or disproof--Nietzsche said, "What have I to do with refutations?" [9] It is envisioned that each cognitive faculty will act as a corrective in regard to the excesses of the others. [10]

With regard to the theory of knowledge, K ng is rather more favorable towards Descartes's contemporary and fellow Frenchman, Blaise Pascal. K ng believes that Pascal has transcended the question of the insecurity of knowledge and was led to consider the more important matter of the insecurity of existence. He compares Pascal to Kierkegaard, who he says understood radical doubt as radical despair at the situation of the individual. [11] Rather than considering human beings exclusively as thinking beings, he sees every facet of the person as involved in every act and decision. This way of despair might also be the way out of despair, if the method of Descartes has been unsuccessful in establishing security.

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[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, Modern Library, New York, 1968. (W. Kaufmann, tr.), p. 454.

[10] The case for a 'counter-inductive' way of doing things in the realm of science is cogently argued for by Paul Feyerabend in Against Method. He suggests that scientific progress is impossible without the presence in the scientific thought-world of theories contrary to the prevailing view. These provide otherwise unattainable perspectives for testing the accepted theory. He goes so far as to contend that myth, history, and magic are capable of providing suitable counter-approaches to scientific 'fact'.

[11] K ng, p. 52.

Reason, according to Pascal, is not the source of basic principles. These are perceived 'with the heart, in intuitive immediacy'. [12] Pascal was quite aware of the interplay of reason and 'nature', and sensitive to the epistemic polarities associated with each: dogmatism, a consequence of nature's desire to believe rather than not believe, and skepticism, which regards no proposition as valid without compelling reasons for accepting it. It is not that nature or reason acts as the generator of propositions, but each is an active faculty which evaluates them.

Pascal finds reason a poor tool for discovering 'metaphysical' truth. He thought that people would rather be convinced by their imaginations than their minds, and noted that the mind is so easily deceived by appearance. [13] Arguments for God are incomplete and lose their force once the passion to grant them disappears. [14] The alternative to reason leading to skepticism seems to be dogmatism, and this too cannot be maintained for long in practice, on account of the attacks of reason.

According to Pascal, the middle way between reason and dogmatism is the decision for faith, made with the heart. This decision is a decision of the 'whole person', which is to say, not mind, desire, feeling, or imagination alone, or any one of the other mental faculties, but rather the totality of these at once. The situation that this whole confronts, not a priori (because it has been presented to one), but existentially (because one finds oneself in the midst of it) is what Pascal calls the recognition of the

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[12] Küng, p. 50.

[13] Blaise Pascal, Pensées (A.J. Krailsheimer, tr.), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1966, 44, (pp. 38-42).

[14] Küng, p. 62.

'greatness and wretchedness of man'.[15] For Pascal this has a number of implications. It means the recognition of man's insignificance with respect to the universe, or macrocosm, and his greatness when compared to the microcosm, the microorganisms and atoms, a chain of being which finally ends in nothing. Historically we came to this recognition through the strength of our science; today we recognize our greatness and wretchedness through the power of our technology, at once witness to our tremendous potential for innovation and destruction.[16] Pascal was also aware of the split between a person's public and private existences, sometimes seeing the value in outwardly base people, but at other times seeing the insecurity of those who appear assured, and the fear of being alone in those who surround and divert themselves with the affairs of the world. The greatest gap of all is between life, which, no matter how wretched, one has the natural inclination to cling to, and death, the 'bloody last act'.[17] Expressed in terms of our ability to know, our obvious wretchedness, existential and epistemological, is balanced by our greatness in knowing, at least, that we are wretched.[18]

Pascal's response to these dilemmas between wretchedness and greatness, and skepticism and dogmatism, is faith in God shown to us through Jesus Christ.[19] This is not an irrational faith, but one which can be made reasonable. Pascal proceeds mathematically at first, through his famous wager, to show the reasonableness of believing in God, while asserting the

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[15] Klügel, p. 52.

[16] T.S. Eliot wrote: "There will be time to murder and create". (The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1917)).

[17] Klügel, p. 55.

[18] Klügel, p. 55.

[19] Klügel, p. 62.

final impotence of reason in deciding matters of faith or unfaith.

The importance of these considerations for K ng is that they indicate that we cannot ignore the question of God today, despite our scientific awareness, because we are still faced with an awareness of our 'greatness and wretchedness'. Reason cannot show us God, nor can it take God away. Even if God's existence is not a scientific problem, it is an existential problem as real today as in the seventeenth-century France of Descartes and Pascal. Bonhoeffer may have been correct in asserting that the world come of age has no more need to call upon the hypothesis of God, but that maturity has extended only to some scientific realm. Modern humanity is still in its infancy, but out of pride in its science imagines itself in adulthood. Clearly we cannot restrict ourselves to the scientific world-view. Science has not solved every mystery, technology has not eliminated suffering, and psychiatry has not made mankind content; nor is it obvious that progress in these fields will eventually bring about the desired goals.

Whatever we may think of Pascal's solution to the dilemmas of his and our existence, the considerations brought out by K ng serve to indicate the necessity and possibility of rational inquiry into the question of God. For his part, K ng finds Pascal excessively anti-rational, too willing to re-effect the break between theology and philosophy, between Church and science.[20] This amounts to a denial of what Descartes (and K ng) recognize as humanity's God-given reason, as well as entailing, over against rationalism, an equally absolutist orthodoxy of the heart. K ng also feels

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[20] K ng, pp. 80-83.

that this unphilosophical stance limits our consideration of God to images of 'naive anthropomorphism', since the God of philosophy is henceforth to be banished.[21] Küng's treatment of Descartes and Pascal, while clearly more favorable toward the latter, shows us that he is attempting to steer a middle way between skepticism on the one hand, and dogmatism on the other. Later in the book he will similarly attempt to find the middle position between post-Vatican I Catholicism and Protestant neo-Orthodoxy.

## 2.2. Küng and nihilism

Küng provides accounts of the ideas of several of the classical atheistic thinkers--Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud, in particular--but in each case sees their arguments as, in the last resort, unable to inspire conviction. His reaction to them is not especially combative; he prefers, rather, to state that even if these thinkers's arguments count against the plausibility of faith, they do not do so conclusively. In the case of Freud, for example, Küng concludes that the existence of psychological factors affecting faith neither denies nor confirms the existence of God.[22]

For Küng these representatives of anti-religious positions do not provide the most effective opposition to belief in God. The real opponent and antithesis to faith is not psychoanalysis, anthropology, or physics, but the philosophy of nihilism, which has it that reality is fundamentally incoherent and not amenable to systematic understanding.

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[21] Küng, p.87.

[22] Küng, pp.330-331.

We will see later that effectively, K ng is attempting to create a situation analogous to the pre-scientific faith of those who lived before Copernicus, Newton, and Darwin. Bonhoeffer's analysis in Letters and Papers From Prison shows us that God had been used in the past to supplement our explanations of nature when science failed. Today we would regard this as the introduction of the idea of God where 'God' really had no business being, namely as a stopgap solution to the unsolved mysteries of the cosmos. Need we understand this situation in such a pejorative manner? It might be fairer to describe it as faith in God ensuing from an insufficiency in man's understanding of reality. Now we need no longer have recourse to God to explain the world, spatially or temporally. However, K ng will argue that to have a coherent account of our understanding of ourselves and others, the 'working hypothesis' of God is required. Given this approach to the question of God, the way of thinking which is most dangerous to belief in God is one which denies the coherence of reality.

K ng follows Nietzsche in defining nihilism as "the conviction of the nullity, of the internal contradiction, futility and worthlessness of reality".[23] In more practical terms, nihilism may be characterized first of all as the denial of the possibility of any authority, external to the person, that might establish values. Second, it means the impossibility of explanation, arriving at the truth, but rather the possibility only of interpretation, a subjective construct applied to the phenomena[24]--consequently the conviction that truth does not exist. This

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[23] K ng, p. 388.

[24] K ng, p. 383.

means denying three characteristics of events: identity, meaning, and value, the transcendentals of neo-scholasticism, which asserted the possibility of immediate knowledge of objective reality. [25] To say that reality has no identity is to deny that there is a unity to events, in effect, denying the possibility of valid generalization. To say that there is no meaning in reality is to deny that any statement about the nature of reality can be made; to say that there is no value in reality is to deny that events have goals or show accomplishment. [26] All judgments and evaluations about reality are bound, then, to be superficial and relative.

Certainly, an aspect of nihilism is psychological despair at the chaos of reality. This is exemplified in Schopenhauer, whose post-Kantian dilemma consisted in the need to provide a coherent and comprehensive account of a world known only as phenomena and appearance. [27] Alongside Schopenhauer's consciousness of suffering is his disrespect for reason. Contra Hegel, Schopenhauer thought that the essence of the world was not reason but will. [28]

Nihilism's most celebrated exponent, Friedrich Nietzsche, saw himself more as the prophet than the propagator of nihilism--his nihilistic pronouncements were more intended as predictions and descriptions than as exhortations. Nietzsche saw the coming of nihilism primarily in terms of the decay of religion. This belief is recorded most succinctly in his famous parable of the Madman. [29] Kūng respects Nietzsche for taking

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[25] Kūng, pp. 417-418

[26] Kūng, p. 421.

[27] Kūng, p. 358.

[28] Kūng, p. 358.

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Aphorism 125.



religion seriously even though he felt that belief in God was impossible. Nietzsche saw that the 'death of God' was not an event for joy but fear, even if some initial liberation was gained.[30] Nietzsche, like K ng, insisted that atheism is a serious matter. An untroubling atheism is to be despised, just as a believer might devalue an unarticulated faith which did not pervade one's understanding of the world.

What did nihilism mean to Nietzsche? K ng makes two observations: first, that belief in God had become impossible--this Nietzsche took as a given after losing his own boyhood faith.[31] Further, nihilism entailed the conviction that, the death of God being a fact, life could not continue as before. Nietzsche despised D.F. Strauss for wanting to dispense with Christianity but persist in a religion of optimistic piety centered on the universe.[32] The only possible guarantor of values for Nietzsche is God, and he does not exist. Nietzsche understood values as human inventions, not derivable from nature, which were then hypostatized, conferred objective or substantial existence, a practice he observed particularly in Platonism and Christianity. Nietzsche wants to get rid of the cogito, a priori synthetic judgments, substance, antithesis, even truth itself. He suspected that the 'distinctions of the philosophers' were 'provisional perspectives' of men guided not by logic but instinct and self-interest.[33] Morality, then, came under attack as unsubstantial and contrary to life.

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[30] K ng, p.370.

[31] K ng, p.404.

[32] K ng, pp.349-350.

[33] K ng, p.383.

### 2.3. Fundamental trust and faith in God

Klüng's idea of fundamental trust depends first of all on a particular attitude toward reality: non-rationalistic, intuitive, pragmatic, and strongly subjective. He refuses to give rigorous descriptions of 'self' and 'reality'. He says that reality consists primarily in "the world and all that constitutes the world in space and time...particularly human beings...above all myself". [34] On the question of the essential human nature, Klüng would not respond by denying that such a thing exists, but he is wary of one-sided or reductionistic answers. Klüng prefers a pluralistic conception--that will and reason are inseparable[35]--and he stresses the subjective component of knowing. Knowing is regarded as a function of one's entire being--"interests, instincts, emotions, passions, attitudes"-- and is done "in light of one's entire existence". This leads to a particular attitude towards truth; in its concrete form, as it is 'for me', it is to a large extent something made by the self out of "universal truth".[36] Klüng is not uncomfortable in a world of phenomena; for him, reality is both something made and something found, and hence it is necessary for one to react to the world. Klüng thinks of the subject's reaction to the world less as confrontation than as symbiosis.[37]

Klüng agrees that "man is condemned to be free"; he believes that one is obliged to make a 'fundamental decision' with regard to the 'uncertain reality' with which one finds oneself already in relationship. This is

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[34] Klüng, pp. 429-430.

[35] Klüng, p. 428.

[36] Klüng, p. 429.

[37] Klüng, p. 431.

so,he says,despite even some environmental and genetic determinism. Again,Kūng does not have a philosophically explicit position on human freedom. He states outright that freedom can only be perceived inwardly,and he is content to regard human beings as incapable of being known completely. He wishes to remain in the realm of practical reason,the realm of intuitive self-knowledge,of cognition in the context of action.

What is the decision, explicit or implicit, that must be made with respect to reality? Kūng describes it as the choice between being and non-being. This may be expressed differently as the choice between coherence and incoherence. Non-being is not the same as non-existence. The existence of reality cannot be denied, but to say the the world, people, and myself are 'non-being' is say that they have no nature, value, or identity. It is to say that reality is fundamentally disjointed,possessing no pattern, order, significance, or worth. Such a world consists of only discrete monadic entities,admitting at the same time neither discrimination nor non-discrimination.

The decision in favor of being,the saying of Yes to reality,is called 'fundamental trust' by Kūng; its opposite, 'fundamental mistrust'. Fundamental trust is also referred to as as 'primordial trust', 'trust in life', 'trust in being', and 'trust in reason'.

Clearly exhorting us 'fundamentally' to trust,Kūng contends that not to trust entails willful disregard for what is around one--'closing one's eyes to reality'. This attitude is one which cannot be 'consistently maintained in practice'; even the nihilist,the No-sayer, must at some points abandon mistrust,laying aside suspicion in order to exist at all in

the world. K ng agrees with Pascal's objection against the skeptics in arguing that it is against human nature to say No to reality, even though one is completely free to do so. The option of saying No is a repugnant one for K ng because it discloses only nullity in existence. Through mistrust the elements of reality which become most apparent are "chaos, absurdity, illusion" and on the personal level, "death, fate, sin, failure". [38] In K ng's words, "Reality remains closed against fundamental mistrust." On the positive side, K ng contends that human beings are fundamentally inclined to trust. Unlike mistrust, trust can consistently be applied in practice; it is not contradicted by lapses of uncertainty. It is through trust that the positive, non-empty aspects of reality become open for us.

Since K ng describes the fundamentally positive attitude or decision toward reality as 'trust', it is clear that something other than either a priori knowledge or empirical verification lies at the basis of this decision. How, then, is one's trust to be justified? K ng's thesis is that such a trust "manifests its essential reasonableness in its realization". [39] Otherwise put, fundamental trust possesses intrinsic rather than external, subjective rather than objective, rationality. Living in trust means taking what one is initially given--reality, reason, existence, and freedom--and through trust receiving these back in an enhanced form. [40] This is why K ng calls trust both a gift and a task.

The basis for trust, then, is certain: it consists in those things which we possess already from the beginning of our lives. It remains for

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[38] K ng, p. 444.

[39] K ng, p. 447.

[40] K ng, pp. 451-452.

the individual to take the not-blind leap or risk of trust. Küng calls trust 'superrational', that is, based on reality and hence rationally justifiable, but nevertheless involving a risk. Trust can be distinguished from what Pascal called dogmatism in that it cannot be demanded, only inspired. [41]

Küng does not present the idea of trust as a strict alternative to the scientific or rationalistic approach to knowing. This is true in three important ways, and is consistent with his desire for dialogue, not combat, with the natural sciences. First, trust is to be employed alongside logic and the other cognitive faculties to produce an integrated, wholistic, non-reductionist view of the world. Second, the relationship between science and fundamental trust is even more intimate, as Küng concludes that trust actually lies at the basis of science. He argues that methodological rules are matters of choice and convention. It is a well-noted objection to the absolutist claims of various sciences that a method is not self-justifying by its own criteria of meaningfulness. For example, the verification principle of logical positivism has been attacked as itself neither analytic nor empirical.[42] Hence the adoption of a method or rule is a matter of trust in its validity or usefulness. Küng cites W. Stegmüller who suggests that some prior belief or convention must lie at the basis of all science and knowledge.[43] Thirdly, an important conviction lying behind Küng's optimism as to the continued well-being of faith and religion pertains explicitly to the proliferation of science and scientific work.

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[41] Küng, p. 528.

[42] William Blackstone, The Problem of Religious Knowledge, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1963, pp. 13-15.

[43] Küng, p. 464.

Küng feels that modern confidence in the coherence of nature, brought about by the success of natural science, actually makes the scientific age a fertile ground for trust in reality.

Küng argues for the necessity of trust not only in scientific reasoning but also in ethical decision-making. Küng does not believe that ethical reasoning can any more be based on 'obvious, immutable standards', leading to 'ready-made solutions' based on the Bible or natural law. Knowledge of ethics and the good cannot be had a priori and hence must be based on reality known through trust. Küng defines the form of the good functionally as 'that which helps man become truly human at all levels'.<sup>[44]</sup> Here Küng claims that this attitude toward morality is actually a more responsible attitude as it demands a greater degree of personal effort toward the achievement of ethical knowledge.

The question which naturally arises with respect to this 'fundamental trust' is that concerning its relationship to faith. The two terms, 'trust' and 'faith', mean, after all, nearly the same thing in common discourse. The relationships that Küng considers possible between faith and trust are: faith and trust being one; trust ensuing from faith; trust existing without faith; and faith existing without trust. The last of these cases describes the 'superficial believer' and the third pertains to some atheists. An implication of Küng's conception of trust is that an atheist can lead a fully moral life and avoid nihilism. We will see, though, that Küng will ultimately not allow the atheist to remain content with this position.

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[44] Küng, p. 471.

Küng considers the question of whether there is anything in the finite realm which is to point us to God. He begins by doubting that political and technological progress can lead to societal structures that adequately attend to the needs of human beings. The Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch makes much of the idea of the self-transcending of mankind: one approaches reality with instinct, wonder and hope, not knowledge. This hope is expressed symbolically in religion.[45] Bloch sees transcendence of the human situation as occurring through socialism, but Küng doubts the completeness of Bloch's scheme. Küng thinks that 'genuine transcending' must be brought about by 'genuine transcendence'; in other words, earthly and human factors are not enough--emancipation and ascent are not to be achieved by way of nation, Church, party, or even correct knowledge. Küng says: "Man cannot cope with himself".[46]

Another possibility is Max Horkheimer's notion that humanity's seeking for perfect justice points to God and religion.[47] Here God is seen as that Other who guarantees absolute meaning, truth, and morality. Küng disagrees with Martin Heidegger's contention that God should not even be asked of until Being itself has been explicated. Küng thinks, on the contrary, that while God can certainly not be thought or deduced systematically, he can nevertheless be reached through trust. Here he defines trust as a 'justified leap of thought arising in response to a number of indications'.

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[45] Küng, p.486.

[46] Küng, p.487.

[47] Küng, pp.490-491.

Küng most wants dialogue with the positions of post-Vatican I Catholicism and Protestant neo-Orthodoxy. He sees these as the most significant positions on the question of man's being led to God. As Küng describes the situation, the first Vatican Council, against rationalism and fideism, had asserted that knowledge of God could be attained through nature and without revelation. In the years following the Council, however, liberalizing tendencies were followed by a conservative backlash which led to a reformulation of the above principle, it now being stated that natural reason could actually prove the existence of God.[48] The opposite position, against which Küng also wishes to fight, is that of dialectical theology, and of its chief exponent, Karl Barth, which abhors the presumption to natural knowledge of God. The concerns of this theology are the Bible, revelation, proclamation, and most of all God. It is considered a diminution of God to conceive him as directly accessible to the human mind--if one knows God, then it is because God has revealed himself.

On one level, Küng agrees with much of what this position states. In another sense, though, Küng would regard Barth's ideas as 'noumenal'; in the concrete world of our existence, there are other important considerations, and, as Küng says, "...the order of being and the order of knowledge do not need to correspond with one another".[49] Küng concludes that while God is indeed primary and Wholly Other, we can, in theology, begin with mankind's questions; similarly, human needs can provide the starting point, but not the content, of theology. The Biblical message provides the essential criterion for God-talk, but does not contain all knowledge about God, nor

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[48] Küng, pp. 510-511.

[49] Küng, p. 527.



demand intolerance of other religions.[50]

Küng has been arguing both for the reality of God and for the existence of pointers to God. How then does one investigate--or prove--God? Küng discusses the four classical proofs of God--cosmological, teleological, ontological, and moral--but regards them as meaningful only insofar as they bring God into discussion. He takes their content seriously, without accepting their validity as proofs. The cosmological proof gives impetus to thinking about our ideas of cause and effect. Küng suggests that if we are not to fall into the nihilistic position of denying causality then we may, after all, have to posit a first cause. Similarly, if we are to avoid nihilistic aimlessness, perhaps we have to assume that the world has order and purpose. The ontological proof suggests that an a priori conception can suffice to show the existence of an objective reality; Küng suggests that another a priori, that of trust, may indeed be required for acceptance of God and other realities.[51]

A transition must be achieved from these considerations to actual knowledge of God. In this regard, Küng approves of Kant's appeal to practical rather than theoretical reason in the quest for knowledge of God. This approach has the advantage of speaking of God in the context of concrete human existence. With reference to Kant, Küng speculates that it is only through trust that Kant's postulates--self, freedom, and God--can be apprehended as realities as well as ideas.

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[50] Küng, pp. 527-528.

[51] Küng, p. 531.

Küng is attempting to justify belief in God in the context of fundamental trust, without making faith either dependent on or implied by fundamental trust. He describes the decision in favor of God as one to be faced on a deeper level than the decision regarding reality. Küng represents God as 'fundamental ground, meaning, and support' of reality.

Küng's belief is that even if one possesses fundamental trust in reality, even if one lives fully as a human being and a human moral actor, even if one possesses a basic understanding of one's life and of reality (which is to say, having neither nihilistic confusion, nor arrogant confidence in the completeness and rightness of one's beliefs), something is still missing from one's understanding. Küng thinks that even if we trust, we can still be troubled by finitude, and by the apparently unsolvable problems of suffering, injustice, the conflict of humanity and nature, reason and matter, cosmos and logos, and Being itself.[52] Following Kant, Küng says that questions still remain, even in a fundamentally trustable universe: What is our human nature -- since we are 'defective, yet infinitely expectant'; Where do we come from? -- the question of ultimate cause and meaning; Where are we going? -- the question of ultimate aim.[53]

Like Pascal, Küng believes that the decision for or against God is one to be answered in the context of our universal human condition, i.e., of our 'grandeur and misery'. What difference would believing in a God make? According to Küng, God as primal source, ultimate meaning, all-embracing

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[52] Küng, pp. 562-563.

[53] Küng, pp. 563-564.

hope can enable one to overcome the menace of fate, death, meaninglessness, and sin.[54] God as Being-itself overcomes the threat of non-being. Belief in God would guarantee the ultimate rationality of fundamental trust, K ng contends. Here he says that even a firm trust can be uncertain, if we become aware that it is ultimately unjustified. Belief in God provides what K ng calls 'radical rationality' for trust, something which atheistic trust lacks. K ng accuses atheism of justifying its trust through an 'irrational trust in human reason'. If we wish to speak of our hope and confidence in reality as ultimately rational, then we must also trust that a ground, support, and meaning to uncertain reality objectively exists; this conviction we designate 'belief in God.'

Faith in God is both like fundamental trust in reality, and unlike it. Trust is concerned with reality, faith with the primal ground of reality. Yet K ng says that both are 'grounded in reality', of existential and social significance, and are experienced in concrete situations involving other people. K ng seems uncertain as to whether there is a decision for faith, or whether it is a spontaneous occurrence. If it is a decision, then it is not a mere decision, but one invited by reality. The decision for God would seem to be a decision for coherence and absoluteness, hence a form of meta-trust, a trust that one's trusting is justified.

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[54] K ng, p. 567.

## CHAPTER 3

### Schubert Ogden: Existential faith and reflective faith

In this chapter I will consider Schubert Ogden's book The Reality of God (as well as several essays, most of them written in the 1960s), a body of writing which represents an intense attempt to defend belief in God by establishing the legitimacy of the form of cognition peculiar to theology and religion. While Ogden's constant theme is God and God's necessity, the mode of his argument is the defense of the religious way of knowing and speaking in the midst of other ways of knowing and speaking appropriate to science, morality, and philosophy.

Ogden was writing in a cultural milieu in which theology was influenced strongly by the 'death-of-God' theologians, philosophy had recently overcome logical positivism, and popular culture was becoming more secular, liberal, technological, permissive, and untraditional. This made for a situation whereby Ogden could see some emerging forms of theology now as a foe, philosophy as a potential ally, and popular culture an ambivalent mixture of affirmations and denials.

That the idea of God as really existing came under attack from within theology itself was a scandal to Ogden. Theologians such as Paul Van Buren had come to believe that the idea of God could and must be dispensed with for the sake of the survival of Christianity and that, most incredibly, this development was actually sanctioned by the Gospel. What would be left would be a number of assertions which make no statements about an objective and separate reality beyond the world, but speak instead about people's

attitudes toward things.[1]

Ogden is one with Nietzsche in coming out against this sort of 'secular piety'. [2] Ogden insists that theology today must be post-liberal, by which he means that the questions of liberal theology, dealing with the implication of secular insights for Christian faith, should be examined again. This must be accomplished with a more critical attitude towards secular norms than was possessed by 19th-century liberal theology, and with more concern for apologetics, but without the excesses of neo-Orthodoxy, which tended to ignore the legitimate conflicts perceived by liberal theology. More practically, for Ogden, this means 'seeking a conceptual overcoming of the inadequacies of traditional theism.' [3] The 'death-of-God' movement would be among those which appropriated too readily the insights of secularism, in particular, the conclusions of the verification and cognitivism debate which had it that the only cognitive statements were those having empirical falsifiability.

### 3.1. Ogden's idea of basic confidence

Ogden asserts firmly that God, far from being an option of Christianity, is indeed the entire content of Christian faith. [4] This faith may be understood in two senses: that of faith 'in' God, the subject of faith, and faith 'about' God, the object of religion. According to Ogden, God cannot be denied by Christian theology precisely because it is

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[1] Schubert Ogden, The Reality of God, London, SCM Press, 1967, p.85. (henceforth referred to as RG)

[2] See Chapter 2, p.18.

[3] RG, p. 11.

[4] RG, p.11.

in the attitude of faith (understood in the first sense, however the objects and affirmations of faith are construed) that one affirms God. For Ogden, faith is something more and other than theoretical assent to propositions about God; it means a form of existential understanding, one which is cognitive but not theoretical, i.e., not in the form of a scientific proposition. [5] Faith here does not refer to belief in the tenets of any of the historical religions, including Christianity, but rather to a general confidence in the meaning and worth of one's existence. Such a confidence implies a confidence about existence as a whole. Ogden's 'anthropological theological orientation' or 'transcendental method' entails doing theology in terms of human self-understanding[6] and supposes that we can have knowledge of the whole based on knowledge of the self. Ogden says: "It lies in the nature of this confidence to assume that the real whole is worthy of this confidence and evokes it within us." [7] He wishes to begin with humanity but not end there, [8] as our self-knowledge is always a knowledge in the context of the world. This movement of knowledge from the self to the whole is not merely inferential or analogical, a 'leap'. Rather, it is a realization that the whole is the referent for statements and beliefs about the particular. [9] While the self is the locus for theology, the world is the locus of the basis or ground of

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[5] Schubert Ogden, 'The Christian Proclamation of God to Men of the So-Called Atheistic Age', in Fundamental Theology: Is God Dead? CONCILIUM: Theology in the age of renewal, Vol. 16, (ed. J.B. Metz), New York, Paulist Press, 1966, p.89.

[6] John C. Robertson, Jr., 'Rahner and Ogden: Man's Knowledge of God', Harvard Theological Review 63 (1970) 377-407: p.378.

[7] Schubert Ogden, 'How does God function in Human life?', Christianity and Crisis 27 (15 May, 1967): pp.105-108.

[8] Robertson, p.391.

[9] Robertson, p.391.

our knowing. We can see that Ogden theoretically starts with our self-experience but in doing so argues that what is existentially prior is a more general experience of confidence in the whole--that it is ordered and that what we do makes a difference.[10] As Robertson points out (with reference to the positions of Ogden and Karl Rahner), this approach goes beyond the pre-Cartesian belief in direct intuition of being, the post-Cartesian limitation of experience to sense perception and self-knowledge as thinking subject, as well as the Kantian limitation on metaphysics.[11]

The confidence or trust referred to here may be understood as the analogue of the idea of 'fundamental trust' expressed by Hans Küng. But while Küng spends a great deal of time exhorting one to trust, Ogden holds that this basic and original confidence is already a possession of every person.[12] To be sure, this is not the case at the conscious level: people really do profess nihilism and despair. At the existential level, however, Ogden contends, all people still possess convictions of meaning and value. This is not merely an empty proposition, an insistence that something--confidence--is really there after all despite the most vehement denials. Ogden feels that this basic confidence is demonstrated regularly in at least two areas of our existence, namely morality, or action in general, and science (more generally, inquiry).[13] Any action we do is performed with the conviction that somehow it is the best thing to do, which implies a recognition of meaning and worth. Even more basic than a confidence in the worth of a particular action is a confidence in the worth of acting,

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[10] Robertson, pp. 392-393.

[11] Robertson, pp. 381-383

[12] RG, p. 21.

[13] RG, p. 13.

the conviction that 'what I do matters'. This implies that there is some good or standard in light of which one's actions count. Similarly, any form of inquiry (especially scientific inquiry), presupposes a coherence in its subject-matter. Ogden even goes so far as to say that the suicide is actually affirming the worth of his or her existence by at least taking some form of action with regard to it, rather than remaining passively disinterested. This confidence is not only the mode of our everyday existence, it is its presupposition and ground. That is to say, the individual truly exists only in relatedness to others, and this relating is done in the context of confidence in those things and persons which make up the surrounding whole. The consciousness must be related to the brain and body, the body to other beings, and other beings to the 'encompassing society'. [14] We attain selfhood only when we feel that our existence is meaningful, and that occurs only with reference to the whole. We do not attain our humanity in isolation, in a vacuum, Ogden would say. We achieve our identity only on the basis of our relatedness to other people, things, and ideas. That identity is distinctively human because we 'internalize the norms of our culture'. This does not mean that one's identity is wholly conditioned, rather, that one's being is not created, as it were, ex nihilo, but as a response to the world, presented to one in particular contexts.

Confidence in reality is equated with religious faith in that God is understood as the "objective ground in reality itself of our ineradicable confidence" [15] or "whatever it is about the experienced whole that calls

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[14] RG, p.58.

[15] RG, p.37.



forth and justifies our original and inescapable trust". This causes Ogden to conclude that, in the last resort, faith in God is unavoidable, as confidence in reality is universal. This, he feels, is consistent with the biblical understanding of God as ultimately real for all people.

Just as confidence in reality can be either conscious or existential, so too belief in God. Ogden considers existential denial of God to be far more serious than conscious or reflective denial, and reflective affirmation to be perfectly consistent with existential denial. This is not to say that Ogden believes reflective affirmation of God to be unimportant. Rather, he says, its absence tends to pervert the heart as well as the mind. Nor does he feel that atheism has no meaning and is not a serious matter. To be sure, by Ogden's understanding one cannot help but have an implicit faith in God, but true, existential atheism exists and involves sharing this faith with something else, i.e., it is idolatry, the veneration of something else alongside of God. Ogden further describes idolatry as "regarding a non-divine thing as a symbol of divine presence".[16] Ogden does not wish to regard every endeavour or value which does not refer to God in an explicit manner as idolatrous. The scientist, for example, would be affirming God implicitly whenever s/he attempted to articulate the rational structure of the universe, in astronomy, physics, biology, etc. Idolatry occurs whenever something other than God is taken as the ground of our confidence. It would be idolatrous to regard one's wealth or economic power as the source of one's confidence and security, as this would be to make an extreme attenuation of reality the ground of one's confidence.

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[16] RG, p.24.

Idolatry occurs when our confidence is not based on reality, but on a perversion or misunderstanding of that reality. Such a confidence would be bound to be, if not misplaced, then certainly baseless except on account of reality itself.

### 3.2. The nature of religion

Ogden's perception of the meaning and purpose of religion is not yet clear on the basis of the previous discussion. We might wish to ask him at this point--why should one be what could meaningfully be called a 'religious person'? Answering this question involves discussing logical and epistemological aspects of Ogden's idea of religion.

Ogden appropriated some insights of analytic philosophy in his formulation of religion, drawing especially on the ideas of the British language philosopher, Stephen Toulmin. Toulmin's basic insight is that there are various 'uses of argument' and realms of discourse, each possessing its own logic and subject to the norms appropriate to it.[17] The religious realm, or religious way of speaking does not deal with matters of morality or science -- these fields have their own functions, rules, and presuppositions. The type of question to which religion and religious assertions address themselves is what Toulmin refers to as 'limiting questions', that is, questions which arise at the end, limit, or boundary of some other mode of reasoning. An example would be "Why be moral at all?" -- which Ogden, following Toulmin, insists is not strictly a moral question, since he describes moral reasoning as that form of reasoning

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[17] RG, pp.27-28.

which deals with the harmonization of conflicting interests. The logic of limiting questions is specifically their own, however, as such a question as "Why be moral?" does not, Ogden asserts, really call out for a literal answer; it only appears to, as it uses the idioms of another mode of reasoning. It is the grammatical but not the logical equivalent of a question such as "Why not steal from my neighbour?". What this sort of limiting question is really asking for is reassurance, an answer which in some way helps to strengthen one's conviction or faith in the type of reasoning at the end of which the limiting question comes. But this implies a prior confidence or assurance which one is now asking to have supported. Ogden says that the function of religion is never to create confidence or trust. The asking of religious questions is evidence that trust is already in place. The circumstances of our lives--suffering, death, guilt, chance, loneliness, doubt, the threat of meaninglessness--can act to shake our trust; the function of religion, then, is to reconcile our confidence with these problems and circumstances, which became problematic in the first place only because of our trust. A question like "Why should I be moral?" already presumes the validity of moral reasoning and is only asking for the courage and confidence to continue using that mode of reasoning.

Besides reassurance, religion has another function, implied in Ogden's writings. In his essay, "Theology and Religious Studies" (1978) Ogden makes the case for identifying a discipline of 'theology' distinct from 'religious studies'. He argues that a 'study of religion' is a 'religious study' only when its object is religion as such, that is, when it asks questions about "the meaning and truth of religion as itself a claim to

truth",[18] or when it is an attempt to understand religious answers to the question of faith. 'Theology' is that study which asks questions about the truth of the Christian religion. Certain studies of religion may be termed 'religious' or 'theological', not because their participants are adherents to some religion, but because, in a sense, one is thereby 'doing religion', even though one is only 'religious' when an answer to the question of faith is also given.[19] The value of any religious study (or for that matter, any attempt at understanding) is that the possession of more reflective and articulated knowledge of our lives makes for a more abundant existence. 'Faith' is essential for life, as explained earlier, but understanding is the key to 'prospering'.[20] Faith presupposes already a certain understanding, but since we wish not only to live but 'lead' our lives, even greater understanding must be our quest. Hence we may see that religion, in as much as it is an articulation of a primitive, even pre-rational, understanding, gives rise to a more prosperous life.

By these ways of understanding religion, religion is really something secondary to 'faith' or original confidence. Ogden calls faith the substance of our culture, while religion is the explication of that substance.[21] The historical religions are each attempts at an articulation of original confidence. Ogden's writings are not to be understood as a defense of the exclusivity of Christianity; he certainly would not think of Islam or Buddhism as organized mass idolatry.

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[18] Schubert Ogden, 'Theology and Religious Studies: Their Difference and the Difference It Makes', Journal of the American Academy of Religion 46 (1978) 3-17: p.12. (henceforth referred to as TRS)

[19] TRS, p.13.

[20] TRS, p.11.

[21] TRS, p.9.

Christianity has value, though, as a valid articulation of our confidence, where validity is understood as effectiveness in causing (re-)assurance. The Christian is not convinced of the exclusive truth of his understanding, but is certain of the validity of his understanding. The task of theology, then, is to articulate more fully such an understanding, and to investigate the relationship of the Christian understanding, as embodied in Scriptural witness, to our existential self-understanding. As the two criteria for the appropriateness of religious assertions as Christian assertions, these two cannot substantially be in conflict; what may be at odds are our understandings of our existence and of the Christian message.

### 3.3. The inevitability of faith: Ogden's critique of Sartre

Let us first consider the case where our reflective self-understanding, human truth', is inadequate. Ogden says that the most important theological question to be answered today is whether it is possible to have an adequate understanding of ourselves and the universe which excludes the idea of God. The Scriptures assert otherwise, but of course this assertion must be made reasonable, else we neglect our post-liberal task. In his essay 'The Strange Witness of Unbelief', Ogden suggests that in calling Christ Logos we are saying that his truth must be 'of a piece' with human truth, but that this latter truth need not be accepted at face value.[22] This essay, a critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's 'Existentialism is a Humanism', attempts to support Ogden's contention that even self-conscious atheism is eventually impossible, by coming to the startling conclusion that Sartre, the quintessential, self-declared atheist,

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[22] RG, p.121.

while certainly not a Christian, nevertheless provided what amounts to an effective, if unintended and indirect, witness for theism.

Ogden describes Sartre's argument as having the following form: if God does not exist, then there is no supreme consciousness to conceive of human nature, therefore human nature does not exist, there is no a priori good, and everything is permitted. Since Sartre does not believe in God, the conclusion, 'everything is permitted', follows. To say that everything is permitted is equivalent to the famous Sartrean maxim 'existence precedes essence', i.e., a person has no nature originally, and becomes only what s/he makes of him/herself. If one exists in such a state of unrelatedness, then there is nothing impelling one to act in any particular way. And since one is free to make oneself anew at every instant, there is no moral connection with the world, no 'natural law'.

Ogden accepts the major premise of Sartre's argument, that if God does not exist, everything is permitted, but disagrees when Sartre (according to Ogden) merely assumes atheism so that the minor premise becomes 'and God does not exist'. Rather than taking Sartre to task on this assumption directly, Ogden argues that the minor premise should be 'but not everything is permitted', and he finds a warrant for doing so in Sartre's own writings. The conclusion, then, would of course not be 'everything is permitted', but 'then God exists'.

Ogden believes that there are good logical and experiential reasons for doubting the claim 'everything is permitted'. This statement implies 'we may believe or not believe any statement, as we wish', thereby asserting that if we choose to disbelieve the statement 'everything is

permitted', then there is really no good reason why we may not do so. Hence we have a proposition which does not deny its contradiction. Analyzing our ordinary experience, Ogden finds that in moral debate we never question that a standard for moral judgment can be found; we possess "an all but instinctive assumption" that true moral judgments are possible. [23] While we may disagree on morals, we do not disagree on the "possibility of moral truth".

Ogden argues that Sartre does not at heart, or existentially, believe his own contention that everything is permitted, or that nothing 'precedes' our existence, nothing accompanies or is presupposed by our being-in-the-world. In the first place, while Sartre does not admit a universal human nature or essence, he contends that there is a universal human condition, defined by the limitations that describe mankind's situation in the universe. These include being, labouring, and dying in the world.[24] So it seems that Sartre is contending 'condition precedes existence'. Another consequence that Sartre has drawn from the non-existence of God is human freedom, the 'absolute character' of which 'lies at the heart and center of existentialism'.[25] We are, Sartre proclaims, 'condemned to be free', i.e., we are obliged to choose, to react, to do things in the world.

Now Ogden thinks that in making these statements Sartre approaches an affirmation of precisely what he set out to deny. In speaking of a universal condition humaine, Sartre is not far from asserting a universal

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[23] RG, pp.135-136.

[24] RG, p.130.

[25] Jean-Paul Sartre 'Existentialism is a Humanism', in The Existentialist Tradition, (ed. Nino Langiulli), New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1971, p.409.

human nature;[26] to say that one is obliged to react to these conditions, albeit freely, comes even closer. Sartre himself alludes to a continuity when he says that no human purpose (being a reaction to this condition) is foreign to him.[27] Ogden believes that Sartre actually draws moral imperatives from this situation. Sartre criticizes those guilty of mauvaise foi, or bad faith, whereby one understands one's existence in such a way as to attempt to escape from one's condition.[28] He makes freedom itself an a priori good, again contradicting himself in establishing an absolute standard of moral judgment.[29] The end of freedom, Sartre contends, is to realize itself, and it is at this point, Ogden claims, that a 'limiting question', of the sort described earlier, may be asked.[30] The question 'Why ought one to realize freedom?' is unanswerable but already presumes that freedom is a good and ought to be realized. Sartre possesses a 'basic confidence', at least, in the value of freedom. Indeed, implied throughout his entire essay is the conviction that human action is good and worthwhile. While Sartre might say that such action is good in and of itself, Ogden would suggest that this judgment implies an horizon of confidence or a referent outside the person. In other words, saying that what I do matters implicitly points to God.

Ogden calls Sartre a theist 'in spite of himself' (malgré lui) and contends that all such attempts to explain or describe our existence without God are bound to fail in one way or another. A reflective atheism

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[26] RG, pp.130-131.

[27] Sartre, p.408.

[28] RG, p.131.

[29] RG, p.132.

[30] RG, p.138.



must either be inconsistent (like Sartre's) or incomplete.[31]

#### 3.4. The neo-classical understanding of God

The first task of theology is so to account for our experience that God becomes a necessity. The second, asserts Ogden, is so to articulate God that his existence becomes intelligible to one's age. That this task has not been accomplished for the modern era (which certainly includes our century and may be extended back to the Enlightenment) is one of the most significant reasons for the modern 'falling away' from religion, on account of the perceived untenability of the idea of God.[32]

Ogden says that faith is present as theoretical faith only in terms of an historical conceptuality, i.e., a way of articulating God particular to some place and time. (Of course, faith or basic confidence is present in itself even without such a conceptuality.) The purpose of any metaphysical scheme must be the same as that of any other religious assertion, namely, to provide comfort and reassurance. Identifying oneself as a Christian does not depend on acceptance of any one conceptuality; it is rather a matter of accepting a scheme which is a valid articulation of the Christian scriptural witness. Ogden accepts Bultmann's point that the Christian preaching or kerygma must be mediated through some new conceptual scheme today because it is not expressed in idioms which modern people can accept.

Besides having a restorative quality, an articulation of the Christian understanding must be subject to the same norms as are assertions from

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[31] RG, p.42.

[32] RG, p.51.

saying that God is not literally related to the world, Ogden claims that it amounts to saying that God is literally not related to the world.[35] This is unacceptable, as if God is in no way related to us, then nothing we do, whether for good or for evil, can make any difference to God.

In place of the classical theism, Ogden substitutes the neo-classical metaphysics of process theology, especially as articulated by Hartshorne and Alfred N. Whitehead. This metaphysics has as its starting-point the 'reformed subjectivist principle' of Whitehead, which allows for more thematized metaphysical knowledge based on our subjective experience. This principle takes "as the experiential basis of all our most fundamental concepts the primal phenomenon of our own existence as experiencing subjects or selves".[36] An implication is that we understand God 'by strict analogy with ourselves'. Instead of the classical metaphysical category of 'substance', an understanding by which the self is conceived as an atom, having no real relatedness to anything outside of itself, by this principle, in recognizing that the self does not by any means exist in isolation from others, and is temporal and changing, we take as the chief category of interpretation 'process' or 'creative becoming'. By this understanding, God is conceived of as having a history, a past and a future as well as a present. He is absolute with regard to his existence, but relative with regard to his essence or actuality.[37] Ogden's statement that God's absoluteness is the abstract structure of his relativity may be understood as saying that the ground for our confidence in reality will

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[35] RG, p.50.

[36] RG, p.57.

[37] RG, pp.47-48.

never be taken away, that despite change and passing-away it will always be possible to feel that our lives are coherent and worthwhile. God is understood as really related to us, as through our actions we participate in his history.

Since the idea of God is not the true content of faith or even of Christianity, but rather it is God in himself that is important as the true content of faith, then there can be no accusation that Christianity is trying to preserve itself by denying itself, i.e., attempting to make Christianity acceptable by presenting only an attenuated and watered-down version. (This, Ogden would say, is really what the death-of-God movement was doing.) Through the substitution of the neo-classical model, Christianity would, in a sense, be making itself anew, but only at the theoretical level. Previous conceptualities are not so much wrong as inappropriate to our time, not necessarily to their own. Critics of religion are not merely such; they also have the function of articulating the world-view of an age. Sometimes when that view changes then religion must reform itself, but not so faith. For this reason the 'God of the philosophers' may be dispensed with, but never God, and hence never the idea of God as such. Ogden believes that religion can follow secular culture in acquiring a new theoretical articulation without thereby reducing itself to absurdity or meaninglessness, that abandoning a system of thought does not mean abandoning God.[38] Ogden says that God must be conceived as a necessary being, and perhaps even the way in which this is done is relative to one's time. In the past God was the necessary guarantor

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[38] RG, p.xiii.

of the coherence of nature, that which ensured our science;[39] now science is better able to secure itself, but this does not mean that God is no longer needed at all. God is now conceived by such persons as Ogden and Küng as the guarantor of our existential self-understanding.

### 3.5. Secularism and secularity

Ogden, for this reason, does not see scientific advance as a threat to religion. He accepts that the choice for the secular is a legitimate one.[40] But this does not mean that one must be a scientist instead of a Christian. While approving of secularity-- the conviction that what is 'human' or 'worldly' (understood in a general and common-sensical way) is good and valuable--he objects violently to the turn towards 'secularism', or the ideologizing of the secular. This is the all-encompassing attitude of modern mankind that only the secular is real, that the only mode of knowing is that of sense perception, (i.e., the way of natural science) and that this world in no way points beyond itself.[41]

Ogden sees secularity as a positive development, as it is both the content and the expression of our discovery of the worth and coherence of our lives and of the universe.[42] Secularity is a very important aspect of our faith today; Ogden regards it as modern humanity's implicit discovery of the reality of God, which puts us in a very good position to be able to acknowledge God explicitly. Hence Ogden regards secularity as an

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[39] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, London, SCM Press, 1971, pp. 311, 325-326.

[40] RG, pp. 44-45.

[41] RG, p. 12.

[42] RG, pp. 44-45.

"expression of profound faith in [God]."[43] Even though it seems to make the world more significant, the only significant thing, in fact, secularism actually debases the world, according to Ogden. It does this by denying that 'reality', the world, possesses any objectively existing basis or ground in itself that validates our attitude of confidence in its goodness, coherence, and meaning; to admit this would be to affirm God.[44] Ogden's position is that it in no way enhances the value of the world to say that the world is all there is. Certainly this would not be in affinity with thinking which has it that being exists as being-in-relatedness or being-in-process, rather than as substance and in independence. Ogden, of course, insists that such secular activities as scientific inquiry and moral behaviour in fact 'point beyond themselves', as we saw in his discussion of limiting questions--questions which come at the end of a chain of reasoning in some mode of discourse and use the idioms particular to it, but are not strictly within that field of discourse, hence directing us to look beyond it. When these questions are asked one implicitly refers to God, the ground of our confidence in morality and science.

What is dangerous in secularism is not its attention to the worldly--for it shares this with secularity--but, in effect, its idolatry of worldly things. This occurs when, say, science or political ideology is seen as in some sense salvific in itself, not as an expression or embodiment of a coherence and value in reality. These systems are then not even abstractions from reality, but instead constructions on reality.

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[43] RG, p.45.

[44] RG, p.45.

Ogden's greatest point of conflict with the secularist attitude has to do with its tendency to limit the scope of discourse to the point where religious assertions are no longer even possible; as was noted at the outset, most of Ogden's efforts in one way or another center around a defense of the religious mode of knowing. He gladly concedes some points to the secularists (though only when they evince a secular, not peculiarly secularist, wisdom): that the old conception of God has 'acute logical difficulties', [45] and that even statements of faith must have cognitive content. But he parts company with the secularists at the point where he follows philosophers such as Toulmin in insisting that making the sole function of language the expressing of analytic or empirical information constitutes an unnecessary and unjustifiable narrowing of the range of discourse. Ogden is quick to point out that the positivist notion of meaning is itself unjustifiable by its own criteria.[46] He believes it more appropriate to look at the function of ordinary language, where we will see that there are various 'fields of argument',[47] each having its own standards. The moral field (as I have mentioned) deals with the harmonizing of interests, and the scientific field with the erasing of surprise or unpredictability in nature. The religious field of argument deals with the articulation of our confidence in the face of the difficulties in our lives. Each field has its own notion of when a statement makes sense and when a statement is true. Hence, while

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[45] Schubert Ogden, 'God and Philosophy: A Discussion with Antony Flew', The Journal of Religion 48 (1968) 161-181: p.163. (henceforth referred to as GP.)

[46] See Chapter 2, p.22.

[47] Stephen Toulmin, The Uses of Argument, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958, p.14.

acknowledging Antony Flew's assumption that 'any assertion which is an assertion must involve a corresponding denial' [48], i.e., we must be able to state what would have to be the case for the assertion not to be true, Ogden does not think that this must be done within the limits of the 'falsification test'. This is to say, the possibility of error need not be of factual error, since the logic of theism is quite different from that of empirical science.[49]

A statement is held to be 'cognitive' if one can specify the principle in accordance with which its truth can be rationally determined.[50] By this rule, Ogden contends, metaphysical statements are cognitive, but not empirically falsifiable. Metaphysical statements speak about the 'constant structure of reality' not the 'variable details'. [51] Hence if a metaphysical statement is untrue to this structure, it will be judged false, but it will never be falsified by the empirical details, as these are not 'facts' in this field of discourse. This is why Ogden regards metaphysical statements as 'true necessarily', rather than contingently or empirically.[52] On Ogden's terms, then, the claim 'God exists' is a cognitive one (even though it is not strictly a religious assertion) as it would be falsified by showing that people do not possess an implicit confidence in reality. Despite this, it is still possible to conceive God as a necessary being, for even if this lack of confidence is a reflective or speculative possibility, it is for Ogden an existential impossibility.

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[48] GP, p.168.

[49] GP, p.169.

[50] RG, p.92.

[51] RG, p.117.

[52] GP, p.171.

Calling a statement 'true' does not mean the same thing in religious discourse as in other fields. Again following Toulmin, Ogden suggests that there has been a confusion of the definition of 'true' with the criteria for judging truth.[53] The first is constant: 'true' is "'the most general adjective of commendation' pertaining to matters of belief",[54] while the criteria for determining truth differ from field to field. To answer the latter question--how do we determine truth?--it is necessary to look at the questions of a field and the presuppositions of these questions. Religious assertions (for example, mythical assertions) are answers to the question of faith--the question arising from the conjunction of confidence in reality, and death, guilt, pain, etc., and this question presupposes precisely that life is of ultimate worth and that this is affirmed in the world. Hence, true religious assertions are those which successfully account for this conjunction.

Even our notion of 'reality' is to a certain extent field-dependent. Reality, say Ogden, is whatever is relevant to a particular realm of discourse.[55] In the religious field of reasoning, Ogden contends, 'God' is the meaning of 'reality' 'when this word is defined in terms of our basic confidence...',[56] so that finally it becomes pointless to ask the question about the objective reality of God. Here Ogden is rejecting the objection that his idea of God is without any referent apart from our confidence and trust,i.e.,it is only an idea, something subjective. He argues that when we reason, argue, or speak religiously we assume already

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[53] RG, p.110.

[54] RG, p.111.

[55] RG, p.38.

[56] RG, p.39.



that God exists, since God is the basis of the confidence which inspires us so to reason. Therefore, he argues, the question of the objective reality of God should not even be raised.

## CHAPTER 4

### A comparison of Küng's and Ogden's defenses of theism

Our next task will be to provide a comparison of the positions of Ogden and Küng. As well as pointing out interesting similarities and differences, the objective of this exercise will be to use the contrasts in their positions as the basis for critique.

We immediately see that the positions of the two theologians are very close to each other. Each believes that faith is in an important way non-propositional, that is, it is not a matter of assent to certain propositions about God, statements which are equivalent in structure to scientific assertions, whether established by scientific reason or a will to believe. [1] Rather, they hold that faith is realized and attained only in the context of a more general attitude toward reality, while at the same time they contend that our living and doing in the world is carried out in the context of this attitude. God is then identified with the basis and ground in reality itself for this attitude, which is called 'fundamental trust' (by Küng) or 'confidence in reality' (by Ogden), referring to a conviction that reality--both the reality of the world and of oneself--is somehow good and valuable. Along the way, each defends the validity of non-scientific ways of knowing against the scientific prejudice that all

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[1] In terms of Ogden's distinction between "religion" and "faith", religious and metaphysical statements are similar to scientific statements and are falsifiable against the "constant structure" of reality. They differ from scientific statements, though, because from the point of view of science they would be considered as "true necessarily" since they do not make statements about contingent "facts".

knowing is logical or empirical. Despite this, however, each is hopeful that the modern turn toward science will make for conditions more conducive to the flourishing of faith and religion. [2]

This serves to outline the positions of K ng and Ogden, but there are still differences between them, and questions to be asked. Ogden and K ng offer us the choice between implicit faith in God, ensuing from an implicit 'basic confidence' in reality, and explicit faith in God in the context of a conscious choice for the rationality of an also conscious and reflective 'fundamental trust'. In this chapter we will consider the 'difference, and the difference it makes' between these two options. The principal points of contrast concern Ogden's and K ng's views on the origin of trust, the universality of trust, the nature of belief (whether it is basically implicit or explicit), and the connection between fundamental trust and faith in God.

I will argue that K ng's formulation of the problem of faith shows greater depth and insight into this issue than does Ogden's, though in the next chapter I contend that both ultimately fail in their attempt to update religious belief. Ogden suffers from standing too much in the tradition of Anselm of Canterbury, and his attempt to turn unbelievers into believers (albeit, in Ogden's case, more by decree than by proof) suffers from existential irrelevance. Just as the 'ontological argument' is found to be unsatisfying in its production of God without taking account of the existential causes for belief (whether these are construed as matters of reason or of will), so too is Ogden's quite formal attempt to create faith by

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[2] Ch.2, pp.22-23; Ch.3, pp.46-47.

applying the name 'God' to the 'ground of basic confidence.' Ogden assumes that if God is to be understood as a necessary being, then faith in God must be understood as necessary faith. That is to say, he makes the mistake of believing that God must be rationally necessary, rather than existentially necessary to individual persons. This is to the detriment of his theology, since he is forced to ignore, for all his emphasis on 'existential faith', the consciously existential aspects of faith. Ogden never gives an account of the origin and development of confidence, and therefore is not able to discuss the reasons why a person may choose for God. Klüng, by contrast, sees faith as arising in the context of certain choices in one's attitude toward the world. These are choices which, while not always made consciously, are matters of conscious awareness and hence of existential interest. Ogden's point is principally a logical one, going back to the insight of Plato that one cannot logically deny the validity of reason, since reason is required to substantiate this assertion. There is a truth here, that it is impossible to always mistrust reason and reality, but nihilism and confusion are still possible, so one may in fact mistrust most of the time. Similarly, Ogden's idea of basic confidence may imply that in some sense we never give up hope that life is worthwhile, but it cannot deny the existential realities of confusion, despair, and anguish.

Ogden's presentation provides the abstract structure for Klüng's and to this extent they cannot be understood as opponents. They partake of the same basic insight, but this is provided in its starkest form by Ogden, while given existential depth by Klüng. I will proceed by discussing each of the aforementioned points of comparison between the positions of Ogden and Klüng.

#### 4.1. The origin of trust

The first question we may ask pertains to their views on the 'ontological' status of trust. This is particularly problematic with regard to K ng. Ogden makes it quite clear that, in his judgment, all human beings possess in some form a confidence in the worth of their existence, and do so within an 'horizon' of confidence in the world. K ng, somewhat by contrast, exhorts us to trust, and sees this trust as the most desirable attitude. His efforts in the book Does God Exist? are directed toward establishing the reasonableness of trust, rather than the existence of trust, which leads us to ask whether he gives it the same universal status as does Ogden. It seems that he believes that one can legitimately opt out of fundamental trust.

The 'confidence in reality' spoken of by Ogden is present on a different and deeper (in the sense of being farther from the surface) level than K ng's idea of fundamental trust. Ogden's concept is one of an implicit confidence, subconscious and unreflective, which may or may not have a conscious and reflective articulation. He regards it as a universally present possession of human beings, a prerequisite to our living in the world in any manner whatsoever. As such, even though it may be present in the deficient mode of idolatry, there is no question of someone's rejecting this confidence, and hence not having faith in God.

The genesis of this confidence is not made clear in Ogden's presentation. It is apparently immediate and spontaneous, an intuitive judgment on the world. Ogden considers faith in science to be an expression of this confidence in reality, so that confidence must be pre-rational. It

is not totally surprising that Ogden says so little about the origin of basic confidence. It is, to Ogden, very much a given, an a priori, a necessity, and to speak of its beginning would be to imply that there may be a time in one's life when one is without trust, or that trust comes to people at different times and in different ways. Klügel is somewhat clearer on this matter. Fundamental trust may, for some people, have its origins in earliest childhood, in the relationship of child to parent in the first few months of life, and later in the relationship of child to family and society. Klügel says: "Man slowly grows into it [the fundamental decision] from childhood." [3] But this is not the end of the matter. After all, not all children will learn to trust in the same way; some may learn it only in a very limited form. Klügel accepts that trust, given willingly from childhood, sometimes must be consciously and reflectively decided upon in adulthood. As he says: "Sometimes that which has been lived through must be deliberately appropriated". [4] Trust must be described here as a decision. Klügel is clear that trust is not something which has to be discovered or deduced, as when one discovers, say, order in the movement of the planets or the organization of states. Trust is not a philosophical position, though it can involve reflection and philosophizing. It is above all something to be decided upon, even if this decision is intuitive and made unconsciously. There has to be some process of giving oneself up to trust. In contrast to Ogden's position, Klügel's idea of fundamental trust is one which can be taught, encouraged, and chosen. Consequently Klügel attempts to convince his readers of the reasonableness, i.e., the capacity to be upheld

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[3] Klügel, p.437.

[4] Klügel, p.437.

and supported by reason, of fundamental trust.

According to K ng, fundamental trust is reasonable, first of all, in so far as nihilism is not provable by reason. Trust also appears as reasonable since, despite the ever-present possibility of chaos and meaninglessness, life and the world are not always incoherent and inspiring only despair. Most importantly, trust makes itself reasonable in practice. It affects life by enhancing those elements which we already possess, elements which are themselves pointers to trust. Trust manifests its reasonableness 'in the doing', so to speak--not before or even after, but in the very act of trusting do we see that it is the best thing to do.[5]

K ng says that fundamental trust is rational and reasonable because it is based on reality. He does not mean that trust is an empirical-scientific position, or as was said earlier, something that can be discovered. What is being said is that trust is based on the facts of our experience, that it is not merely an ideology or attitude that one has adopted out of nowhere. It is not, however, provable from the 'facts', but eminently justifiable. This is why K ng is able to call the decision for trust a free reaction [6] that cannot be demanded [7] while at the same time speaking of the gift of trust, which for K ng means the gift of reality. Trust, then, is also a commitment, a pledging of oneself to something which is still uncertain.

None of these reasons, or even all of them together, is universally compelling, and some have a negative aspect as well (nihilism is not

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[5] K ng, p.448.

[6] K ng, p. 432

[7] K ng, p. 451

refutable by reason, either, and sometimes life acts to inspire mistrust rather than trust). To this extent, trust is always an option one can refuse; we may, for whatever reasons, continue to be unconvinced in spite of quite compelling evidence. Even if we are being irrational, we can always reject trust. To be sure, K ng contends that the consequences of failing to trust are largely, if not exclusively, negative; mistrust, as a critical method, makes clear only destruction, chaos, and meaninglessness, and gives rise to fear rather than contentment. In the last resort, however, we may choose mistrust over trust. K ng comes very close to Ogden's position when he says that fundamental mistrust cannot consistently be maintained in practice, which is similar to Ogden's contention that trust or confidence is the presupposition of all activity. K ng at one point suggests that "saying No to uncertain reality", i.e., engaging in fundamental mistrust of that reality, clearly appears a pseudo-possibility, because of the impossibility of always mistrusting.[8] Does he then regard fundamental mistrust as, after all, impossible? He speaks of the impossibility of consistent mistrust, but does not infer from this the inevitability of consistent trust, or even the predominance of trust, and so never argues that the problem of trust is a closed one.

Trust, in K ng's estimation, is not something constant and unchanging. We may give it and take it away; it may diminish or be replenished. K ng calls it our task because we must work at it and prove it in practice.[9] Fundamental trust is also a risk, as we may never feel secure in our trust, even though we feel certainty that our trust is justified. Here Ogden and

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[8] K ng, p.445.

[9] K ng, p.453.



Küng differ considerably in their ideas on trust. Ogden would not admit the possibility of losing one's basic confidence, while Küng sees fundamental trust as somewhat more tenuous. We can honestly choose mistrust over trust, even if we have previously trusted.

#### 4.2. The relationship between trust and faith

Küng and Ogden differ in the way they construe the connection between trust and faith in God. Most obviously, Ogden identifies trust and faith, while Küng argues that it is possible to possess fundamental trust and still reject God. Some of the difference disappears when we note that what Küng would call atheism, Ogden would claim as 'existential theism but reflective atheism'. Küng does not want to regard as Christians those who would deny God 'with their minds and mouths'. Since Ogden wishes to define God as "another word for reality" when "reality is understood in terms of our basic confidence in the significance of life and the kinds of questions and answers such confidence makes possible",<sup>[10]</sup> to have confidence in reality is to have faith in God. For Küng, however, questions still remain even after we trust in reality. Küng sees the question of God in this context as the question of Heidegger and Leibniz--"Why is there something at all and not nothing?"<sup>[11]</sup> This question of Being is not necessarily a question arising out of doubt and despair--hence perfectly compatible with trust rather than mistrust. It is a question that goes beyond the question of trust in reality. Küng describes this as the "great mystery of the world--that it justifies trust but seems itself without foundation".<sup>[12]</sup>

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[10] RG, p. 39

[11] Küng, p.499

[12] Küng, p.476

This is also the question of the radical rationality of one's trust in 'uncertain reality'. Radical rationality is not the same as rationalism; it does not insist on a proof for all assertions. What it does insist on is a reasonable response to outstanding questions. Here K ng is contending that there is a difference between trusting in reality and believing that one's trust is ultimately justified. This subtle distinction can perhaps be better understood by analogy with the case of ethical belief. One may be convinced of the rightness of an action without being able to give the reason for this conviction. One may choose to remain content that one's sentiment is the basis for one's belief, or on the other hand, attempt to articulate the reasons why this belief is the correct one. So we can see that it is possible to trust, while at the same time not being able to say why one's trust is reasonable, and then perhaps becoming uneasy at the realization of this deficiency. K ng describes this situation by saying that trust overcomes nihilism "factually" but not "in principle".[13]

If our faith, however, is that reality is ultimately rational (even if not always explainable) and that there is some objectively existing ground in reality itself that supports our trust, then, K ng claims, we must give a positive answer to the question of God. This ground and support is construed as real but not simply something of the world, e.g., the nation, the people, the race, the Party, or science.[14]

K ng believes that the impulse to ask the question about God comes from the feeling or suspicion that somehow, the world of experience is not

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[13] K ng, p. 476.

[14] K ng, p.561

enough; he agrees with Kant who recognized a "metaphysical need" in human beings.[15] Kant found speaking about God to be necessary because the moral sense dictated certain propositions which were unsupportable purely on the basis of the phenomenal world. The idea of God arises out of the need to possess a unity of all objects of thought;[16] in Kant's case, God is necessary to make the connection between our moral sense and the desire for happiness and perfect justice. For K ung, God may be postulated as the guarantor of order, value, and goodness in reality--all qualities which we perceive through our fundamental trust in reality.

K ung does not insist, then, that belief in God is unavoidable. It is not irrational not to believe, but "lacking in radical rationality".[17] Belief in God, like fundamental trust, is a decision and a commitment, not a submission to inexorable logic. Ogden regards reflective atheism as ignorance or irrationality; K ung seems more aware that reason is not always compelling. In this, he takes seriously the objection of Pascal--that reason alone will never suffice to convince one of the reality of God, that reason's rhetorical excellence may prevail for a time, only to quickly lose its power. At the deepest level, Pascal is saying that belief is a matter of the heart, of the whole person. Ogden, by contrast, seems to think that the problem can be cleared up on an intellectual level, as he speaks of "inconsistent or incomplete accounts of reality".[18]

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[15] K ung, p.539.

[16] K ung, p.539.

[17] K ung, p.571.

[18] RG, p.43.

Though both Ogden and K ng are writing to defend theism, even Christian theism, it is something more basic than a creed that lies at the heart of their writings. The decision for God, as K ng presents it, is similar to the decision for fundamental trust in that in each case we make a decision for coherence and rationality. Ogden's notion of a decision for God is really one of no decision at all; it is a matter of realizing the inevitable consequences of an already inevitable confidence in reality.

An important difference between K ng and Ogden is that K ng does not recognize 'implicit' belief in God. For Ogden it is of less importance that one consciously accept the proposition of God's existence than that one possess basic confidence in a mode not corrupted by idolatry. Ogden claims: "Christian theology has recognized time and again that this existential denial of God in one's heart is by far the more serious denial of him".[19] K ng, on the other hand, is concerned that one reflectively possess both faith in God and fundamental trust. Here is found a real difference, for the professed nihilist, even if s/he were partaking only of the 'pseudo-possibility' of nihilism, would, according to K ng, be engaging in fundamental mistrust, while for Ogden this person may well be regarded as an implicit believer. Ogden would regard the nihilist's world view as fundamentally sound in an existential sense, while K ng would regard this person as without the benefits of fundamental trust. We see, then, that Ogden never takes nihilism seriously in the way that K ng does. In K ng's only reference to Ogden in Does God Exist?, he takes Ogden to task on this very point, saying that in Ogden, "the possible alternative of fundamental

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[19] RG, p.23.

mistrust, of nihilism, is not considered".[20]

Küng believes that it really matters whether one's conscious attitude toward the world is one of despair, hatred, and confusion on the one hand, or hope, love, and acceptance on the other. Presumably Ogden would not find this distinction a meaningless one, but in regard to the greatest spiritual realities, it seems to make no difference; his remark about the affirmation implicit in the act of suicide is a telling one in this regard.

#### 4.3. The meaning of living religiously

It is not easy to conclude what each of Küng and Ogden would understand as the 'religious life'. One is Catholic, the other Protestant, but in the matter of positive, articulated faith there might not, in essence, be a great deal of difference between them. Ogden would certainly want faith in God to be explicit as well implicit (even though, as we just saw, he regards reflective unfaith to be a less serious matter than existential unfaith or idolatry--we see that Ogden never does accept the existence of atheism, only misplaced faith combined with faith in God). In a sense, Ogden does want to 'claim all men for God'. Even though he agrees with Küng in regarding religiosity as something intuitive, rather than reasoned, making it a matter of existential rather than theoretical importance, we would, in order to fully describe their positions, have to make a distinction between types of intuition. These can be described as conscious or unconscious, and for Ogden, implicit intuitions take precedence over explicit ones. For Ogden, the essence of the religious life

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[20] Küng, p.757, n.5.

lies in possessing a basic confidence in the value of one's life, even if one would outwardly deny God and world. K ng sees the religious life as one's coming to and sustaining an acceptance and conviction of the order, meaning, and value in one's life and the world, and then realizing the essential rationality of this conviction. For K ng this is always a thematized understanding, expressed in terms of belief in God. K ng sees the purpose of religiosity as making one "more fully human" on all levels of being. If this is to be achieved then not only basic confidence (which could be a faith in morality that produces only guilt) is needed, but also a fundamental trust, a reflective affirmation which is truly prior to all activity and active deciding. It is not possible, then, to reduce affirmation to non-negation, nor love to attentiveness, as Ogden is inclined to do.

It is true that Ogden pays more than lip service to the personally beneficial effects of religion, as he says that a function of religion is to banish fear, and that the criterion of validity for religious assertions is that they provide reassurance. He speaks also of religion's enabling us to prosper through its articulation of our existence. However, Ogden's idea of reassurance is not synonymous with "comfort"; it pertains to decisiveness, but that may mean a decision for suicide rather than a decision for life. Even the conviction that one's actions make a difference is an ambiguous one, as, after all, one could as well do evil as good, and neither good nor evil actions guarantee personal happiness. Having a 'purpose in life' can be understood in the negative sense of merely being a means to an end. One can be convinced of the order and even the goodness of reality without making a commitment to it--many psychiatric case

histories must surely attest to this.

We might say that for Ogden, religion is of secondary importance. Ogden sees basic confidence to be more important than reflective faith, even though he resists a denial of God, regarding this as ultimately untenable. Küng holds that a perfectly human life may be lived without belief in God, as long as fundamental trust is present (even though one may be living with logical and philosophical inconsistencies). The advantage for life of faith in God, though, according to Küng, is that one's trust can thereby be made rational and more secure, more immune from doubt. For Ogden, faith has the effect of helping to sustain basic confidence through reassurance. In deciding for God, we also decide for the support system of religious reassurance. In a sense, then, for Ogden the most beneficial aspect of religion has nothing to do directly with one's 'decision' for God. This contrasts with the situation described by Küng, whereby the conviction of God's existence enables us to trust with even more certainty. Ultimately with Ogden it is neither basic confidence nor faith in God that provides a feeling of well-being, but instead statements of reassurance such as are provided by established religion; an example would be 'God loves us'. Is it the case that the most important function of belief in God is to make such reassuring statements appear more valid? Ogden has stated that the function of God is to make the whole venture of human life worthwhile;[21] this does not seem to include establishing a feeling of contentment. Ogden equates belief in God with basic confidence, but it is difficult to imagine how a confidence that is not inconsistent with

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[21] Schubert Ogden, 'How does God function in Human Life?', Christianity and Crisis 27 (15 May, 1967) pp.105-108.

nihilism and suicide is truly able to set man free or banish fear.[22]

Despite their differences, K ng and Ogden are in agreement on the most important point in their presentations, that God is to be understood, in the tradition of Kant, as that which provides the unity of all our "objects of thought".[23] Without the idea of God, there is an unexplained discontinuity between our empirical perception of the world as uncertain (though in many ways amenable to scientific explanation), and our basic existential confidence or trust in this uncertain reality. If there is no God, then trust is ultimately without a basis, and one is constantly in danger of having trust undermined by reality; when reality impinges on the world-view one has adopted, it is to destroy, not support. If we cannot prove that the world is certain (deserving of trust) through science, a prospect which seems unlikely, then we must either give up our trust or conclude that there exists an objectively existing basis for trust. If trust cannot be given up, then we must conclude that God exists.

The above formulation overstates the position of K ng and understates that of Ogden. Ogden would assure us that trust can never be given up, and that God's existence follows inexorably from this fact. K ng, on the other hand, is aware of the distinction between remaining secure in one's trust, and taking the next step of believing in God. It would be a mistake, though, to view K ng and Ogden as fundamentally opposed to each other. Ogden's writings actually provide support, not opposition, to K ng's position, through the adamant contention that God is to be met in the

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[22] Ogden, 'How does God function in Human life?', pp.105-108.

[23] K ng, p.539.



context of a general attitude toward the world.

It is this point which truly lies at the base of Ogden's and Küng's defense of theism. On this ground they are able to argue that belief in God is still possible, even when science and revelation have been found wanting as warrants for faith. What each has attempted to do is to create a route to faith that is not subject to the critiques by science and philosophy (which deny an empirical or logical proof of God) and the critiques of special revelation (which, from the point of view of the skeptic, is as easily rejected as accepted).

## CHAPTER 5

### A Critical Assessment

We have just seen how Küng and Ogden have provided for a renewal of talk about the question of God by avoiding the devastating criticisms that imperilled other defenses of theism. We must now ask: to what criticisms are their own positions open?

We first of all return to Pascal, whose criticism of the capacity of reason to reach God was too extreme for Küng. Pascal radically calls into question not only theoretical arguments for (or against) God, but the whole enterprise of rational approach to God. He suggests that we may talk around the question of God, but reason will not be that which essentially grounds faith.

The authority of reason is indubitable in pure mathematics (but even then only after certain presuppositions have been made), compelling but less sure in natural science, confident (up to certain more or less acceptable levels) in statistical analysis, and open to widespread doubt in historical reconstruction and the social sciences. To what extent then can even a 'reasonable' argument hope to give one security on the contentious, doubt-ridden, and elusive question of God? We cannot accuse Küng of insensitivity to this question; his long discussion of Pascal is evidence of that. He takes Pascal's objections seriously and makes his own choices in awareness of them. This does not prevent us from asking whether Pascal's critique is more potent than Küng has admitted.

### 5.1. Is there a divine ground for trust?

First of all, does it make sense to look for a ground and support for trust which lies beyond that trust, i.e., is the question of the origin of trust anything more than a question about a person's psychohistory? We might point out that there are other non-empirical beliefs, such as paranoias and phobias, which are held with much conviction, but which (one hopes) have little objective basis. Here it is possible to doubt the 'transcendental method' itself, and also to ask whether it is legitimate to infer from the existence of a belief (whether it is held consciously or unconsciously) that the believer has implicitly appropriated all the rational preconditions to this belief. This presupposes that reason and not unreason is the basic mode of acquiring beliefs--that if one believes something, it is for good reasons, that beliefs are substantiated and not merely capricious, even if we cannot immediately say what the warrant for that belief is. In fact, such psychological phenomena as repression indicate that a belief may be existentially necessary without being rationally necessary and supportable. Perhaps trust is only a defense against despair. Klüng presents trust as inculcated from childhood; this does not suggest a solid, reasonable ground for trust, since from psychiatry we know that not only trust but many neuroses also have their beginnings in childhood. We see, then, that there is some reason to argue that a belief may be held without its rationality or reasonableness being implicit.

A similar and related question asks whether it is justified to speak of the ground and basis for trust as 'God'. It is possible that the basis for trust is actually something secular, human, of the world. If we trust

in the goodness of nature, could it not be that natural science alone has convinced us that nature is good and ordered, and can show us this without positing a creator, orderer, first cause, or final cause? To object that the 'proofs' of science are inductive and by no means certain, and that fundamental trust is at the basis of science itself, is not to disqualify this observation. In fact, it would be difficult to describe the relationship of fundamental trust and science as anything but dialectical: a science which did not work would never receive our trust. We may trust in human relationships because we genuinely believe that people are good and trustworthy. Is it necessary to assume that something else lies behind our trust and the objects trusted? It may be objected that a judgment about an object must take place in the context of some third reality--a "horizon"--outside that object and the judging subject. Three elements are required for any judgment: an object, a faculty of judgment, and a standard for judgment. The last two are aspects of the subject, and consequently there is no need to posit a third reality.

Schubert Ogden wishes to use the designation 'God' for "whatever it is about the experienced whole that calls forth and justifies our original and inescapable trust"[1] but does not say why this must entail something outside of nature. The difficulty here is that a substantial and clear indication of the meaning of the term 'God' has not been provided; Ogden and Klüng have not avoided the most penetrating criticism of theism by modern philosophy--that the idea of God is simply meaningless. The idea of God provided by Klüng is even less clear; he refers to God as the

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[1] RG, p.37.

"fundamental ground, meaning and support" of reality [2], which appears to be consistent with Ogden's formulation. The definition they offer appears clear at first, but it is really begging the question to assume that this 'whatever' refers to the sacred or divine. It could refer to something supernatural, natural, or psychological. If we infer from the structure of the physical world and our experience of human relationships that life is worthwhile and the universe is good, is this to imply a perception of something else--God, the divine--lying behind the data of our perception; a 'ghost in the machine', as it were? This suggestion would either make God an object of experience, or, if this is denied, would imply that fundamental trust is gained purely on the basis of secular, worldly, experience. This would make unnecessary the idea of God as the precondition of trust.

## 5.2. Do we 'perceive' God?

The underlying assumption of both Klüng's and Ogden's positions is that human beings are somehow able to perceive God (understanding perception in the widest possible sense, as referring to an appropriation of new information on the basis of experience). The argument for this is somewhat indirect. From the existence of basic confidence or trust it is argued that the presupposition of trust, God, understood as the ground, basis, and support of trust, must already have been perceived. If this argument is valid, we should be able to speak of the 'perception' of God in a more direct manner. Now it is unquestioned that God is not amenable to ordinary sense perception and hence, if the argument is to hold, some other form of

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[2] Klüng, pp. 566-567.

perception or intuition must be in use. Its operation, however, has never been observed. In other words, if K ng and Ogden wish to argue backwards, as it were, to suggest that trust or confidence has as its presupposition God as the ground and sustainer of reality, then they must admit that a pre-supposition is just that, a belief held prior to trusting, and that trust is the result of reasoning from the existence of God to the rationality of trust. We may ask, then, about the mechanism for acquiring this implicit belief in God. If it is merely an assumption or positing, then belief in God is arational and nothing more is to be said. If it is on the basis of some evidence then such evidence must be cited. Herein lies the deficiency.

The point here is not to deny that such non-empirical modes of perception exist, but to cast at least prima facie doubt upon a faculty which cannot be named or described, and which may turn out to be an a priori category of understanding, the result of a socially constructed need, or a neurosis, an irrational but useful device for coping with life. Ogden, especially, leaves himself open to this criticism as he portrays basic confidence as a given, an a priori, something which is original, and identical in all people. It would appear to be an automatic or natural construction on reality, not a decision or perception, as these would come differently to persons of varying histories. This indicates that basic confidence is not an apprehension of some quality or characteristic of life or the universe, but instead is essentially a quality of the subject. Hence it is not something "about the experienced whole"[3] that calls forth

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[3] RG, p.37.

our trust, but rather 'something about the experiencing subject'.

Küng speaks of trust as something acquired gradually and sometimes consciously and reflectively decided upon. Yet some of the same criticisms apply to his as did to Ogden's position. By presenting fundamental trust as a topic of developmental psychology,[4] he invites the criticism that this science alone can account for trust. He differs from Ogden in not insisting that the 'radical rationality' of trust is a foregone conclusion, but is subject to the same difficulties as when he admits that Freud's critique of religion may be valid.[5] A psychological explanation for faith or fundamental trust does not disprove God, but it makes it less reasonable to argue for an objectively existing God, since nothing outside the world (or the mind) is required to account for this belief.

### 5.3. The basic error of Ogden and Küng

In short, both Küng and Ogden make an unjustified leap in argumentation when they identify that which warrants trust with an objectively existing reality designated 'God'. One may, of course, use the label 'God' for whatever one wishes, but this is senseless if one chooses something which is inconsistent both with the Christian tradition and any ordinarily accepted idea of the 'sacred' or 'divine'. Ogden and Küng appear to be making the following error: they observe (perhaps out of an analysis of 'ordinary language') that when people evince a belief in God they are expressing their confidence and trust in the worth of life and the coherence of the universe; therefore, if we establish that someone

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[4] Küng, pp. 459-460.

[5] Küng, pp. 330-331. See also Chapter 2, p. 15.

possesses this confidence, then we may conclude that this person also believes in God. (This is closest to Ogden's formulation; K ng sees this confidence as sufficient warrant for believing in God, even if one does not actually do so.) But this is a reversal of the original premise. In fact, all that has been proven is the existence of confidence; any suggestion of an objectively existing divine reality is unsubstantiated. The 'heresy' of the death-of-God theologians has not been overcome, since what they would call 'a particular attitude toward reality' is only renamed 'God' by their opponent Ogden. One side is dishonest by speaking unnecessarily of 'theology', the other by speaking unnecessarily of 'God'. Ogden is correct when he opposes the death-of-God theologians's attempt to speak of Christianity without God, on the grounds that God is the irreducible content of the Christian faith. There is, however, an irreducible content to 'God' as well. 'God' cannot designate anything one chooses, and must entail some notion of a divine, objectively existing being. Hence the formulation "whatever it is..that calls forth and justifies our...trust" does not qualify as a designation of God. Of course, one may choose to believe that that which justifies trust is an objectively existing divine being, but such an identification is not necessary.

If we accept Bonhoeffer's insight--that in the past, God had been a 'working hypothesis' used to explain the deficiencies in scientific understanding--then K ng's and Ogden's defenses of theism have an important advantage over other, more traditional defenses. God is conceived as a necessary, or, better, required being; by Bonhoeffer historically, as one whose existence must be posited to uphold science, and by K ng and (especially) Ogden theologically, as a being who must unavoidably be



believed in. Bonhoeffer, however, denied that God could any longer be understood in this way, owing to progress in science and philosophy, yet he did not become an atheist. In this he implies a discontinuity between the way faith is appropriated in the present and the way this took place in the past. This injures the credibility of faith, since the propositions about religion and God appear as ideology to be upheld now this way, now that way, according to which method is most convincing at a particular time. In other words, the content of faith is divorced from the grounds for faith. Whether intentionally or not, what Klüng and Ogden provide is a continuity between faith in the past and the present. They restore the notion of the necessity of God, in this case, not for the sake of science but of trust. (Ogden admires the structure of the ontological argument without accepting it as a valid proof because he believes that if we know who God is, then we will know that God is.)[6] Their basic insight is that the impulse to faith is a result of a desire for coherence. There is a far greater difference, for example, between supporting faith by reason and by revelation, than there is between defending God as the guarantor of science and the guarantor of trust.

This advantage is, however, undermined by the considerations discussed previously. The flaw in the argument is still that a belief about the world is being made into a belief about God. Without impugning the faith of those who reach God through (in Klüng's words) "a leap, based on certain indications" from the nature of the world, e.g., the argument from design, one may dispute that there is a rational necessity to such faith (as Ogden

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[6] RG, p.22.

contends). In fact, exhibiting a similarity between faith in the present and in the past actually provides fuel for the argument that it is something other than faith in God (in this case, a need for coherence) which is at the base of confidence or trust. Trust may indeed be objectified as faith in God (and at this point K ung shows a deeper perception than Ogden by recognizing that the question of trust and the question of faith are to be faced at different levels); nevertheless, trust is first and foremost a judgment about the world, not something out of the world, no matter what beliefs it may inspire.

#### 5.4. An alternative understanding of God and trust

Earlier it was suggested that Ogden and K ung were arguing that there was a 'ghost in the machine', that when we are inspired by reality to trust, we are in fact 'perceiving' something non-worldly or divine. This ghost is the ghost of the anthropomorphic God. Even if contemporary theologians have done away with the supramundane or extramundane God[7] there is nevertheless a 'sentimental anthropomorphism' at work. This is what causes the label 'God' to be applied to such conceptions as 'whatever it is about reality that calls forth our trust'. 'God' is a term out of our culture's spiritual past and in that context referred to a personal and anthropomorphized being. If belief in this being cannot any longer be sustained by philosophically and scientifically sophisticated people, and no other conception pertaining to a personal and objectively existing being can be substituted, then the term should simply be retired, and not introduced in contexts where it is apt to cause confusion.

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[7] K ung, p.185.

Ogden may be guilty of paying too little, not too much, attention to 'ordinary language'. What is usually taken to be 'God' is some notion of a 'higher being', a personal God, one who behaves with such human characteristics as justice and love. The error made by Küng and Ogden, given what they have realized about the nature of faith as an expression of trust in reality, is in not carrying this insight to its logical conclusion and demythologizing, as it were, the idea of God. If what one really means by faith in God is 'confidence or trust in reality' then one should describe one's faith in these terms, and not attempt to claim more by retaining vestiges of the personal God, which for our spiritual ancestors was the language appropriate to expressing this confidence, but which will not do for us today. What Ogden and Küng are doing is prolonging the projection, à la Feuerbach, of human attributes (namely, that human life, and life with other human beings, is worthy of our trust) onto God.

Ogden would respond that this 'secularist' attitude debases the world by denying that it has in itself an objective basis for our confidence.[8] If, though, our spontaneous reaction to our being in the world is one of trust and confidence, especially in our fellow human beings, should we then say that it is not really humanity and nature which inspires this wonderful attitude? Does not the use of the 'code word' 'God' really divert our attention from the world? If any hypostatization or objectification is to occur, then it should be in such a way that mankind and nature are celebrated and worshipped, if what we call 'faith in God' is in fact a manifestation of confidence in these realities. Ogden contends that the

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[8] RG, p.45.

atheistic aspect of secularism actually undermines the secular, but is this really the case--can there be secularity without theism? The idea of God, for Ogden, seems to function as a device for locating the essence of humanity outside itself, in order that mankind not become its own deity. Is the function of God then to be the mitigation of man's pride? Ogden's espousal of secularity, over against secularism, may be understood as a plea, even a demand, for the recognition of a 'spiritual' aspect of our existence. This may be roughly characterized as the realization that life is not banal, the buying and selling of labour and material; that, as Ogden says, what we do really matters; that morality makes sense; that science and technology do not fully describe human life or provide all the answers to its problems.

It may be too optimistic to hope that mankind can pursue this spirituality without centering it on some object. This would make the idea of God practically useful, if theoretically unjustifiable. So it seems that Ogden has realized something good and important about humanity but is caught in the Nietzschean dilemma, which he solves by introducing God as the ground of basic confidence. Even if the objections to neo-classical metaphysics are less devastating than those to the classical conceptual scheme, Ogden ultimately fails by failing to provide a necessary link between basic confidence and a divine being.

The point here is not to deny a 'spiritual life', though this term should perhaps be replaced for the same reason that Ogden's use of the word 'God' is inappropriate. The perception that in some way the world is not enough and points beyond itself is one which should be preserved, but there are other ways of understanding this than by positing God. For one thing,

we may be led to go beyond 'is' into 'ought'--the world of fact, the world shown to us by history and natural science, at the same time cries out for an ethical interpretation. Ogden's concern that God be understood as process may not be lost if we understand basic confidence as a confidence in the present's fruitful transition into the future. By understanding the ground of our confidence as a dynamic and changing reality, we may see as a basis of hope our capacity for innovation, growth, progress, and change, though Küng and Ogden choose to express that conviction in theological terminology.

#### 5.5. A conclusion

Ogden correctly sees the connection between God and metaphysical theistic schemes, but does not take the next step of viewing the idea of God as itself a conceptual scheme for understanding confidence and trust. The idea of God, when used to express the idea of a ground for basic confidence and trust, has the function described by Clifford Geertz, when he speaks of religious symbols as "clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic".[9] It was not Ogden's intention to introduce God merely as a device or 'trick' to heighten the feeling of confidence. However, when he speaks of God as "reality, understood in terms of basic confidence"[10], one may begin to suspect that his idea of God is substantially no more than this.

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[9] Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, New York, Basic Books, 1977, p.90.

[10] RG, p.39.

At this point, nothing is really resolved. The problem which now confronts Küng and Ogden, or those wishing to argue along similar lines as they, is that the idea of a ground for trust is not well-defined. Until it is possible to give compelling evidence that such a ground can only be successfully articulated in terms of a divine reality, faith remains in a precarious position. Theism has been so circumscribed that only the identification of "God" and "the ground or basis of trust" can make faith possible, yet this identification may not, as yet, be made.

These considerations tend to inspire, in this author at least, a good deal of skepticism concerning the viability of theistic religion. The point of this thesis, however, has not been to give a reasoned defense of atheism, but rather to suggest that the insights of two defenders of theism, Hans Küng and Schubert Ogden, provide, with apology to Ogden, a 'strange witness for unbelief'. They accomplish this by seeing, perhaps too clearly for theism's sake, into the existential causes for religious belief. By pointing out that faith in God is truly a matter of faith in things of the world, they invite the conclusion that this faith is nothing more than a secular faith.

Hans Küng is to be respected for his attempt to unite cosmology and the question of God. I would suggest that further work on the transcendental argument for belief in God be along the lines of answering the question quoted by Küng: "Why is there anything at all and not nothing?". An appealing aspect of this line of inquiry is that it makes for the possibility of a genuine union of theology and natural science, theological verification and empirical verification.

If we are limited in that ordinary sense perception can give us no metaphysical knowledge, then is any judgment that we make, even if we think it pertains to the supernatural, really just a judgment about sense data? The question here is whether judgments (other than judgments about one's own subjectivity) based on other than sense data are actually possible. If not, is it possible to talk about God at all?

One may, of course, decide in favor of belief in God, as a risk or wager. To defend Christianity as a revealed religion is not to proclaim the authority of revelation, but rather the capacity of revelation to call forth faith. In one way this approach is more sound than the attempt to reason from the sensible to the non-sensible, but some serious doubts can be raised. First, this form of defense has an equal responsibility to provide a viable notion or idea of God, as do defenses based on reason or trust. Second, revelation may have the effect described earlier, that of encoding judgments about the world in theological language. In this case, acquiring faith might be nothing more than learning a new way of talking about trust, morality, or science. The writings of Ogden and K ng, as well as Scripture, could then function as revelation. Belief in God is the inheritance of (at least some of) those living in the West. [11] A deeper inheritance is the tendency to translate certain types of faith, faith in unifying beliefs, into beliefs about divine realities.

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[11] It not the intention of K ng and Ogden to legislate for Christian theology, or even Christian faith. Rather, their method is anthropological, and their subject faith per se. This being said, neither a reckless extension of their discussion to other religious traditions, particularly Judaism and Islam, the other great monotheistic traditions of the West, nor the narrow exclusion of these traditions, would be appropriate.

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