FAITH, LANGUAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

FAITH, LANGUAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL:

IN RECENT ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

By

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To my mother Suzanna,
who first taught me of the love of God,
and
To my daughter, Alicia,
in whom this love is most wholly manifest.

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ABSTRACT

The problem of evil is meant to show that the propositions (A) "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent," and (B) "There is evil in the world," are logically inconsistent and incompatible. Formulated in this way, the problem of evil confronts theism with the following dilemma. If, on the one hand, it can be shown that propositions (A) and (B) are logically incompatible, therein lies a proof of atheism and the end of theism as a rational enterprise. If, on the other hand, propositions (A) and (B) are not logically incompatible, then religious and theological utterances become, on the basis of Antony Flew's falsification challenge, vacuous and meaningless, and are, at best, pseudo-assertions.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to resolve the above-mentioned dilemma by attacking both horns; that is, by showing that both alternatives are in fact false. It is argued that propositions (A) and (B) are not logically incompatible and that, although (B) does not falsify or count against (A), religious language is nonetheless meaningful. In order to substantiate this latter claim, a careful study of the concept "meaning" is made to show why the falsification criterion of meaningfulness is not the only criterion of meaningfulness, but that the actual use of any language provides a sound criterion.

In substantiating the former claim, a careful examination of the nature and use of such concepts as "omnipotence", "omniscience",

"all-goodness", and "freedom" is made in order to compare them as they appear in the formulation of the problem of evil with their traditional usages. Next, the whole question of Divine Omnipotence, Omniscience and Foreknowledge, Divine Goodness and Human Freedom is discussed to show that the traditional Free Will Defence is valid in that it shows that not even an omnipotent God could make men such that they would always choose freely what is right. The notion of a perfect world, a world free of evil, suffering and defect, is next discussed. It is argued that a world free of evil and defect is logically impossible, and further that even if such a world were possible, human life insofar as it involves moral developments and rationality would not be possible.

The discussion ends with a consideration of the attitude of the religious believer when faced with evil and suffering in the world. It is my contention that, although religious people are affected by the great deal of pain, evil and suffering in the world, their faith is not threatened; that is, they need not (and do not) give up their belief in a God of love. This does not mean that evil and suffering do not affect the believer, that he is not concerned about them, for clearly he is. He is constantly struggling with suffering and evil, all the time trying to understand why these must be. He may never understand why evil and suffering must be, but he does not relinquish his belief in God because he knows that evil will be overcome. Others (non-religious people) may never understand his attitude, but that is only because they do not share his beliefs. And it is here that the whole

issue between the believer and the non-believer reaches (it seems) an unresolvable deadlock.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of evil is one of the oldest and most intractable of theological problems. It is a problem with which every serious religious person (and especially the Christian) must grapple, because he constantly has to reconcile the fact of evil and suffering in the world with his belief in a good and loving God. Imagine a child being told by his parents that God loves him, cares for him, that this God who is all-powerful and all-good will protect him and guard him. The child believes all these things sincerely and is overwhelmed by this powerful all-loving God. But he suddenly falls "victim" to a very painful sickness — malignant cancer maybe. For this child, the suffering is more intense simply because he might wonder why his God would allow him to go through this pain and suffering. He might even be forced to say that this God is not good after all, or that he does not love him after all. The point here is that the problem of evil and suffering is a very real problem for every religious person, even the most religious; witness the prophets and even the Christ.

But that is not all. The problem of evil, it has been claimed by some recent philosophers, is much more serious than this; for when it is formulated as a logical problem, it threatens the rationality and meaningfulness of religion as a whole. As a logical problem, the problem of evil is meant to show that the statements (A) "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent" and (B) "There is evil in the world" are logically inconsistent, and contradictory. And if indeed it can be shown that

there are internal contradictions within theism, this is enough to call into question the rationality of the whole discipline and to render religious language meaningless. It is for this reason that I said above that the problem of evil is one of the most intractable of theological problems, for it is with this problem that theism as a rational enterprise stands or falls. J.L.Mackie puts it this way:

> Here it can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another, so that the theologian can maintain his position as a whole only by much more extreme rejection of reason than in the former case. He must now be prepared to believe not merely what cannot be proved, but what can be disproved from other beliefs that he also holds. [1]

Now when the problem of evil is formulated as a logical problem, it does not count only against the rationality of religious beliefs, but also against the meaningfulness of religious statements and utterances. The question of the meaningfulness of religious language has received, in recent years, a great deal of attention in Anglo-American Analytic Philosophy. [2] It has been claimed that religious statements are no more than emotional or attitudinal ejaculations which express the user's feelings and state of mind. These statements are not statements of fact in the sense that the statement, "It is raining," is a statement of fact, but are like expressions of approval or dis-

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1. J.L.Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in N.Pike, ed. God and Evil, pp. 46-47.

2. For a concise and illuminating survey of the recent discussion of religious language in Anglo-American Analytic Philosophy, see W.T.Blackstone, The Problem of Religious Knowledge.

approval. What this means is that whereas it is possible to verify (or falsify) empirically the statement, "It is raining," it is not possible (it is claimed) to verify empirically "God exists," or "God loves us." (For example, when someone says, "God loves me," he is saying no more than "I am happy.") It is not even possible to verify the latter statements in principle: that is, to say what could possibly count as verification. This has led philosophers like A. J. Ayer, A. Flew and J. L. Mackie, among others, to characterize religious statements as nonsensical or cognitively meaningless.

The meaninglessness of religious language can also be brought out on logical grounds. For example, if it could be shown that a particular discipline or schema is logically inconsistent or contradictory or embodies logically contradictory premises, then the language of this discipline (it is claimed) is meaningless. This is precisely how the problem of evil as a logical problem affects the meaningfulness of religious language. This thesis is mainly concerned with the problem of evil as a <u>logical and linguistic problem</u> and not so much as a disproof of God's existence. For this reason, I have chosen to concentrate on those writers (e.g., H. J. McCloskey, J. C. Mackie, A. G. N. Flew, R. D. Bradley) who formulate the problem in the former sense.[3] These philosophers claim that the problem of evil confronts religion with two logically contradictory propositions, <u>viz.</u>, (A) "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent," and (B) "There is evil in the world."

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3. It is, however, the opinion of these writers that the issues they deal with are continuous with the entire tradition of the question of evil. Whether they are right in this regard and in their interpretations of the positions of major historical writers on the problem of evil is not my concern here. Consequently, when any references are made to writers outside the discussion (e.g., St.Augustine, Aquinas), such references are merely for illustration and elucidation.

The point which these philosophers are emphasizing is not simply that the problem of evil is a disproof of God's existence, but more than that. For them, it is a question of the meaningfulness of religious statements and utterances.

Now, it is clear that one way to define a contradiction is to say that anything at all can follow as a conclusion from it. The following logically valid proof will illustrate this:

$p.\sim p \supset G$ (God exists)

1	(1)	$p .\sim p$	A
2	(2)	G	A
1,2	(3)	$(p.\sim p) \supset G$	& I
1,2	(4)	$(p.\sim p)$	& E
1,2	(5)	$\sim\sim G$	RAA
1	(6)	G	DN

From the above proof, it is clear that, if, in any particular schema, a contradiction can be shown to be central to that schema, then that schema is compatible with every and any state of affairs or propositions; in other words, it is meaningless. This brings up the "falsification challenge" of Antony Flew which states that for an assertion or statement to be meaningful, to assert anything, it must be possible to indicate what would count against it. A statement or assertion that is compatible with every and any state of affairs is meaningless. The falsification challenge is a very serious one for religious language and must be met. One way of meeting it, I believe, is to question the status of the falsification principle as the sole criterion of meaningfulness. This, I will argue, can be done by providing a careful analysis of the concept "meaning". (This is dealt with in Chapter VI.)

The problem of evil, then, confronts theism with the following dilemma. If, on the one hand, it can be shown that propositions (A) and (B) are incompatible and contradictory, therein lies a proof of atheism or the end of theism as a rational enterprise. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that propositions (A) and (B) are, as a matter of fact, not contradictory, i.e., that the truth of (B) does not count against the truth of (A), then religious utterances become, on the basis of Antony Flew's falsification challenge, vacuous and meaningless and are, at best, pseudo-assertions. For according to Flew, if the theologian is not willing to allow anything to count against his claim, "God loves us," or "God is good," then such a claim ends up being void of content and, hence, meaningless.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to resolve the above-mentioned dilemma by attacking both horns; that is, by showing that both alternatives are in fact false. It will be argued that the propositions (A) "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent," and (B) "There is evil in the world," are not logically contradictory; that is, that (B) does not falsify (A), and that although proposition (B) does not falsify or count against proposition (A), religious language is nonetheless meaningful. This does not mean that the problem of evil "disappears" by showing that it does not contain the contradiction as its proponents claim it does. The problem does not disappear but has a proper place in religious belief, and it will be argued that the place or role which the problem of evil has in religious belief in fact illuminates the way(s) in which religious language is meaningful.

In carrying out the above programme, a careful examination (Chapter II) of the nature and use of such concepts as "omnipotence", "omniscience", "all-good", "evil", and "freedom" will be made in order to compare them as they appear in the formulation of the problem of evil by J. L. Mackie, Antony Flew and H. J. McCloskey with their traditional usages. Next, the questions of divine omnipotence, omniscience and foreknowledge, divine goodness and human freedom are discussed to show that a traditional answer to the problem of evil in the form of the free will defence is valid in that it shows that human freedom implies at least the possibility of many choices; that is, that not even an omnipotent God could make men such that they would always freely choose what is right. Chapter Four deals with the notion of a perfect world, that is, a world free of evil, suffering and defect, and to what extent such a world is possible and desirable. It will be argued that a world free of evil and defect is logically impossible. It will be argued further that even if such a world were possible, human life insofar as it involves moral developments and rationality would not be possible. It is possible, of course, that some sort of creatures might inhabit such a world, but they would not be creatures capable of moral and rational development; in short, they would not be human beings. The first part of the discussion ends with Chapter Five where it is argued that the fact of evil in the world does not falsify the existence of a God who is all-good and omnipotent, that the propositions, (A) "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent" and (B) "There is evil in the world" are in fact compatible.

The next two chapters (VI and VII) deal with two problems which arise from the conclusion in Chapter Five, the first (already mentioned above) concerns the meaningfulness of religious language in the face of the falsification challenge, and the second, the attitude of the religious believer towards evil and suffering in the world. With regard to the former, it is argued that religious language need not conform to the falsification criterion in order to be meaningful. In order to substantiate this claim, a careful study of the concept "meaning" is made to show why the falsification criterion of meaningfulness is not the only criterion of meaningfulness, but that the actual use of any language provides a sound criterion. The discussion ends with the consideration of the second problem, namely, the attitude of the religious believer, that is, how his belief fares in the midst of the evil and suffering in the world. It is my contention that, although religious people are affected by the great deal of pain, evil and suffering in the world, their faith is not threatened; that is, they need not (and do not) give up their belief in a God of love. Indeed, in many instances, the beliefs of these people are strengthened because of evil and suffering. (Some familiarity with the Scriptures is enough to substantiate this claim.) This does not mean that evil and suffering do not affect the believer, that he is not concerned about them. He is constantly struggling with suffering and evil, all the time trying to understand why these must be. He may never understand why evil and suffering must be, but he does not relinquish his belief in God because he knows that evil will be overcome. Others

(non-religious people) may never understand his attitude, but that is only because they do not share his beliefs. And it is here that the whole issue between the believer and the non-believer reaches (it seems) an unresolvable deadlock.

CHAPTER I

STATING THE PROBLEM

The problem of evil has been described as one of the most formidable, perplexing and vexing problems that has ever confronted theism. Indeed, for many critics of theism, this problem is the most serious one with which theism has to contend, because it is with this problem that theism as a rational enterprise stands or falls. The seriousness of the problem of evil is at once brought to a focus because it is not the kind of problem which can be ignored or brushed aside easily for the simple reason that (as we shall see later) it is at the heart of theism. Very often problems are ignored because they do not threaten the essential tenets of the particular system concerned and this, though annoying, is understandable. All that the critic can say is that an important problem has been ignored and probably should not be. But this is not the case with the problem of evil as it affects theism. J. L. Mackie points out that the problem of evil provides a positive disproof of God's existence [1], and if this is indeed the case, then theism is refuted once and for all. It is for this reason that I say that the problem of evil is not only a serious problem for theism, but the most serious problem. A quick glance at the historical formulations of the problem is enough to lend strong support to this claim. Epicurus (342/1 - 270 B.C.)

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1. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" in N. Pike, ed., God and Evil, pp. 46 ff.

formulated it in the following way:

> God either wishes to take away evils, and is unable, or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them? [2]

The same problem appears in many of the works of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Augustine was greatly perplexed by this problem. In the Confessions, he puts it thus:

> Either God cannot abolish evil or He will not: if He cannot, then He is not all-powerful; if He will not, then He is not all-good. [3]

In St. Augustine's formulation, we might add that a God who is not all-powerful and all-good, is not God.

St. Thomas Aquinas' formulation of the problem is more precise and definite. It comes closer to the contemporary formulations of the problem in that it shows quite clearly that it is a logical problem and not really a factual one. He states an apparent dilemma as follows:

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2. Cited by John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 5, note 1.

3. St. Augustine, Confessions, Bk. 7, Chap. 5.

> If one of two contraries is infinite, the other is excluded absolutely. But the idea of God is that of an infinite good. Therefore if God should exist, there could be no evil. But evil exists. Consequently God does not. [4]

In his classic attack on natural theology, David Hume puts the problem thus:

> Is (God) willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil? [5]

There are many formulations of the problem of evil in recent times [6], but the following two should be sufficient to indicate the renewed interest in the problem, which again points to its seriousness. H.J.McCloskey puts the problem thus:

> The problem of evil is a very simple problem to state. There is evil in the world; yet the world is said to be the creation of a good, omnipotent God. How is this possible? Surely a good, omnipotent being would have made a world that is free of evil of any kind. Either God cannot abolish evil or he will not; if he cannot, then he is not all powerful; if he will not, then he is not all-good. [7]

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4. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica: I, 2, 3.

5. D. Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. Norman Kemp-Smith, Part X, p. 198.

6. J.L.Mackie puts the problem of evil this way: "The problem of evil ... is a logical problem, the problem of clarifying and reconciling a number of beliefs ... in its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent: God is wholly good, and yet evil exists." ("Evil and Omnipotence" in N.Pike, Op. Cit., p. 47.) See also H.J.McCloskey, "God and Evil" in N.Pike, Op. Cit., p. 61.

7. H.J.McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil", Journal of Bible and Religion, Vol. XXX, No. 3, 1962, p. 187.

R.D. Bradley puts the problem in the form of a dilemma. He writes:

> If God is willing that evil exists, then he is not perfectly good. (Premise 1.)
>
> If God is unwilling that evil exists, and it exists nevertheless, then he is not omnipotent. (Premise 2.)
>
> But God must be either willing or unwilling that evil exists. (Premise 3.)
>
> Therefore, if evil exists, God is either not perfectly good or not omnipotent.[8]

The thing which is clear from the foregoing formulations is that the problem of evil is a logical problem; that is, a problem concerned with the concepts "omnipotence", "omnibenevolence", and "evil". What is implicit in the formulations of the problem is that the following propositions, which are essential to theism, form a self-contradictory set when taken together. The propositions are:

(1) God exists;

(2) God is omnipotent;

(3) God is omniscient;

(4) God is all-good; and

(5) Evil exists.

Now it should be made clear that these propositions cannot by themselves establish a formal contradiction. For what the argument is meant to show is that if propositions (1) – (4) are true, then

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8. R.D. Bradley, "A Proof of Atheism", Sophia, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 1967, p. 38.

proposition (5) must be false, or if (1) to (3) plus (5) are true, then (4) is false. And it is obvious that the truth of the proposition, "There is evil in the world" does not by itself entail that the proposition "An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God exists" is false. Thus, in order to derive a formal contradiction, an additional proposition (6) is needed — one which is either a necessary truth or an essential tenet of theism or one which follows from (1) - (5). For not any proposition will do. Such a proposition might be:

> (6) "Good is opposed to evil in such a way that a good thing always eliminates that which is evil."

Now, it is obvious that (6) is not a tenet of theism, nor does it follow logically from (1) - (5). Is it then necessarily true? It will be argued that it is not. But more of this later (Chapter V.).

When it is claimed that the above propositions (1) - (5) are contradictory, what is meant is that it is not possible logically to hold both that God exists and is omnipotent and all-good and that evil of <u>any kind</u> exists. The problem, then, is a unique one — it is a problem that arises as soon as the concepts "omnipotence", "all-goodness" and "evil" are taken together, regardless of what the nature of the world is like. M.B. Ahern points out that "neither the stating of the problem nor the answering of it need suppose any matter of fact." [9] This point is of utmost importance because it avoids a

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9. M.B. Ahern, <u>The Problem of Evil</u>, p. 4. It should be pointed out, of course, that the traditional problem of evil was in fact triggered by the nature of the world, but this need not be the case. Once the terms ("omnipotence", "all-good", "evil", etc.) are understood, the problem of evil appears — it is, therefore, an abstract problem. (See M.B. Ahern, <u>Op. Cit.</u>, p. 12, notes 8 and 9.)

great deal of confusion with regard to the problem of evil. It avoids the confusion between the "problem of evil" as it is formulated here and the "problem of suffering". For example, many critics have thought that the greater the number of instances of evil and the more intense the particular example, the more formidable the problem of evil becomes. But this is to confuse "the problem of evil" with the "problem of suffering". The "problem of evil" as we have formulated it above is a logical problem whereas the "problem of suffering" is not. The problem of suffering is concerned with instances of suffering and evils and with the intensity of these cases of suffering. The "problem of evil" (as was pointed out above) does not depend on particular instances of evil and suffering. When we state the "problem of evil", we are asking whether it is possible for both an omnipotent, all-good God and evil of <u>any</u> kind to exist together. And it matters not what the evil is or how cruel or sordid it may be. Thus, when it is pointed out that thousands die every day due to starvation, or due to wars in various parts of the world, or earthquakes, hurricanes, plane crashes, volcanic eruptions, or that some poor rabbit was torn to pieces by a wolf or that a six-month old baby is suffering with inoperable cancer of the throat or that the "...Turks took pleasure in torturing children ... cutting the unborn child from the mother's womb, or tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes", [10] we may be sad and

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10. F. Dostoevsky, "Rebellion" from <u>The Brothers Karamazov</u>, Trans. C. Garnett, Book V, Chapter 4, p. 251.

shed tears, we may want to vomit at the thought of such atrocities, but the "problem of evil" is not thereby intensified or made worse. What I am trying to point out is that if there were only one case of evil in the world and if it were only a matter of someone being deceived, the problem of evil is not thereby made less formidable or less serious — it remains the same.

The problem of evil as we have formulated it can be solved only if it can be shown that the set of propositions (1) - (5) stated above are not in fact self-contradictory (which is the main task of this present work), but this will not provide answers to questions pertaining to the great amount of evil in the world, or questions which ask why God allows such sufferings. If the problem of evil is solved,[11] all that will have been shown is that the set of propositions (1) - (5) is not self-contradictory; that is, that evil and an omnipotent, all-good God are logically compatible. If, however, it is shown that the set of propositions (1) - (5) is in fact contradictory, then the existence of God will have been disproved and theism will have been refuted. And whatever kinds or amounts of evils may exist will no longer pose a problem to be solved. But if it is shown that evil and an all-good omnipotent God are logically compatible, it still

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11. Among those who claim that there is no solution to the problem of evil are A. Flew, John Stuart Mill, J. E. McTaggart, H.D. Aiken, C. Ducasse and H.J. McCloskey (see N. Pike, ed., God and Evil, pp. 86-87.

remains for the theist to show that certain kinds and amounts of evils are also compatible with God's existence.[12] Thus if it is shown that the set of propositions (1) - (5) is not self-contradictory, it would still be unreasonable to believe in the existence of an all-good, omnipotent God if it is shown that pointless evils exist in the world. For, if the Christian theist is faced with an evil for which he cannot claim that such an evil is allowed by God as a necessary condition for some good state of mind, he is admitting that an evil "X" exists and "X" is pointless. And to admit the existence of pointless evil is a logically inconsistent position for a theist to hold. Thus, although evil and an all-good God might be logically compatible, the existence of pointless, meaningless evils would constitute good reason to conclude that God does not exist. Because of the complexity of the problem of God and evil, it is important to differentiate the logical problem from specific problems. M.B. Ahern puts it this way:

> If there is to be clarity about the question of God and evil, it seems essential to distinguish the general problem of evil, the problem whether the existence of even one instance of any kind and degree of evil of itself logically excludes the existence of a God who is both wholly good and omnipotent, and the specific problems of evil -- that is, whether the existence of this or that kind, degree or multiplicity of evil excludes the existence of such a God.[13]

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12. It is interesting to point out that some critics do not formulate the problem of evil as a logical problem in the sense of showing that the propositions 1-5 are self-contradictory. E.Madden and Peter Hare point out that it should be clear that the problem of evil is not one of formal inconsistency or formal contradiction. For "If the problem of evil were stated as a formal contradiction the theist would have no difficulty in rebutting it." (See E. Madden and Peter Hare, Evil and the Concept of God, pp. 3-4.)

13. M.B. Ahern, Op. Cit., p. 6.

Thus far, we have been trying to establish that the problem of evil arises when the set of propositions (1) - (5) (that is, (1) God exists, (2) God is omnipotent, (3) God is omniscient, (4) God is all-good, (5) Evil exists) are taken together. This immediately suggests that the problem arises only for the person who is committed to these five propositions. The theist who rejects any one of the above propositions is at once rejecting the problem of evil, although he is not offering a solution to it; he is admitting that no problem emerges. For instance, if proposition (1) God exists, is denied, there is no problem of evil. If, on the other hand, the existence of God is maintained but either one of the propositions (2) - (5) is denied, the problem does not arise. If one were to argue that although God exists, he is not omnipotent, the problem of evil does not arise for him. For God may be all-good and omniscient but lack the power to prevent the evils in the world. Similarly, if it is maintained that God, though omnipotent and omniscient, is not all-good, the problem does not arise. Such a God may have all the power in the world, and he could be malicious enough to permit evils simply to amuse himself, or be, himself, the author of these evils. It is also open to anyone (although this is much more difficult to maintain) to claim that evils do not exist — what we call evils are really blessings in disguise, although we in our finitude cannot see this. If someone maintains such a position, (albeit irrational), the problem does not arise, at least not directly. It may arise indirectly in that it can be argued that the fact that God made us so that we would mistake blessings for evils is at once to deceive us, and this in itself is an evil.

Thus there are many for whom the problem of evil as we have been discussing it does not arise, that is, those who are prepared to deny any one of the above five propositions or to modify them excessively so as to empty them of their traditional meanings. The latter cannot rightly be called theists, but rather "quasi-theists". They are thus called because they do not reject the theists's concepts, but attempt to modify them so as to meet serious problems like the problem of evil while still maintaining some of the essential assumptions of theism. E. Madden and P. Hare point out that the quasi-theists

> ...are trying to combine a theistic concept of God, on the one hand, with temporal and pantheistic concepts, on the other. (They) ...are suggesting that with the proper metaphysics they can combine different conceptions of God in such a way that they retain the merits of all of them but avoid most of their faults ... in particular they wish to produce a conception of God that has all the worshipability of the traditional theistic God without the traits that create the problem of evil. [14]

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14. E. Madden and P. Hare, Op. Cit., pp. 9-10. According to Madden and Hare, the quasi-theists have shown that the attempts of theists to solve the problem of evil have failed because they depend on false metaphysics. These theists "depend upon the traditional notions that God is unlimited in power, is outside of and not included in the universe; created the universe ex nihilo .... Deny one or more of these assumptions depending upon the specific nature of your own system of metaphysics and the problem of evil is solved or disappears."

It is interesting to note that although the problem of evil does not arise for those who adopt one or more of the above escape routes, there are other difficulties which arise which either outweigh the problem of evil or are of equal intensity with it. It might be an easy matter for a theist to claim that although God exists, he is not omnipotent or all-good, thereby avoiding the problem of evil. But he is left with the idea of a God who is imperfect -- one for whom he constantly has to make excuses. Not only would such a God not be the God of the Judaic-Christian tradition, but it is doubtful if such a God could rightly be classed as a God of theism in any sense. But even if the concept of such a God were feasible, it would be extremely difficult to deny that he would be wholly imperfect or malicious. For once some limitations are allowed, it would be very difficult to resist admitting that there are other imperfections. I daresay one would be better off without any God whatsoever than to believe in a God who is imperfect and finite. One would be better off if one were to renounce belief in such a God altogether and worship chance, fate, the law of gravity, the law of diminishing returns, or the uniformity of nature or some such thing. Furthermore, it is hard to see how the religious attitudes of worship, prayer and adoration can successfully or meaningfully be maintained once one admits that the God or Being to whom these attitudes are directed is imperfect or limited in one way or the other. And in spite of the efforts of the quasi-theists (mentioned above),

this problem, it seems to me, is insurmountable. One either has to renounce theism altogether or adhere to what is essential to it, and this means (among other things) professing belief in a God who is almighty and all-good. One cannot, that is, maintain that God is imperfect on the one hand, and still claim to be a theist on the other — it is not possible to have it both ways. As Penelhum says:

> ...the concept of God rules out a very large number of theistic defences, because they entail attributing to God limitations or preferences that are incompatible with his stated attributes. So although it may seem plausible for a theist to say ... that he does not need to commit himself to any particular theodicy, his very theism commits him at the very least to saying that a large number of possible theodicies are false, viz., all those that commit these errors. This entails the view that whatever reason God may have for allowing evils, it is a reason which is compatible with his omnipotence, omniscience, and his moral goodness. [15]

I have been contending that although it is possible to escape the problem of evil by denying one or more of the above mentioned propositions, this manoeuvre creates more problems than it solves in that it seems to drain theism of what is essential to it. Many theists who wish to solve the problem of evil have recognized this weakness and have attempted to avoid it by accepting all five propositions while at the same time interpreting them in such a way so that either the problem of evil does not seem to arise or, if it does, it can easily be solved. For example, it has been argued by some that

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15. T. Penelhum, "Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil", Religious Studies, Vol. 2, 1966, p. 99.

religious claims, e.g., God exists, God is good, etc., are not factual assertions which can be true or false, but are rather attitudinal and/or emotional, so that when the theist adheres to our five propositions above, he is not asserting anything. It is obvious that if this is so, the problem of evil cannot arise. But this is to avoid the problem of evil at the expense of a more serious problem, viz., that of claiming that theism is not a rational enterprise — a claim that would evoke cries of horror from a large number of theists.

It has also been argued that the universe as a whole is completely good. It seems evil only because we do not look at it in the right way; that evil, pain and sin do not really exist; they are only apparent. But these arguments are wholly untenable; they are not really answers or solutions, but obviously subterfuges. For, even if it can be proved that the world as a whole is good, or that evil and pain do not really exist, this would leave unexplained the fact that we interpret them as evils, and this in itself is obviously evil. A world in which goodness is concealed from us, in which good appears as evil, cannot be wholly good. The mere fact that such deception takes place is an evil greater and more severe than many that we now encounter. This is not to suggest, of course, that there are no serious attempts to solve the problem of evil, for obviously there are, and always have been, as we shall see later in this discussion[16],

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16. More important attempts to solve the problem of evil do so without denying that evil exists. It is argued, for example, that although there is evil in the world, this is nonetheless the best possible world, that a world without evil is not the world in which spiritually significant human beings can be produced, that morality is impossible in an evil-free world, viz., a utopia, that evil is due to man's misuse of his freedom. Although these arguments have been severely criticized, they are nevertheless extremely important (as we shall see later) in defending theism.

but it does show that the problem cannot be brushed aside easily, nor can it be easily dissolved. John Wisdom points out that "however many times we pronounce evil unreal, we always leave reality behind, which in its turn is to be pronounced evil." [17] And once we recognize this, we at the same time recognize anew the problem of evil, that is, whether evil and an all-good, omnipotent God could both exist.

I mentioned above that the problem of evil is at the heart of theism and for that reason cannot easily be ignored but must be taken seriously. I have been trying to show that this is the case by pointing out why attempts to evade the problem have failed and must fail. Attempts to evade the problem by denying one or more of the five propositions succeed only at the expense of creating greater problems. These attempts are (according to the old cliché) like the fish who jumped from the frying pan into the fire. It seems that the only way to avoid the problem of evil is to renounce theism; that is, to become an atheist. The theist, then, in order to avoid the difficulties mentioned above has to take the problem of evil seriously. He has to do so not only because of the problems involved in denying it, but because his concept of God presupposes evil of some sort. Let us see why and how this is so.

The theist (within the Judaic-Christian tradition) does not maintain only that God is all-good and omnipotent, but that he is, by definition, Just, Righteous and Merciful — our Saviour and Redeemer.

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17. John Wisdom, "God and Evil", Mind, Vol. XLIV, No.173, 1935, p. 2.

Thus it is said of God that His "mercy endures forever" (Psalm 100), that He is "our strength and redeemer" (Psalm 19); that he "shall judge his people" (Deut. 32:36; cf. Heb. 10:31-36). [18] And to say of God that he is just, righteous and merciful is at once "...to presuppose that there exists a universe of a certain character and that he stands in a certain relationship to it." [19] It is to say that God is opposed to what is unjust, that he is compassionate, that he is anxious to save His people from wickedness and inquity (cf. Psalm 5:4-5). But if such talk about God is to mean anything, we have to picture the world as one in which there is wickedness, injustice, corruption and disasters. R.D. Bradley puts it in this way:

> To say of God that he is Just and Righteous is, in short, to say that he abhors evil and will, one day, call the workers of evil before him in judgement. But to say that he abhors evil is, of course, to commit oneself to saying, or to presuppose, that evil exists. [20]

Thus, if the theist is to speak meaningfully about his God, not only can he not deny that he is all-good and all-perfect, he also

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18. It is not very difficult to find texts in both the Old and New Testaments which speak of the nature of God. For example, the Psalmist cries, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love: according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly for my iniquities and cleanse me from my sin." (Ps. 51:1-2). In the New Testament, Paul says: "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." (Ephesians 2:4.)

19. R.D. Bradley, "A Proof of Atheism", Sophia, Vol.6, Issue 1, 1967, p. 45.

20. Ibid., p. 45.

has to presuppose the existence of evil or else deny that God is Just, Righteous, Merciful, all-good and all-perfect, which is tantamount to an over-all denial of God — in a word, atheism. To avoid atheism, then, the Christian theist has to maintain all the attributes of God. And once he does this, the problem of evil becomes more forceful than ever. For, if the set of propositions (1) - (5) can be shown to be self-contradictory, this would at once establish either that God does not exist or that evil does not exist. Let us say that it is the latter; that is, that evil does not exist. What this amounts to (following our argument above; that is, that the theist's conception of God as Merciful, Righteous, Just, etc., logically presupposes that evil exists) is that the theist is faced with a reductio ad absurdum argument for the non-existence of God. He is faced, on the one hand, with an argument which shows that the propositions that God is all-good and omnipotent entail that evil does not exist, and on the other with the concept of God as Just, Merciful and Righteous which logically presupposes that evil exists. When we put both arguments together, we get the concept of a God as an "all-good, omnipotent redeemer" which, if the argument is correct, is as self-contradictory as a "round square". Let us put the argument more formally. Let G represent the hypothesis that God is all-good, omnipotent, Merciful, Just, and Righteous, and let E represent the evidence for the existence of evil in the world. We have:

(a) G. entails not-E,

(b) G entails E.

Conjoining (a) and (b), we get: (c) G entails (not-E and E) which is a

reductio ad absurdum of G. When the problem of evil (or as it is sometimes called, the paradox of evil) is put in this form, it seems impossible to evade it. The theist has to attempt to solve it or renounce theism altogether. And the only way I can see a solution forthcoming is by showing that (a) "G entails not-E" is false. The purpose of the ensuing chapters will be to argue that (a) is in fact false and that the "problem of evil" itself can be reduced to a reductio.

Throughout this chapter, I have been trying to formulate the problem of evil in such a way so as to avoid confusing it with the problem of suffering or the problem of pain. It seems to me that part of the difficulty with the problem of evil is and can be attributed to a failure to avoid such a confusion. I have also pointed out that once the problem of evil is carefully delineated from other problems, its force and importance are at once brought to the fore and must be taken seriously. And taking it seriously is, on the one hand, to avoid subterfuges (such as the claim that evil is illusory or that the world is wholly good, etc.) and on the other, to examine the nature and use of the key concepts in the argument (e.g., "omnipotence", "omniscience", "all-good", "evil" and "free-will", etc.) to see whether or not the argument is as forceful and as detrimental to theism as its adherents seem to think. This, then, will be our task in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

KEY CONCEPTS

In the last chapter it was made clear that any formulation of the "problem of evil" must include the concepts, "omnipotence", "omniscience", "all-goodness" and "evil". It is when these concepts are taken together that we have the "problem of evil". Thus any attempt to solve this problem must come to grips with these concepts. This will be our task in this chapter.

A. Omnipotence and Omniscience

If we are to make any sense at all of the concept "omnipotence", as it affects the "problem of evil" in the sense that we have been discussing this problem, we must pay careful attention to the use of the concept within the theistic tradition. For if this use is ignored or dismissed, then whatever conclusions one may reach after analysis of the concept cannot legitimately affect theism. I am suggesting that there is a legitimate sense in which words can be used differently within different language-games, and any serious criticisms of these language-games must come to grips with the use of these words and concepts. Notice that I am not saying that the use of words and concepts cannot be criticized from outside a particular language-game (in this case the religious language-game), but that if such criticism is to carry any weight at all, the use of these words and concepts must be taken seriously. If this is not done, our critic would be like Don Quixote fighting imaginary soldiers.

J. L. Mackie takes objection to such a view. He claims that such a view is not only "both false and pernicious", but that it prevents "any proper consideration of fundamental philosophical questions."[1] He seems to think that one could ignore the use of "omnipotence" within the religious language-game and yet enquire whether an omnipotent being exists or does not exist, or whether it is even possible for such a being to exist. Now, while it is true that one can enquire whether an omnipotent being exists without adhering to the role of the word "omnipotent" in the religious language-game, it is clear that this omnipotent being need not be (and probably would not be) the omnipotent being referred to in the religious tradition, in which case it would be irrelevant to the problem of evil. Thus while I agree with Mackie that the religious language-game, or any language-game for that matter, cannot be a "closed system" in the sense of being completely autonomous, I would insist against him that one has to come to terms with the use or uses of particular concepts in that language-game if the criticisms are to be meaningful and relevant.

It is equally interesting to note that the question of whether an omnipotent being exists or does not exist, can or cannot exist, is not only irrelevant to the problem of evil, but is blatantly question-begging. For the problem of evil presupposes that an

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1. J.L. Mackie, "Omnipotence", Sophia, Vol. 1, Issue 2, 1962, p. 14.

omnipotent (all-good) being exists, and without this presupposition it ceases to be a problem. The question of whether an omnipotent being can or cannot exist, may or may not affect theism, but it cannot do so via the problem of evil because this problem presupposes such a being. Furthermore, if it can be shown that an omnipotent being cannot or does not exist, and that this omnipotent being is to be identified with the omnipotent being of theism, then the "problem of evil" goes by default — it does not arise. Hence it is clear that, although it is possible to answer the question from outside the religious language-game whether an omnipotent being can or cannot exist, without taking into consideration the role which such a being plays in the language-game, the answer would still be irrelevant to the problem of evil. It is for this reason, then, that the role which "omnipotence" plays within theism must be taken into consideration when the concept is being analysed.

There is one sense of the concept "omnipotence" that we should rule out at the very outset, viz., "unqualified omnipotence"; the concept of "omnipotence" which J.E. McTaggert had in mind when he pointed out that "There is nothing which an omnipotent God cannot do otherwise he would not be omnipotent."[2] If by omnipotence we mean the power to do anything whatsoever, including what is absurd or logically impossible, then it is impossible to conceptualize what such

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2. J.E.M. McTaggert, Some Dogmas of Religion, p. 20.

power could mean. Thus to attribute unqualified omnipotence to a being is to say that something exists (that is, granting that it is meaningful to attribute existence to it) but we know not what. In other words, when we attribute unqualified omnipotence to a being we are at the same time saying that it is impossible to say anything about such a being, that utter silence is the only alternative. J.L. Mackie points out that the view that there is an absolutely omnipotent being (omnipotent in an unqualified sense) stands "right outside the realm of rational enquiry and discussion", and it is therefore a waste of time even to consider it.[3]

Now to attribute "qualified omnipotence" to God is not to attribute limited omnipotence to him for the simple reason that "limited omnipotence" makes no sense — it is contradictory. Nor is it to say that insofar as God is omnipotent in a qualified sense, he is inferior to a being, X, who is omnipotent in an unqualified sense. We have seen that "unqualified omnipotence" is meaningless, and once this is admitted we can dispense with "qualified and unqualified omnipotence" and settle for "omnipotence". The point I am trying to make is important and crucial. For if it is true that "unqualified omnipotence" is vacuous and that what is normally called "qualified omnipotence" is really the only sense in which we can meaningfully speak of "omnipotence", then this would eliminate (what amounts to a confusion among some philosophers) the idea that there are

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3. J.L. Mackie, "Omnipotence", Sophia, Vol. I, Issue 2, 1962, p. 16.

degrees of omnipotence. When the theist says, for example, that God is omnipotent, what he means is that God has the power to do all that he wills to do, or all that is consistent with his nature as a God of love; he means that God is not controlled by conditions external to Him; that is, not of His own making. But it does not mean that God can do anything whatsoever, no matter how absurd. Within the theistic tradition "omnipotence" is never used in the latter sense. This point is made clear by G. MacGregor. He says:

> There is no suggestion anywhere in the Old Testament or the New of the notion of omnipotence in the sense of "the ability to do anything whatsoever". Nor is there any evidence that this notion was in the minds of the Greek Fathers of the Church .... [4]

(The word used in the New Testament to describe God's omnipotence is not παντοδύναμος, the power to do anything whatever, but παντοκράτωρ, which means all-powerful, almighty, in the sense of "all-controlling" or "omni-governance". In this sense omnipotence means that God has the power to overrule everything in order to achieve his purposes.)

To say, for example, that God cannot make a triangle with more or less than three sides or something which is at the same time both round and square, or something which is both coloured and not coloured, or a circle which does not have 360°, is not to say that he lacks unlimited power and hence is not omnipotent. The fact that God cannot do these things does not count against His power, because

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4. G. MacGregor, Introduction to Religious Philosophy, p. 269.

not only are these things

> extraordinary and contrary to the laws of science, but ... they are unthinkable and contrary to the laws of logic -- self-contradictory. In this sense of 'omnipotence' it must be admitted that if God could not prevent the evil in the world he is not omnipotent. But no one in his senses should mean such nonsense when he says God is omnipotent. There is always one thing an omnipotent God cannot do, namely be not omnipotent. [5]

An omnipotent God, therefore, cannot do what is contrary to his own nature; that is, he cannot lie, cheat or do a wicked act; he cannot make something that is logically necessary not to be; for example, that there be a cause without an effect, or an effect without a cause, or that the sum of the angles of a right triangle totals 80^{o}, or that 2 plus 2 equals 3, or construct a square with unequal sides. If A is a necessary and sufficient condition for B in the sense that without A it would be impossible for B to come about, then it is not possible for an omnipotent God to make B without A.

John Stuart Mill once pointed out that since God employs various means to achieve various ends he is not omnipotent. He says:

> For what is meant by design? Contrivance: the adaptation of means to an end. But the necessity for contrivance -- the need of employing means -- is a consequence of the limitation of power ... The very idea of means implies that the means have an efficacy which the direct action of the being who employs them has not. [6]

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5. J. Wisdom, "God and Evil", Mind, Vol. XLIV, No. 173, 1935, p.3.

6. J. S. Mill, Theism, ed. R. Taylor, p. 33.

As formulated here Mill's argument is forceful only if the means are not logically necessary. For example, it is not logically necessary that a patient should suffer pain in order to be cured in the end. The use of anesthetic could prevent the pain and still bring about the cure. But if the means are logically necessary for the achievement of the ends, then it is clear that Mill's statement is false. As I pointed out above, if B cannot come into existence without A, so that B without A is logically inconceivable, then even an omnipotent God cannot make B without A. But this does not, in any way, count against his omnipotence. In the same way that it is logically impossible for God to bring about B without A, it has been maintained (and rightly as we shall see later) that it is logically impossible for him to create free beings while at the same time guaranteeing that they should always choose the right. For in order to be free beings, it must at least be possible for them to choose both rightly and/or wrongly. To guarantee that they would always do either is to deny them freedom. But this seems to suggest that God, insofar as he cannot create free beings in such a way as to guarantee that they would always choose the right, creates beings whom he cannot subsequently control; that is, in so far as they are free, God, even though he created them, cannot control which way they will choose. The brings us to the notorious problem of the "paradox of omnipotence".

The paradox of omnipotence can be put simply thus: "Can an omnipotent being create something which he cannot subsequently

control?" "Can he make rules which bind him?", or "Can he make a stone too heavy for him to lift?"[7] G.B. Keene states the paradox more formally as follows:

> Either an omnipotent being can make things which he cannot control, or an omnipotent being cannot make things which he cannot control. If he can make such things then there is something which he cannot control; in which case an omnipotent being is not omnipotent. This is impossible: Therefore an omnipotent being cannot make things which he cannot control. Yet this means he is already not omnipotent; in which case, again, an omnipotent being is not omnipotent.[8]

At first blush this paradox seems damaging to omnipotence. For, whereas it is very simple to detect a contradiction from "A is able to make something both white and not white", the same does not seem to be the case with "A is able to create something which he cannot control". The former formulation is not only contradictory but unthinkable, but the latter is not. It is an absurdity to say "X can make a round

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7. In order to show that unqualified omnipotence cannot be attributed to any being who continues in time, Mackie claims that the concept "omnipotence" is logically vicious. To show that this is the case, he claims that it is paradoxical to say that an omnipotent being creates things which he cannot subsequently control, or makes laws which bind himself. "It is clear", he says, "that this is a paradox: the question cannot be answered satisfactorily either in the affirmative or the negative. If we answer "Yes", it follows that if God actually makes things which he cannot control, or makes rules which bind himself, he is not omnipotent once he has made them; there are then things which he cannot do. But if we answer "No", we are immediately asserting that there are things which he cannot do, that is to say, that he is already not omnipotent." ("Evil and Omnipotence", in N. Pike, ed., God and Evil, pp. 57-58.)

8. G.B. Keene, "A Simpler Solution to the Paradox of Omnipotence," Mind, LXIX, Jan. 1960, No. 278, p. 74.

square", but it is not (or at least it is not readily apparent) absurd in the same way to say, "X is able to build a stone which he cannot lift." For it makes good sense to say, "Robinson Crusoe built a boat too heavy for him to lift." And if it makes good sense to say this, then the paradox as formulated also makes good sense. But does it really? The statement, "Robinson Crusoe built a boat too heavy for him to lift," makes good sense precisely because Robinson Crusoe is not omnipotent, and as such, it is expected that he could build things too heavy for him to lift. Now, if God were not omnipotent, he would be in the same situation as Crusoe, and there would be no problem -- no paradox. To say that a being who is not omnipotent made something which he cannot lift is to say something very trivial indeed. No one would be astonished to hear that -- it is commonplace. But the paradox arises precisely because we attribute omnipotence to God. And as soon as we predicate omnipotence of God, "... the phrase 'a stone too heavy for God to lift' becomes self-contradictory".[9] Let us see what is implied in saying that an

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9. G.I. Mavrodes, "Some Puzzles Concerning Omnipotence," Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXII, April 1963, p. 222. A similar position is maintained by B. Mayo. He says that since "... 'things which an omnipotent being cannot control' is self-contradictory", it would be logically impossible for him to make such things. And this "failure to bring about logical impossibilities" in no way counts against his omnipotence. ("Mr. Keene on Omnipotence," Mind. Vol. LXX, No. 278, p. 250, 1961). Although J.L. Mackie cautiously accepts this argument, he claims that an affirmative answer can also be defended in like manner. ("Omnipotence", Sophia, Vol. 1, Issue 2, 1962, p. 21.) But what Mackie fails to see is that an affirmative answer is impossible since the phrase "things which an omnipotent being cannot control" is self-contradictory, and what this means is that there is no such thing to

omnipotent being could create a stone too heavy for him to lift, or that he could create beings so free that he cannot subsequently control them.

It was pointed out above that there is at least one thing that an omnipotent being cannot do; namely, not be omnipotent. But to say that an omnipotent being can create a stone which is too heavy for him to lift is to say that he is not omnipotent. It is to say, that is, on the one hand, that God is omnipotent insofar as he can create or do something or anything, and on the other, he is not omnipotent, because he cannot do something; namely, not be able to lift a particular stone. But what this amounts to is that God is omnipotent when he is not omnipotent, that he can both do X and not do X, at the same time. This, I submit, is not only self-contradictory but patently absurd. And as was pointed out above, not being able to do what is contradictory does not limit God's omnipotence in any way whatsoever.

It has often been said that the fact that an omnipotent being created contingent things which subsequently defect from being, thus,

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9. (con't) be done. But even if a persistent objector claims that God is able to create things which he cannot control or make a stone too heavy for him to lift is not self-contradictory but self-coherent, this still would not affect God's omnipotence. For even if it is admitted that God could make such a stone, the dilemma does not reappear for the simple reason that the objector has now "... contended that such a stone is compatible with the omnipotence of God"; and as such "cannot ... draw any damaging conclusions from this answer." (See G.I. Mavrodes, "Some Puzzles Concerning Omnipotence", Philosophical Review, No. 1, Vol. LXXII, 1963, p. 222.)

causing evil is sufficient reason for claiming that such a being is not omnipotent after all. But this claim rests on a misconception — the misconception of thinking that an omnipotent being cannot create contingent things which can defect from being. But to create contingent beings which cannot fall away from their created state is to create not contingent beings, but necessary beings. And since it is logically absurd to expect God to create contingent beings which are not contingent, it is therefore no limitation of God's omnipotence that he creates contingent beings which subsequently defect from being. P.M. Farrell points out that "limitation" would consistently appear in the creator only if it could be demonstrated that it is impossible for him to create a being which could, of its nature, defect from being."[10] In like manner, if it can be shown that insofar as the world is contingent, it is logically impossible for evil not to exist, not only would God's omnipotence be maintained but the "problem of evil"

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10. P.M. Farrell, "Evil and Omnipotence", Mind, Vol. LXVII, No. 267, 1958, p. 401. Farrell, further, argues that it is only if God were not able to create contingent things from which evil will follow that we could say that his omnipotence is limited. According to Farrell, evil "is permitted (not directly caused) if God in the course of manifesting himself in ... contingent good ... For in order to avoid evil, God would by the law of contradiction be obliged to prevent any or some privation of good. It would follow necessarily that He would have to restrict his power by not creating all or some contingent goods. His power would thus be impeded and limited by evil — ie. non-being. If it were not absurd, this would indeed be a limitation of his omnipotence." (Ibid., pp. 402-403.)

would have been solved. The obvious retort is that it is not logically impossible for evil not to exist; for it is possible that a world should exist without evil. So says M.B. Ahern:

> It is conceivable that a world without evil should exist, or that there should be no world at all. It is also conceivable that a world should exist with some evils and not with others. Hence, an omnipotent being could prevent all evils or certain specific evils.[11]

While I agree that it is conceivable that a world should exist with some evils and not with others or that there should be no world at all, the idea of conceiving of a world without evil I find extremely puzzling. For, granting that it were possible to conceive of such a world, it would be so unlike this world as to make it completely unintelligible to say the least. All that can be said is that it is logically possible to conceive of such a world (using "world" equivocally of course), but not that it is actually possible. (We will come back to this in Chapter IV). Enough has been said to establish that if certain types of evil could be prevented, that if it is not logically impossible to prevent such evils, then an omnipotent being could prevent them, but not that he should prevent them — that he should prevent them would depend upon his omniscience and his goodness. An omnipotent being could refuse to prevent some evils not because he is unable to prevent them but because it is better not to.

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11. M.B. Ahern, The Problem of Evil, p. 16.

I have been maintaining that when the theist says that God is omnipotent, what he means is that God's power is unlimited in the sense that he can do whatever it is logically possible for such a being to do; and the fact that he cannot do what is logically impossible is no limit to his power. But a being who is omnipotent is also omniscient. Ninian Smart says that "it is convenient to include God's omniscience simply under his omnipotence; for a God who can do anything, but does not always know what is the best way of doing it, might be said to be, in an important sense, less than all-powerful."[12] That is to say that any being who possesses unlimited power must also possess unlimited knowledge with respect to what it is logically possible for such a being to know.[13] For example, if when we say, "God is omniscient", we mean that the statement, "God knows that X" is a necessary truth, or that, "For every X God knows that X", so that whatever we substitute for X, "God knows that X" will be true, then it seems that such necessity is incompatible with human freedom. But the weakness of this argument is obvious. For, if in place of X, I substitute "2+2=5", what we get is "God knows that '2+2=5'" which is clearly false, let alone a necessary truth. Thus the fact that God is omniscient does not mean that it is possible for him to know of an object which is a "round square", or that it is possible for him to know the future free actions of men. God cannot know

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12. N. Smart, Philosophers' and Religious Truth, p. 140.

13. M.B. Ahern, The Problem of Evil, p. 16.

what men will do in the future because he cannot know future contingencies. God can only know what men will do in the future and hence know future contingencies if by "know" we mean "know" in the sense of "it is highly probable that ...". But this is presumably not the sense in which "know" is used to refer to God. (But more of this later in Chapter III.) To say that God is omniscient, then, is to say that he has all knowledge of necessary events or occurrences which are the result of the operation of the laws of nature, but not events which are the result of men's free choices. (We will have occasion to discuss this problem of omniscience and free will in the following chapter.

B. Evil

We can start our discussion on evil by dismissing the claim that evil is illusory or unreal. I have already pointed out that evil, insofar as it is illusory, is nonetheless evil. Some philosophers have maintained that when St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas point out that evil is not a positive thing but a privation, what is meant is that evil is not real but illusory. But this is a wrong interpretation of the privation theory of the nature of evil. Frederick Copleston says:

> When Aquinas calls evil a 'privation', he does not mean to assert that evil, either physical or moral, is an illusion. Blindness in a human being is a privation, and not a positive entity; but it does not follow that it is unreal or an illusion ... The analysis of evil as a privation is not, therefore, an attempt to make out that there is no real evil in the world at all.

> The description of evil as privation does not diminish the evil in the world, and still less does it do away with it ... If we point out that darkness is not a positive entity like a rock, we do not thereby turn night into day.[14]

When it is said, then, that evil is not positive, what is meant is that evil has no ontological status in the sense that other beings (eg. a dog or a cat) have ontological status. To say that evil has ontological status would be to attribute its creation directly to God, which would in turn be very difficult to reconcile with his goodness. St. Augustine maintains that insofar as the world was created by God, it is good: indeed, whatever is created by God is good. Thus evil cannot be attributed directly to God. What Augustine is pointing out is that things are not in themselves evil, but good. Evil, then for Augustine, is not positive but <u>privatio boni</u> (privation of good). He says:

> What after all, is anything we call evil except the privation of good? In animal bodies, for instance, sickness

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14. F. Copleston, <u>Aquinas</u>, p. 149. P.M. Farrell also maintains that <u>privation</u> is real. It takes the form of blindness, the loss of an eye, the passing away of the odour from the decaying rose. It is in this sense that evil is described "... as the <u>real</u> privation in the nature of an attribute or a quality which that nature is intended to, and should, have. This description will be found to be valid of evil universally, of physical evil, of pain, of moral evil." (See P.M. Farrell, "Evil and Omnipotence," <u>Mind</u>, LXVII, No. 267, 1958, p. 400.)

> and wounds are nothing but the privation of health. For such evil is not a substance; the wound or the disease is a defect of the bodily substance which, as a substance, is good.[15]

When it is said, then, that evil is not positive, this is not to be interpreted as unreal but as the absence of good which ought to be present. And this includes both moral and natural evils.[16] But even if some die-hard objector refused to accept the above account of the nature of evil, this would not affect our discussion in any way.[17] For evil, whether it is considered as privative or positive or illusory, is still evil. And as long as there is evil in the world

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15. St. Augustine, Enchiridion, III, 11. (Cited by J. Hick, Evil and the God of Love, pp. 53-54).

16. With regard to natural evils, St. Augustine maintains the same position, viz., that evil is the absence of good. For it must be remembered when Augustine says that everything as created by God is good, he included rocks, trees, water, etc. Thus he maintains that evil is "... nothing but the corruption of the natural measure, form and order. What is called an evil nature is a corrupt nature. If it were not corrupt, it would be good ... It is bad only so far as it is corrupt." (The Nature of the Good, IV. Cited by John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 54.)

17. It is futile to attempt to define "evil", or enter into discussions concerning its nature; for such discussions end in confusion. In order to avoid such confusions, we could use the term "evil" as "... the name of an indetermined class which includes such facts and events which bring about these torments, such as natural disasters, wars, torture, sickness, prosperity of the dishonest, failure of the honest, etc." (N. Pike "God and Evil: A Reconsideration", Ethics, LXVIII, No. 2, 1958, p. 119.).

the problem of evil becomes a threat to the theist. What is relevant to our discussion, however, are the types of evil; namely, moral and natural evils.[18]

By moral evil I mean that evil which comes about because of human actions, where the humans concerned are free, intelligent agents. Free, intelligent human beings possess the ability to choose between what is right and what is wrong. When one chooses deliberately what is morally wrong, his choice may result in injustice, deceit, dishonesty, envy, hate and selfishness; which in turn brings about great suffering (eg. wars, murders, theft, frustration, etc.) to other people. But a free, intelligent person may also choose wrongly unknowingly; in which case the choice itself is not immoral but only what is chosen. For example, a person may accept a certain job not knowing that what he does may subsequently result in a great deal of pain and suffering to many people. Of course, we could rebuke that person for not being careful about what he does, but we would not, under normal circumstances, call him immoral even though his actions may result in moral evils. It should be pointed out that pain and suffering are not themselves moral or immoral; they are

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[18]. Although evil is normally characterized as moral and natural, some works of theodicy mention intellectual evil, psychological and metaphysical evil. By intellectual evil is meant such defects as insanity, stupidity, mental disorders, irrationality and all the errors which follow from these. Psychological evil includes pain and suffering, whereas metaphysical evil has to do with the finitude and limitation of the created order. For the purpose of this study, however, we would include intellectual, psychological and metaphysical evils under moral and natural evils.

called moral evils only because they result from the actions (free actions) of human beings.

In addition to the evils which originate from human actions, there are natural evils which come about independently of human actions. Under natural evils we include evils which come about because of natural events, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, floods, germs, etc. In the wake of these natural disasters great physical evils follow — physical evils which include the loss of limbs and eyes, deformities of various kinds, diseases, famines, and the loss of thousands of lives. It is important to note that many natural evils, while they may not be caused directly by human actions, can be prevented by human actions; such evils cannot simply be classed as moral or natural, but both. For example, it can be argued that although it is beyond human power to prevent earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, many lives could be saved and much suffering and damage averted through proper planning. Man's scientific knowledge and achievements have advanced to the point where he could, if he used these properly, prevent completely or greatly reduce the suffering and loss of lives which result from major natural disasters. In many instances, the intensity of earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes are predicted weeks and even months in advance, and in such cases, proper precautions could be taken to prevent great loss, but in many cases this is not done. With proper economic planning and foresight, famines could also be averted; the proper distribution of finances could also reduce the evils which follow in the wake of natural disasters.

It is claimed by experts that many lives could be saved in car crashes if more money were spent on safety features rather than on decorations, aeroplanes could be built more carefully so as to reduce the number of crashes per year. Environmental experts also claim that pollution which is responsible for so many germs and diseases could be controlled if money were made available for such projects. Thus, although it is true that natural disasters are beyond man's control, it is nonetheless within his power to control, to a great extent, the terrible outcome of these disasters. It is to this extent, then, that what could be called natural evils could also be called moral evils and vice versa. J.S. Whale puts it this way:

> The distinction between moral and physical evil is not absolute, of course; there are notorious evils such as famine, disease and grinding poverty which often enough belong to both classes. Though man is not responsible for cholera; but for his selfishness and inhumanity, his vices and stupidities, cholera could be very largely eliminated ... The fact is that physical evil and moral evil, though distinct from one another in principle, are closely bound up with one another in fact.[19]

The fact that the world is so built that disasters occur, that human beings despise, hate and even murder each other, that trees and plants decay and die, that planets become extinct, is very crucial

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19. J.S. Whale, The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil, pp. 34-35.

and fundamental to the whole problem of evil only to the extent that mankind is directly affected. To what extent the events in nature which do not affect mankind could be called evil is so very controversial indeed and is of secondary importance to this discussion. It is at this point that it is very important to point out that

> The word 'evil' is an evaluative term. It is frequently said that observation will establish that the world contains evil. This is no doubt true, but the judgment that certain observed facts in the world are to be classed as evils is an evaluative judgment, however much the presence of those facts is established by observation.[20]

If this is not taken into consideration, the theist could always legitimately refuse to accept the criticism of his critics on the issue of evils in the world. (We will have occasion to deal with 'evils' which do not directly affect mankind and the problem of animal pain in Chapter IV).

C. Divine Goodness

We have stated that in order for the problem of evil to arise, the existence of a God who is omnipotent, omniscient and all-good must be presupposed. For a God who is omnipotent and omniscient may be able to prevent evils but may not wish to do so, in which case the problem of evil does not arise. The problem arises for the theist, therefore, because in addition to God's omnipotence and omniscience,

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20. T. Penelhum, "Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil," Religious Studies, Vol. 2 (1966), p. 102.

he claims that God is also all-good, that goodness is an essential part of His nature; that God is morally wholly good. Now to say that a being is wholly good is to say among other things that he is morally perfect, that there is no occasion when such a being could or would act evilly. A good person may, on occasions, make mistakes or act immorally, but we would not therefore call him immoral or evil -- we would not because he is not wholly good. In the case of God, however, a single evil or immoral act would be enough to conclude that he is not wholly good or morally perfect. The problem of deciding whether or not God acts evilly or immorally brings us, therefore, to the notion of 'all-goodness'. The central question is "What does it mean to say that God is wholly good?"

The question of God's goodness is not, to say the least, unambiguous or uncomplicated. Many writers have said that when we attribute goodness to God, we cannot and do not mean goodness in the ordinary sense; nor do we mean it in any sense applicable to human beings. Others have claimed that God's goodness only "resembles", ("is like", "is analogous to") human goodness, but is not the same as human goodness. Still others claim that when we say "God is good" and "John is good", the word "good" does not have the same intension in both cases. But to admit this is to admit that God's goodness is so different from ours, as to be wholly vacuous. C. S. Lewis makes this quite clear when he says:

> ... if God's moral judgment differs from ours so that our "black" may be His "white" we can mean nothing by calling Him good;

> for to say "God is good", while asserting that His goodness is wholly other than ours, is really only to say "God is we know not what".[21]

It is obvious that God's goodness in this sense could have no effects whatsoever on our moral conduct. Thus when we speak of God's goodness, we cannot mean that His goodness is beyond our comprehension or that His goodness is of a different order from ours. To be sure, when we say that God is good in the sense of being wholly good or perfectly good, we are admitting that there is a difference between such goodness and human goodness, but such a difference is one of degree only, not of kind. For instance, when we say of a man that he is good and of a knife that it is good, the difference in goodness is one of kind, not of degree; for a man is good in a 'completely' different sense from that in which a knife is good. The former is moral goodness; the latter is not. Thus, although God's goodness is different from man's goodness, the difference, as we have seen, does not require that we should bracket our moral standards when we are speaking about God's goodness; nor does it mean that we should plead ignorance with regard to it as some religious philosophers have done. God's goodness and man's goodness are the same in the sense that they refer to the same moral standard. It is only that God, insofar as He is wholly good, is "better" than man. Once again I quote from C.S. Lewis:

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21. C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 25.

> The divine "goodness" differs from ours, but is not sheerly different: it differs from ours not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child's first attempt to draw a wheel. But when the child has learned to draw, it will know that the circle it makes is what it was trying to make from the very beginning.[22]

The upsurge from the foregoing contention is that the theist cannot have a different set of criteria for attributing goodness to God from those which he has for calling any person good; he too must adhere to the same set of criteria. Thus when I say "John is good", what I am saying is that John fulfils to a greater degree than most people the criteria (whatever they may be) of being a good person. And if I have no such criteria myself then I cannot be using "good" in any meaningful sense. For, it is extremely odd to say that John is good, but I do not know how he would act if he were asked to contribute toward some worthy cause. This point is clearly brought out by Terrence Penelhum. He says:

> In calling someone morally good a speaker must have in mind some set of moral standards which the man he calls good follows in his conduct ... he must have criteria of goodness which the man he calls good satisfies. And those must be the criteria he subscribes to himself ...[23]

Now the case is much the same when we turn to God's goodness; for the theist cannot consistently attribute goodness to God without

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22. Ibid., p. 27.

23. T. Penelhum, Loc. Cit., pp. 100-101. See also R. Hare, The Language of Morals, Chapter 6.

having a good idea of what such goodness means. I do not want to give the impression that it is an easy matter to speak about the divine nature; for clearly this is not the case. What I am claiming is that if God's goodness is to mean anything at all to the theist, he must have in mind a set of criteria which such goodness has to satisfy. And, moreover, this set of criteria must be his own.

It should be pointed out that when I say that the set of moral principles which the theist ascribes to God are the same as those which he holds himself, I do not mean to imply a set of moral principles external to God, in terms of which He can be called good. For such a position militates against the theist's claim that God is the sole ultimate reality. All that is implied in saying that the moral principles ascribed to God and those the theist holds are the same, is that the theist, insofar as he claims that God is good, is presupposing a moral standard (whatever it may be), and this moral standard must also be his own. And if his moral standard is different from that of his God, then he is forced by the logic of his belief (i.e. God as the sole ultimate reality is Good) to give up that standard or be guilty of inconsistency. What follows from this is that when the theist claims that God is Good, what he is saying is that whatever evils God permits, He has reasons for permitting them — reasons which a theist himself can accept as justifying reasons for such evils. As Penelhum puts it:

> What is necessary is that the moral principles the theist holds to and the ones he ascribes to God are the same. Here ... we have to allow for the fact that an omnipotent and omniscient

> being will not be in situations that compare precisely with any in which we find ourselves (God, in fact, is never "in" situations at all); but the principles he follows must be the same. A rich man with no family and a poor man with a large one will no doubt respond differently to the same request for money; yet their moral principles can be identical.[24]

For example, if the theist cannot justify the existence of some evils in his own moral standard, he cannot escape the charge of inconsistency by claiming that God's goodness is sometimes mysterious or that God works in a "mysterious way his wonders to perform". This might do as an ascription of praise to God, but it cannot answer the charge of inconsistency brought against the theist. It is a mere subterfuge to say that because God sometimes acts in mysterious ways, we cannot always understand why he permits some evils — evils which we ourselves cannot justify according to our own moral standards. The upshot of this is crucial for the theist; for if the critic could show that it is logically impossible for an all-good God to permit certain evils, or that there are evils which the theist cannot justify according to his own moral standards, then he cannot claim that his God is good, let alone all-good. (Of course, the onus is on the critic to show that such evils exist or that it is logically impossible for an all-good God to permit evils. And everything depends on whether this can or cannot be shown. It will be argued that this cannot be shown.)

An important aspect of God's goodness is His love. The theist in saying that God is Good, is at the same time saying that his God

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24. T. Penelhum, Loc. Cit., p. 103.

is a God of love — a God who loved mankind so much that he permitted His son to die so that men might have everlasting life. Indeed, it is impossible to speak of God's goodness without speaking of his love, -- the love which is unconditional and universal; the love (agape) which values man in such a way as to show the deepest concern for his welfare.

In ordinary circumstances when we say that some parents are good we do not exclude their love. A good parent is one who loves and cares for his child; he is one who shows every particular interest in his child's welfare. A parent who does not display great interest in the welfare of his child is not considered a good parent. A good parent is not one who simply provides the wherewithal for his child's training and development without making sure that the child is not abusing it. Many so-called "good parents" have been despised and condemned both by their children and by society as a whole because they did not show the concern for their children's overall welfare. Thus, a good parent is one who is stern and sometimes severe with his child. I recall an incident I once witnessed. A lad of eight was encouraged by his sister to climb a plum tree that was not very high, but high enough to cause serious injury if one were to fall from it. His sister exerted great effort in pushing him up the trunk until he got up to the first set of branches. He was very proud of himself and attempted to climb higher, but as he pulled on a dried branch, he came tumbling down. His sister's screams brought his mother to the scene. He was upon his feet by this time with only his pride hurt. His mother, seeing that he was not injured, grabbed

him and slapped him twice. He could not, of course, understand then why she did this, for he always thought that she loved him dearly -- he was her only son. It probably took him a very long time to realize that it was because of her love for him that she scolded him.

Sentimentality aside, this incident does illustrate the point I have been making. If such a parent is called good and loving, then surely it is not difficult to see why the theist can maintain that the goodness and love of God do not preclude evil and suffering in the world. I think C.S. Lewis is correct in saying:

> When Christianity says that God loves man, it means that God loves man; not that He has some "disinterested", because really indifferent, concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of His love ... The "Lord of terrible aspect" is ... not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, but the consuming fire Himself, the Love that made worlds, ... provident and venerable as a father's love for a child, jealous and exorable, exacting as love between the sexes.[25]

I have been maintaining that when the theist says that God is wholly good, he is presupposing a particular logic (i.e. definite rules of usage) of the word "good". I have also been maintaining that the "logic" of good which the theist attributes to God includes his love in such a way that it does not preclude evil and suffering. It has been said that an all-good God could and should always prevent or eliminate evils as far as he can. But the logic of "good" in this sense is completely different from the logic which we have been

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25. C.S. Lewis, op.cit., pp. 34-35.

maintaining. And it is this logic which the critic must take into consideration when he claims that an all-good God should prevent all evils, or some evils, in the world. He has to show that goodness in this sense is logically incompatible with some or all evils. If he can show this, then theism is refuted; if he cannot, it remains intact. It will be argued that such logical incompatibility does not obtain. We will deal with moral evil and free will first.

CHAPTER III

EVIL AND THE FREE WILL DEFENCE

One very important answer to the question, "Why do men do evil?" is centred around man's will. To be a man is not to be controlled exhaustively by external factors. It is claimed that man has freedom, autonomy and power that help to determine how his attention will be fixed and how his capacities for thought and action will be used. Those who hold this position claim that human life is permeated by decisions, choices and responsibilities, all of which point to the presence of the will and its freedom. They further claim that the doing of evil and the existence of our capacity to choose freely are closely linked together.

This emphasis on free choice rules out the view that man's doing of evil is somehow necessary; that is that man had or has to do evil, or that God causes the evil that men do and experience at the hands of each other. The evil men do and experience from each other does have a cause, however, but the cause is to be found in the human will rather than in God. Thus, the answer to the question, "Why do men do evil?" is this: men do evil because they <u>freely choose</u> to do it. It is true that God gives or creates man with this free will, but it is not true that God causes evil or causes man to do evil. For according to this position, man's free will as created by God is good, but man abuses this free will thus causing evil. [1]

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1. Some scholars (e.g., John Hick, <u>Evil and the God of Love</u>, p.65 f.) claim that this position on the question of free will is similar to that of St. Augustine.

Let us see how this view of free will might be defended. It should be pointed out here that I am not concerned with the issue of demonstrating or proving whether man does or does not have free will. The question of man's free will and freedom is a vexed one and is highly controversial. And although it is an important question, it is not necessary for the purpose of this thesis to discuss it here. It might be objected that the whole free will defence rests on man's free will and freedom and if it can be shown that there is no such free will or freedom, then the defence fails completely. The truth of this objection is obvious; for if indeed it is denied or can be shown that there is no free will or freedom it will make no sense to say that evil is due to human freedom. I must confess that I simply do not believe that it can be shown that there is no freedom. But let us assume for the moment that it can be shown and see what follows.

Not only would the free will defence fail, but Christian theism itself would have been dealt a serious "death blow". For the lack of human freedom would render many central Christian doctrines nonsensical. For example, sin and punishment cannot be explained apart from human freedom; a creature who is not free cannot be held responsible for the violation of any commands, there would not be any need for commands in the first place if human creatures were not free. The Christian doctrines of salvation and redemption would become downright absurd if it could be shown that man is not free, in some sense or the other. In other words, Christianity itself would become meaningless and incoherent if it could be shown

that man is not free, in which case the threat of the problem of evil becomes irrelevant. To deny freedom, then, is at the same time to deny not only Christianity, but morality as a whole; to deny the entire human way of life. J. S. Whale correctly remarks that although freedom "involves grievous error and pain (it) is the very condition of our being human." [2]

The point I am making is that Christianity presupposes human freedom and this is enough to make the free will defence legitimate. And to this extent the question of whether man does or does not have free will becomes a separate issue which can be set aside. For the purpose of this discussion I shall adopt the position that free will is essential to the human person — a position which can be arrived at through a proper understanding of the Christian faith.

I have said that freedom or free will inasmuch as it comes from God is good. This immediately suggests that it is not freedom as such which causes evil but man's misuse of this freedom. Man's misuse of his freedom results in evil — the point here is that evil is not positive, but is characteristic of nonbeing. [3] Some medieval philosophers claim that everything is good insofar as it exists, but since evil is not good, it follows that it does not exist in a positive sense, but as the privation of that which is good. St. Augustine,

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2. J. S. Whale, The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil, p. 50.

3. John Hick, Op. Cit., pp. 46 f.

for example, also suggests that there are different degrees of goodness in what exists. Thus, just as there is a difference between a man and a piece of iron, there may also be different degrees of goodness in the dimension of human existence. From this Augustine suggests that freedom is not the highest good, but an intermediate good -- a good which contributes to a higher good. In other words, freedom of the will, which entails responsibility for its use, is something which is necessary for man to live properly.

Without freedom of the will, man would not, strictly speaking, be man. Freedom, then, is higher on the scale of goodness than, for instance, material wealth or some other physical comforts which, though good, are not essential for full human existence. But this freedom which is essential to human existence also entails the possibility of evil. A freedom which does not entail at least the possibility of evil is not freedom in the sense that it is being used here. To say that man is free but the possibility of doing evil does not exist is, therefore, a contradiction. (I will have occasion to come back to this point shortly.) We have seen, then, that freedom not only is a good, but it is also essential to human life and if properly used would contribute to its over-all well being. When evil occurs, it is not that God has created or caused such evil, but it is because of the misuse of this freedom. It will not do to blame God for its occurrence. The possibility of evil, then, is a logical consequence of man's freedom of the will. The question which now becomes crucial is, "Why did God, who is omnipotent, omniscient and all-good, create man with such freedom?"; "Could not God have made

man in such a way so as to avoid the horrible consequences of this freedom?" "If not, what sense are we to make of his omnipotence, omniscience and goodness?". Let us consider omnipotence first.

I have said above that a freedom which does not entail at least the possibility of evil is contradictory. This is fine so far as it stands. But what of an omnipotent God? Why could he not create man such that though free, he would also have the power to do anything. Omnipotence (as was pointed out above) is the power of doing not everything or anything, but everything which is logically possible. Aquinas made this point quite clear when he said, "... nothing that implies a contradiction falls under the scope of God's omnipotence."[4] Now, for the free will defender, it is impossible to be free and not have the power to do evil. Both A. Flew and J.L. Mackie deny this. Flew argues that "there is no contradiction involved in saying that God might have made people so that they always in fact freely choose the right." He says:

> ... to say that a person could have helped doing something is not to say that what he did was in principle unpredictable nor that there were no causes anywhere which determined that he would as a matter of fact act in this way. It is to say that if he had chosen to do otherwise he would have been able to do so; that there were alternatives within the capacities of one of his physical strengths, of his I.Q., with his knowledge, and open to a person of his situation.[5]

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4. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 25, 4.

5. A. Flew, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom", in A. Flew and A. MacIntyre, eds. New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 150.

Flew takes as a "paradigm case" of acting freely the decision of a man to marry a certain girl "when there was no question of the parties 'having to get married', and no social or parental pressure on either of them."[6] To say that he was free to marry her is not to say that his choice was unpredictable or uncaused, but only that "... being of an age to know his mind, he did what he did and rejected possible alternative courses of action, without being under any pressure to act in this way."[7]

What Flew is hammering home is that there is no contradiction in saying that an action was both free and could have been helped and that it was predictable. Freedom, when understood in this sense, leads Flew to conclude that "... omnipotence might have, could without contradiction be said to have, created people who would always as a matter of fact freely have chosen to do the right thing."[8]

Mackie's position is very close to Flew's. He too is concerned to ask why could not God have made men who would act freely but always choose the good. The point made earlier, viz. that the possibility of making mistakes or doing evil is logically necessary if there is to be freedom, is not accepted by Mackie. He claims that the above point can hold only if freedom means "... complete randomness or

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6. Ibid., p. 149.

7. Ibid., pp. 149-150.

8. Ibid., p. 152.

indeterminacy" with regard to the choice between good and evil. He says further:

> ... if God has made men such that in their free choices they may sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? If there is no logical impossibility in man's freely choosing the good on one occasion, or on several occasions, there cannot be a logical impossibility in his freely choosing the good on every occasion. God was not, then, faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obvious better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right.[9]

Mackie's point is very subtle. What he wants to claim is that God could have so made man's character that he could always choose the right. The choices would then have been free in the only sense of "free", since they would have arisen from man's character. Mackie further argues that even if the free will defender were to argue that God does have the power to control men's wills; that is, determine them to choose good, but refrains from doing so, this would strengthen his (Mackie's) position. Such a position can only mean that "freedom is a value which outweighs its wrongness." He says:

> But why, we may ask, should God refrain from controlling evil wills? Why should he not leave men free to will rightly, but intervene when he sees them beginning to will wrongly? If God could do this, but does not, and if he is wholly good, the only explanation could be

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9. J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence", in N. Pike, ed., God and Evil, p. 56.

> that even a wrong free act of will is not really evil, that its freedom is a value which outweighs its wrongness, so that there would be a loss of value if God took away the wrongness and the freedom together.[10]

Both Flew and Mackie seem to be maintaining a kind of "soft determinism" which they claim is compatible with free will. According to this "soft determinism", all men's acts are determined and their freedom consists only in the fact that their acts flow from their own volitions rather than being caused by external forces acting upon them. This is a position with which I am deeply sympathetic. But the problem with both Flew's and Mackie's positions is that their arguments do not fit this definition of "soft determinism". Both of them claim that God could have so made man that he would always choose the right. And this as it stands is contradictory. If a man is so made that he cannot help acting in a particular way, for example, always choosing the right, then his actions are not "free" in any sense whatever.

The claim is that if a person is so made that he cannot help acting in a particular way, then he is not free. And it does not matter if by particular way we mean "a class of actions, choices, etc." The point is that if a person is so made that he can only choose among a certain number of good things without the possibility of choosing wrongly, then the freedom here is not freedom as ordinarily understood. Of course, it is possible that I can, of my own volition

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10. Ibid., p. 57.

choose only among good things and never choose wrongly, but if I am so made that I must only choose among good things (reading Barth's Dogmatics or listening to Don Giovanni), then freedom is jeopardized. It does not really matter at all whether the choice is among a class of actions, or whether God determines a "range of possibilities". Once it has been made clear that God has so made man that he can or must choose among certain actions only, namely, good actions, then the contradiction is exposed. The crucial point is not that it is contradictory to say that men can choose among equally good actions, but only so if we say that they are so made that they can only choose among those equally good actions.

The claims "made to choose" and "determined to choose" are self-contradictory. Mackie's point that God could have so made man's character that he would always choose the right rests on the assumption that freedom would be compatible with determinism if man's acts were determined by his own character as created by God. For it is clear that if a man's choices are determined by his own character, to this extent they are free. The force of this argument can hold only if man's choosing is somehow independent of his character so that his choosing, though conditioned by his character, is not determined by it. But I must confess that I do not know of any way that such a position can be sensible. Man's choosing is not independent of his character in such a way that while his character may be made by God in a particular way (for example, inclined towards the good) his choices are nonetheless free, that is, uncoerced. Such a position I find incredible. Normally, when we speak of a person's character we are

at the same time implying what his choices will be like so that if it were possible to have an exhaustive knowledge of such a person's character, his choices can also be predicted.

Now if we are to escape sheer indeterminism, we must grant that a person's choices are somehow determined by his character. C.D. Ducasse, for example, is willing to grant that choices are not made independent of the will, but he goes on to advocate a similar position to Mackie's. He points out that if choices are not made independent of the will, then "... why God did not, as he could have done, give man not only freedom to act as he wills, but in addition a good will, ... a will which, although not infinitely good, were good enough to choose the good on all occasions where a choice between good and evil confronts him."[11] But if man's character were so made by God that his choices would always be right, then these choices are no longer his choices, but God's. It might be objected, however, that "if God determines the range of possibilities it is not the same as if he determines exactly what is possible." But if God determines a range of possibilities "x" so that I cannot help choosing "x", then in what sense am I free? God does not have to determine exactly what is possible in order to expose the absurdity in saying that God can so make man's character that he cannot help choosing what is right. The "range of possibilities" would have to be infinite if one were to

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11. C. Ducasse, A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion, pp. 377-378.

escape this absurdity. Saying that God determines the "range of possibilities" still leaves open the crucial question of man's freedom with regard to these possibilities. If I am free only to choose from this range, then this freedom is somehow restricted -- it is not really freedom after all. If man is free, he should be free to choose from this range of possibilities and others as well. The alternative of this is that man's choices will no longer be internally determined (that is, by his own will or character) but externally determined; that is, by God. For instance, let us say that man's choices Z are determined by his character Y which in turn is made or determined by God X. What this amounts to is that Y implies Z and X implies Y. But if X implies Y and Y implies Z, then X also implies Z; that is, that God determines man's choices in which case there can be no freedom of choice for man. What Mackie's and Ducasse's claims really amount to is that an omnipotent God can determine man's choices without interfering with man's freedom. This, I submit, is logically impossible; for what it really amounts to is that man's acts are in fact determined by God in which case there could be no freedom of choice.

The point which Mackie is belabouring, if sound, will be a serious blow to the free will defence because it is aimed directly at God's omnipotence. According to Mackie, if it is not logically impossible for men to choose the right always, then God could have made them in such a way that they would always do so. It is only what is logically impossible that an omnipotent God cannot do. But since it is logically possible that men should always choose the right,

then why did not God make them so? Mackie puts it this way:

> The crucial question is whether it is logically possible that God should have made men such that they would always freely choose the good. If this is logically possible, then ... men's making of morally bad choices is not logically necessary for their being free, and the superior value of freedom cannot explain why a God who can do everything that is logically possible should have created or should now tolerate, a state of affairs in which there is moral evil.[12]

Now, I am willing to grant at the outset that it is logically possible that men should always choose the right — this is hardly inconceivable. If a man is free, then it is logically possible that he will always choose the right or always choose the wrong or that he will choose the right on some occasions and the wrong on others. But Mackie fails to distinguish between "God so making men that they will always choose the right" and "men choosing the right always as a consequence of their freedom". There is an obvious difference between "men choosing the right always" and "men made so that they would always choose the right" — the former is logically possible, the the latter is not. It is possible and quite likely that a person may always choose among good things, but if this is somehow guaranteed by God; that is, if God so made this person that he would or must always choose among good things, then the person is not really choosing freely as Mackie and Flew would have us believe. And as we have pointed out repeatedly, not even God can do what is logically impossible.

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12. J.L. Mackie, "Theism and Utopia", Philosophy, Vol. 37, No. 140, 1961, p. 154.

If it were the case that man was created with free will which entailed the possibility of choosing wrongly but always chose the right of his own free will, this would have been a completely different case. But this is not the case which Mackie and Flew are advocating. They both deny that free will entails the possibility of acting wrongly. But even if, per impossible, God had made creatures in such a way that they would always choose the right or the good, these creatures would not have been men, and which is even more crucial, they would not have been free. They would have been automata or puppets. The statement, "God could have made men so that they would always choose the good" is logically contradictory, and as such does not restrict God's omnipotence in any way. Moreover, to say that God could have made men in such a way that they would always choose the right is to deny that man is a "person" or a "self". As W. D. Hudson has pointed out, Christian theism maintains that the relationship which exists between God and man is that of one self to other selves. In ordinary circumstances we do not say that one person (self) can determine another person's behaviour; for to say so is to deny such a person his personhood. One person may have a profound influence on another person, so much so that the latter only behaves in the way the former does. But this does not mean that such a person is no longer a "person", that he is not a self. Jones may have strongly influenced Smith's actions, but it is Smith who is held responsible ultimately for his actions.

Now if this is the situation between man and man then why should the situation between God and man be different? If, says Hudson,

"it would make no sense to speak of Smith as self, were his actions wholly predetermined by another self, Jones, neither would it make sense to describe men as selves and, at the same time, claim that their actions were wholly predetermined by another self, God."[13] Furthermore, this latter position does not tell against God's omnipotence because omnipotence is not at stake here. For whatever the theist's belief in Divine omnipotence may entail, it does not entail "that nonsense ceases to be nonsense simply because it is talked about God."[14]

In order to support his deterministic view, Mackie claims that an act which is not fully determined amounts to freedom in the sense of "randomness" or "indeterminacy". But this would be the case only if freedom were taken to mean indeterminism — a point which has not been made or established with regard to the free will defence. The free will defender does not deny that human acts as well as natural events have causes. He does not deny that the effectiveness of character, sentiments, and dispositions all go together in determining the human acts. But these are not the only factors involved in the free or voluntary actions — the free choice is also a matter of the ego or the self. A voluntary or free act, then, is a self-determined act. It might be pointed out that this self in turn could be determined in some sense or be the "result" of education, culture, parents, and even God, but this does not change anything. There is a sense

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13. W.D. Hudson, "An Attempt to Defend Theism", Philosophy, Vol. 39, No. 147, Jan. 1964, pp. 20-21.

14. Ibid., p. 20.

in which what we normally call selves or agents are to some extent determined by these factors, but the important point is that an agent or a self is always held responsible for its actions. The self or agent is influenced by other selves or agents, but we do not say of such a self that it is not responsible for its actions. A self that is itself the result of other factors is not less than a self after all but is what we normally understand by a self. No self is not to some extent determined by society, culture, parents, etc. When we turn to God as the cause of a self, we should not view the situation as one of Maker and Thing made. The relationship of God to the individual self is analogous to two selves, e.g. Smith and Jones. (After all, God is held to be personal in the Christian tradition). Smith may have greatly influenced Jones' character, but Jones is nonetheless responsible for his actions — we do not normally say that Smith should get credit for or be blamed for Jones' actions. Much the same situation applies to the relationship of God to individual selves. In this case, the individual self may have been determined (influenced) by God, but the self — the person — is nonetheless responsible for his behaviour. Thus the fact that the self may be the result of other factors does not rule out the fact that its actions are self-caused and free in the above sense. If we construe freedom in this sense, then Mackie's claim that the denial of determinism means randomness "loses" its force. The free will defender does not have to give up his concept of freedom for fear of randomness.

One point worth mentioning here concerns the use of the word "freedom" by the free will defender and by Flew (and Mackie). In claiming there is no inconsistency between complete determinism and freedom, Flew and Mackie are using the word "freedom" in a different sense from the free will defender who holds the opposite viewpoint. Flew, according to Plantinga, is mistaken in claiming that in the ordinary use of words like "free" and "freedom", there is no inconsistency between complete determinism and freedom. Plantinga says:

> I think it is he (Flew) who is using these words in a non-standard, unordinary way —— the free will defender can simply make Flew a present of the word "freedom" and state his case using other locutions. He might hold ... that God made men such that some of their actions are unfettered (both free in Flew's sense and also causally undetermined) ... By substituting 'unfettered' for "free" throughout this account, the Free Will Defender can elude Flew's objection altogether.[15]

I have already mentioned that man's free will is good insofar as it contributes towards his over-all well being. This means that free will contributes towards the supreme end of man (insofar as he develops) a right relationship with God.[16] This is made possible only if men are creatures endowed with freedom of will — a freedom with which the possibility of choosing evil goes necessarily. Hence, moral evil which results from wrong choices has to be permitted. Even God cannot make it otherwise. This

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15. A. Plantinga, "The Free-Will Defence", in Max Black, ed. Philosophy in America, pp. 207-208.

16. John Hick, Op. Cit., pp. 207 f.

point has a great deal of force. What it claims is that freedom which does not entail at least the possibility of wrong choices is self-contradictory;[17] that is, the point which Flew and Mackie want to put across, viz., the causal determinism of a free choice is self-contradictory. The free will defender is now ready to hammer home his point. For him, not even an omnipotent God can cause men with free will to choose always the right. And this in no way goes against God's omnipotence, for the contradictory cannot "fall under the scope of God's omnipotence". S.A. Grave makes the point rather clear when he observes that the Free Will Defender's reply is that moral evils are not necessary, but are necessarily possible consequences of freedom.[18]

The persistent objector may now grant that God could not have created men with freedom in such a way that they would always choose the right but only to question the gift of freedom itself. That is to say that if God had no other choice but to give men freedom, then it follows that this freedom would entail the possibility of choosing wrongly. But it is clear that since God is omnipotent and omniscient, other choices were open to Him. He could have foreseen the consequences of man's freedom, and if so, He could have refrained from

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17. I realize, of course, that this view of freedom is not without difficulties of its own. For example, it cannot be applied to God univocally without creating problems. But it is not necessary for the purpose of this thesis to discuss such problems here. My concern here is mainly with freedom as it is applied to human beings.

18. S.A. Grave, "On Evil and Omnipotence," Mind. Vol. LXV, No. 256, 1956, p. 259.

endowing men with this cursed freedom. Why then, did God create man with this freedom? Why could he not have made man without freedom? The obvious answer to this question is that "man without freedom" is self-contradictory and even God in his omnipotence could not make man without freedom. For to do this, he would have to make men who are not men. This is not to say that God could not have made creatures without freedom who have had "lives of happiness" (whatever that could mean) -- for it is clear that he could have made such creatures. The only thing is that they would not have been men -- they would not have been persons. And for the Free Will Defender, "... only persons could, in any meaningful sense, become 'children of God', capable of entering into a personal relationship with their creator by a free and uncompelled response to his love." [19] Thus, the Free Will Defender stands triumphant over his opponent with respect to God's omnipotence. But what of God's omniscience? How can an act be free or voluntary if God has foreknowledge of this act? How does the free will defence fare in the light of this question?

The question of God's foreknowledge and human freedom is a difficult but important one. In Book III of On Free Choice of the Will, Evodious asks Augustine, "How can it be that God has foreknowledge of all future events, and yet that we do not sin by necessity?" [20]

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19. John Hick, Philosophy of Religion, p. 43.

20. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, p. 88.

Evodius is probably referring to the view of divine omniscience proclaimed by the author of Psalm 139: "Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou discernest my thoughts from afar. Thou searchest out my path and lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether;" (vv. 2-4). In other words, if God is one "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid", what claim is there to substantiate the view that man has free choice? The free will defender while granting that God has foreknowledge, claims that there is no incompatibility between this claim and man's freedom. The claim is that foreknowledge of a free act is not self-contradictory. Before attempting to defend this claim, I would like to consider one line of argument that must be dismissed.

In order to answer the charge that future contingent events are foreknown by God, St. Thomas Aquinas claims that since God is outside time, His life is not measured by time but by eternity. The point of this is that Eternity is not divided into time sequences, into parts, but spans the whole of time. There is no past, no future, no present; all that happens is <u>present</u> together to God. Past, present and future are, as we understand them, concepts which are relational. "To us", says Aquinas, "because we know future contingent events as future, there can be no certainty about them; but only to

God, whose knowing is in eternity, above time."[21] Aquinas' position is summarized by Anthony Kenny thus:

> An event is known as future only when there is a relation of future to past between the knowledge of the knower and the happening of the event. But there is no such relation between God's knowledge and any contingent event: the relation between God's knowledge and any event, in time is always one of simultaneity. Consequently, a contingent event, as it comes to God's knowledge, is not future but present; and as present it is necessary; ... hence, we can admit that what is known to God is a necessary truth; for as known by God it is no longer future but present.[22]

When we analyse the above position, what we get is a denial of God's foreknowledge. For if there is no future or past but only present, then it makes no sense to say that God has foreknowledge: His knowledge is only present. But what this amounts to is that foreknowledge as attributed to God is vacuous. For we cannot say that God knew in 4004 B.C. that the U.S. would land a man on the moon in 1969 A.D., or that Russians will land a man on the moon in 1973. What we have to say is that God knows that Russia and the U.S. are

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21. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 14, 13 ad 3. (Cited by A.Kenny, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom" in Aquinas, ed. by A. Kenny p. 261.) This position was also maintained by Josiah Royce. He pointed out that God as the Absolute "possesses a perfect knowledge at one glance of the whole of the temporal order, present, past and future." This knowledge, he claimed, is "ill-called foreknowledge -- it should be eternal knowledge." (See J. Royce, The World and the Individual, Vol. II, p. 374. Cited by J. Ward, The Realms of the End. pp. 312-313.)

22. This passage was taken from sections of Aquinas' De Veritate, 2, 12, and cited by A. Kenny, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom", in Aquinas, ed. A. Kenny, p. 261.

landing men on the moon, which is clearly false.[23] Moreover, to say that God's foreknowledge is outside time is to say that from the point of view of God's foreknowledge Brutus' stabbing of Caesar and my writing of this paper are occurring at the same time; that is, that Brutus' stabbing of Caesar is simultaneous with all of eternity, which is clearly absurd. In other words, we cannot speak meaningfully of God's omniscience at all if this omniscience is beyond time. This point is well made by A. N. Prior. He says:

> In any case it seems an extraordinary way of affirming God's omniscience if a person, when asked what God knows now, must say "Nothing", and when asked what he knew yesterday, must say "Nothing", and must say "Nothing" when asked what he will know tomorrow.[24]

If God's knowledge is timeless, then we cannot even pretend to speak meaningfully about it, far less to understand it. But that is not all. The whole idea of prophecy is central to Christianity and without it Judaism becomes meaningless and nonsensical. For, in the view that God's knowledge is timeless, the promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many generations becomes inexplicable, in which case we should be entitled to say that if God could not and did not know that Abraham would subsequently become the father of many generations then He had no right to mislead us by saying so. We can only maintain,

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23. A. Kenny, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom", in A. Kenny, ed., Aquinas, pp. 262-263.

24. A. N. Prior, "The Formalities of Omniscience," Philosophy, No. 140, Vol. 37, 1962, p. 116.

then, that God's knowledge is timeless, thereby avoiding incompatibility with future contingencies at the cost of grave incoherency and irrationality. We must, therefore, face squarely the charge that God's foreknowledge is incompatible with future free actions.

Nelson Pike contends that the existence of an omniscient God is incompatible with persons acting freely since it is incompatible with anyone refraining from acting as he does: Pike says:

> Last Saturday afternoon, Jones mowed his lawn. Assuming that God exists and is (essentially) omniscient in the sense outlined above[25], it follows that (let us say) eighty years prior to last Saturday afternoon, God knew (and thus believed) that Jones would mow his lawn at that time. But from this it follows, I think, that at the time of action ... Jones was not able — that is, it was not within Jones's power — to refrain from mowing his lawn. If ... Jones had been able to refrain from mowing his lawn ... (he) would have brought it about that God held a false belief eighty years earlier. But God cannot in anything be mistaken.[26]

Pike is right, it seems to me, in pointing out that there is a contradiction involved in saying that an essentially omniscient being holds false beliefs, so that if such a being holds belief "X" at T_1, such a belief cannot be falsified if Jones refrains from doing "X" at T_2. In other words it cannot be both that Jones refrains from doing "X"

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25. That is, whatever God believes is true, "X is true" follows from "God believes X". And also God knows beforehand (i.e. always has known) that a particular event will take place at the time it occurred. Pike claims that "God knows at T_1 that 'X' will occur at T_2" is an a priori truth . (See "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action" in J. Gill, ed., Philosophy Today, No. 2, pp. 121-124.

26. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

at T_2 and also that an essentially omniscient God believes at T_1 that Jones will do "X" at T_2. But as J.T. Saunders points out, "... this cannot be, only because it cannot be both that Jones will do "x" at T_2 and also that Jones refrains from "x" at T_2; we may not deduce the necessity of an event from the fact of its occurrence."[27] I think Saunders is right in saying that Pike's case can hold only if God's belief at T_1 "somehow guarantees what later happens at T_2."[28] But this can be so only if God's belief at T_1 is necessary and sufficient (in a causal sense) for Jones' doing of "X" at T_2. But if God's knowledge is causative, then of course, if God knew at T_1 that I will do X at T_2, then I must do X at T_2. But it is very peculiar to speak of "knowledge" as being causative. In ordinary circumstances it would be sheer nonsense to say that the fact that I know that Jones is going to the movies tonight is the cause of Jones' going to the movies tonight. If this is what Pike meant (and I am not sure it is), then all one has to do is to deny any causal connection between the knowledge of God, on the one hand, and human action on the other. But if this is not what Pike means, then Jones' power to refrain from doing "X" at T_2 is the power so to act that it will change the situation at T_1.

One might object to the claim that the past can be changed.

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27. J.T. Saunders, "Of God and Freedom", Philosophical Review Vol. LXXV, April 1966, p. 223.

28. Ibid., p. 223.

It is a longstanding belief that while it is possible to change the future, it is not possible to change the past. Whatever happened in the past, it is held, has already happened and there is nothing anyone can do about it; that is, what has happened cannot not have happened. For example, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on June 2, 1953, and that cannot be changed; no sensible person would want to deny that such an event took place at such a time. In this sense there is agreement that we cannot change the past. But what of the future? Can we change the future? I think there is a very important sense in which we cannot. Let us say that a person plans to do something on a certain day in the future. He may, for various reasons, wish to change his plans in such a way that he would no longer be doing the same thing on the same day. He may, further, abandon all plans altogether in which case the particular event will never take place. In such circumstances we are tempted to say that he has changed the future in that what normally would have occurred on a particular day in the future would not now occur. But does this mean that he has <u>really</u> changed the future at all? I think not. Our friend has changed his plans many times and finally abandoned these plans, but the future has not been affected. It is only our friend's plans that have changed, not the future. A.N. Prior has correctly pointed out that "the future is precisely whatever it is that comes to pass after our alleged alteration has taken place, so what we alter <u>isn't</u> the future after all, ... the real future can no more be

altered than the past can."[29]

But Pike's objection still stands. All we have shown is that we cannot change the future any more than we can the past. But this still does not show that God's foreknowledge is not incompatible with human freedom. For, if God knew eighty years ago that Jones will mow his lawn at T_2, then Jones has no choice in the matter. But there is a case in which present actions can affect the past. A grandfather who died 25 years ago can become a great-grandfather today by the birth of a son to his grandson; by being ordained today I make my grandmother's belief that I will one day become a minister of the church into a true belief.[30] If this is granted, then it is possible to act at T_2 in such a way that the situation at T_1 will be different. Saunders points out that:

> Whenever one has the power to do "Y" but does "X" instead, one has the power so to act that the past would be other than it is; for if one were to do "Y" then every past situation would be other than it is in that it would be followed by one's Y-

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29. A.N. Prior, "The Formalities of Omniscience," Philosophy, Vol. 37, No. 140, 1962, 124.

30. A. Kenny points out that beliefs constitute knowledge only because of a relationship between these beliefs and the events they concern, "so it is possible that it is precisely by telling a lie today that I bring it about that God knew yesterday that I would tell a lie today. Of course, I do not bring it about by today's lie that God yesterday believed that I would lie; but it is my current lie which makes his belief then true." (See A. Kenny, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom" in A. Kenny, ed., Aquinas, p. 268).

> ing at this time rather than by one's X-ing at this time ... Once this is seen, we may realize both that it is not contradictory, in the case at hand, to suppose that Jones has the power to refrain from X at T_2, and also that God's essential omniscience is irrelevant to this issue of human freedom.[31]

In addition to the objection raised by Saunders, there is, I believe, a more telling objection against Pike's view. This has to do with the incompatibility between foreknowledge and a free act. Pike's claim is that an omniscient God can have foreknowledge of a free act. This is the claim I wish to deny. If Jones has freedom or free will, then it follows that he has the power to change his mind about his future actions. That is to say that Jones himself does not at T_1 know what he will do at T_2. He can plan at T_1 to do X at T_2, but it is within his power (because of his freedom) to do Y instead. Now if this is true (and I think it is), then at T_1 no one (not even God nor Jones) can know what Jones will do at T_2 for the simple reason that there is nothing yet to be known. An omniscient God can know all there is to know, but this does not include what it is not possible to know. It is in this sense that future contingencies cannot be known by God; for there is nothing yet to be known. And if there is nothing yet to be known at T_1, it is ridiculous to think that this somehow tells against God's omniscience. Freedom implies that future actions are not predictable (i.e. completely predictable).

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31. J. T. Saunders, "Of God and Freedom", Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXV, April 1966, p. 224.

But even if we can make certain "limited predictions" about future free actions, we still can not have knowledge of these future actions.[32] We can have knowledge of these future contingent actions only when they have been performed. A.N. Prior puts it this way:

> The contingent considered as future ... cannot be the object of any sort of knowledge which cannot fall into falsehood; so since the divine knowledge neither does nor can fall into falsehood, God could not possibly have any knowledge of future contingencies if he knows them as future. Divine foreknowledge of such events is, in fact, out; as he knows them, they are not still to come, but already are there.[33]

What this amounts to is that God's omniscience does not entail "foreknowledge" and hence can be compatible with human freedom. God's omniscience can entail foreknowledge only if it is true that "whatever is the case has already been going to be the case."[34]

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32. "Foreknowledge" is a peculiar concept. It is not always clear what it means. If by "foreknowledge" we mean that God has knowledge of all future actions prior to the occurrences of those actions, then my contention is that such "knowledge" is logically impossible. The "fore" in "foreknowledge" should not be an anthropomorphism simply because this is not how we speak ordinarily. We do not say that we have "foreknowledge" of our friends' actions. We do say, however, things like, "I know Jones is going to the movies tomorrow," or "I know that Jones plans to stay at home for the weekend," but this is not meant in the sense of foreknowledge. When it is said that God has foreknowledge, what is meant I think is that "omniscience" is being used in a very wide sense, namely to entail "foreknowledge." My claim is that such entailment does not in fact obtain.

33. A.N. Prior, "The Formalities of Omniscience", Philosophy, 37, 1962, pp. 123-124. H. Bergson denies the possibility of foreknowing (even with regard to God) free actions when he says that "to foresee consists of projecting into the future what has been perceived in the past ... But that which has never been perceived, and which is at the same time simple, is necessarily unforeseeable." (Creative Evolution, pp. 6-7.)

34. A.N. Prior, Op.Cit., p. 118.

Thus to say that "God is omniscient" is not to say that "for all p, if ... p, God has always known that it would be the case that p", but that "it is, always has been and always will be the case that for all p, if p then God knows that p", and what this amounts to is that "if, at any time, it was the case at that time that it would be the case that p, then God knew at that time it would be the case that p."[35]

In his paper, Pike further assumes that it makes good sense to say that God holds beliefs and that these beliefs are analytically true, that he is a person, and that essential omniscience implies knowledge of future free acts. This latter point I have claimed is self-contradictory. With regard to the former claim, it is not clear to me how we are to make sense of it. If it means that any beliefs which God holds must be true or must be the case, then Pike is not speaking of "belief" in the normal sense of its usage. And if we are to make sense of "belief" when we attribute it to God, we cannot empty it of its meaning in normal usage. But apart from this, Pike's contention is clearly false. For, as I pointed out above, God's beliefs become true only when the actions which correspond to these beliefs are performed. That is to say that God's beliefs cannot be analytically true simply because they depend on future contingent actions. And if Pike is using "believe" in the sense of "know" his point would still be very trivial; for as we saw above, God's omniscience does not imply <u>foreknowledge</u>; that is , does not imply

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35. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 117.

knowledge of future contingencies. And even if Pike's point that what God knows now must happen is true, it still would not follow that God's knowledge is incompatible with human freedom. For, when we say if God knows that X will happen, then X must happen, what follows from this is that if God knows at T_1 that X will happen at T_2, then X must happen at T_2, and it will not and cannot be prevented. But what this amounts to is that God's knowing at T_1 that X will happen at T_2 is the same as X happening at T_1. For, the claim that if God knows X will happen then X must happen is no different from the claim that whatever God knows has already happened since there is absolutely no way that it can fail to happen. But this is to mar any distinction between past, present and future from God's point of view — it is to say of God that whatever he knows or has known is happening simultaneously in his present. (We have already seen [pp. 70-73] that this view is logically vicious.) In this sense, then, there will be no future and hence no future contingencies for God to know. What follows from this is that the problem of God's knowledge and human freedom disappears; in fact it cannot even arise. It is not that humans are not free, but that freedom insofar as it entails the future and future actions is not in conflict with God's knowledge precisely because the future qua future together with all possible free actions etc. is ruled out once we claim, as Pike does, that God's knowledge is necessary or analytically true. While this does not prove that God's knowledge is compatible with future contingent acts (human

actions), it does rule out Pike's argument to the contrary. The statement "God knows that I am writing" is not analytically true, but contingently true; for whereas I may hold it to be true now, I will cease to do so as soon as I stop writing. God's knowledge can be analytically true only where what God knows is analytic; for example, "3+3=6". But as A. Kenny has pointed out, a contingent proposition is by definition never an analytic or necessary truth.[36] And if this is so, then the claim that divine knowledge is incompatible with human freedom has not and cannot be established. I turn now to the notion of God's goodness.

I have contended so far that free will is compatible with God's omnipotence and omniscience. But the objector can still point out that if God were all-good (and given that he is omnipotent and omniscient), he could or would have refrained from creating creatures with free wills which led to wrong choices that subsequently resulted in such myriads of evils. Could it be, then, that God is not all-good? Could it be the case that although God is all-powerful and all-knowing, he is nevertheless a malicious demon who, although he knows that men would become such corrupt creatures because of free will and although he had the power to refrain from creating them with such wills, chose to give them such wills and then began to enjoy sadistically their brutality towards each other? Although some critics have gone

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36. A. Kenny, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom", in A. Kenny, ed., Aquinas, pp. 269-270.

a long way towards making God out to be a malicious demon, this is not the point I wish to consider at present. What I want to consider is the idea of the incompatibility between God's goodness and the great amount of evil which results from freedom of the will.

H.J. McCloskey claims that a benevolent God "could and would have created a world devoid of superfluous evil", but this is not the case with regard to this world, for it is clear that there are "unnecessary evils" in the world.[37] It is McCloskey's claim that the moral evil in the world is entirely superfluous. He says:

> ... Clearly God could have created man with a strong bias to good, whilst still leaving scope for a decision to act evilly. Such a bias to good would be compatible with freedom of the will.
> ... An omnipotent God could have so ordered the world that it was less conducive to the practice of evil ... God, if He were all-powerful, could miraculously intervene to prevent some or perhaps all moral evil; and He is said to do so on occasions in answer to prayers ....[38]

On the face of it, it is not hard to see that McCloskey's arguments are not very different from that of Mackie according to whom free will is compatible with absolute determinism. For to say that God could have created men with a "bias to good" is not very different from saying that God could have created men so that they

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37. H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil", in God and Evil, N. Pike ed., p. 84.

38. Ibid., p. 80.

could always freely choose the right. The same criticism raised against Mackie and Flew holds here also and is enough to expose its weakness.

Let us consider McCloskey's claim that God could intervene to prevent moral evil. McCloskey seems to think that intervention by God in answer to prayers and intervention of His own initiative are the same. But this is clearly not the case. The Free Will Defender can claim that prayers for forgiveness of sins or for preventing one from falling into the evil of temptation or for the prevention of wars fall within the correct use of free will. It is the very nature of the Christian's faith that man through his free will should pray to God for guidance and for protection. But God's intervention at His own initiative in all cases is tantamount to the denial of free will and also to the view that free will is compatible with absolute foreknowledge and prediction. And this we have seen is self-contradictory. Furthermore, McCloskey's claim that some cases of evil are superfluous has not been (and possibly cannot be) established. In order to show that certain cases of evil are superfluous, one would need to examine all cases of evil in order to decide when a particular case of evil is or is not superfluous. This I claim is not humanly possible and as such, the force of the objection is diminished substantially. Not only is it not humanly possible to decide when evils (we are speaking of natural evils only) are superfluous or unnecessary, but the notion of "unnecessary evil" itself becomes meaningless once it is claimed that the world as a whole is a complex network

of parts which are interrelated in such a way that each part (however minute or insignificant) contributes to the overall complex. No one part can be eliminated without at the same time affecting the overall structure. This is not to say that there must be evils in the world, or that there must be evils in order for good to arise etc., but that the evils (natural evils) which occur cannot be unnecessary or superfluous. The world as an evolving complex structure cannot possess any event which is unnecessary or superfluous. We can only speak of unnecessary evils if the world were such that each event were somehow independent and self-contained. But such a view is untenable for the simple reason that it would rule out both causality and causal connection — the result being utter chaos and confusion.

Another objection to McCloskey's idea of God's intervention to prevent evils and His ordering of the world in such a way that it would be less conducive to evil practice has to do with the chaos and confusion that might seem to be the result of such actions. A world in which the consequences of our actions were somehow changed by God's intervention to result in less evil would be a chaotic world — it would be a world in which causal connection would be meaningless. And, which is worse, the uniformity of nature, which we presuppose in order to live our ordinary lives, would have no place. The state of uniformity in nature is a necessary and sufficient condition for our lives being what they are. Without this uniformity, life as we know it would not be possible — some kind of life might be possible,

but what this life would be is beyond my imagination. One thing is certain; that is, that it would not be the life which we now live. And it is reasonable to assume that a life that is essentially different from the life we now live might not be subject to the evils which are inherent in this one. But that is only because such a life would not be human life — it would be something we know not what.

But let us come back to McCloskey's world. It is my contention that such a world would be, to say the least, haphazard and chaotic. In such a world, the weapons of war would suddenly become harmless toys, hate would suddenly become love, sorrow would be turned to joy, the falling aeroplane would be miraculously carried safely to its destination. In short, in such a world, there would be no accidents, no murders, no deceit, no robbery, no need to work, "since no harm could result from avoiding work; there would be no call to be concerned for others in time of need or danger, for in such a world, there could be no real need or dangers." Furthermore, John Hick points out that in order to live in this world, an over-all adjustment would be necessary. He says:

> To make possible this continual series of individual adjustments, nature would have to work by 'special providences' instead of running according to general laws which men must learn to respect on penalty of pain or death. The laws of nature would have to be extremely flexible; sometimes gravity would operate, sometimes not; sometimes an object would be hard and solid, sometimes soft. There could be no sciences, for there would be no enduring world structure to investigate. In eliminating the problems and hardships of

> an objective environment, with its own laws, life would become like a dream in which, delightfully but aimlessly, we would float and drift at ease.[39]

I am contending that life would not be possible in McCloskey's haphazard world. But even if it were possible, it would not be representative of God's goodness, but rather a lack of it. For it is clear from our understanding of the concept that we would hesitate to call anyone good (and much less God) who so arranged things as to eliminate individual personal decisions. This would make us out to be irresponsible, helpless, totally dependent creatures. We would live our entire lives like innocent new-born babes — the very thought of which is repulsive to the most derelict human reason. A good parent is one who loves, protects, guides his child; who teaches him to be independent, to accept the responsibility for the consequences of his actions; who punishes him when he does wrong, not out of malice, but because of his love and goodness. This is not the type of goodness which the God of McCloskey's world exhibits, and moreover, it is not the type of goodness which the Christian believer speaks of when he says, "God is good". Moreover, McCloskey's world makes nonsense of free will and rules out completely the Christian understanding of the world as a place of "soul-making" — a world in which men, through facing up to the challenges and engaging in the constant struggle of everyday existence, can become "children of God" and "heirs of eternal life". To ignore this as McCloskey has

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39. John Hick, Philosophy of Religion, p. 45.

done is to miss the point of the free will defence. For example, "McCloskey says:

> However, no matter how we resolve the linguistic point, the question remains — which is more desirable, free will and moral evil, and the physical evil to which free will gives rise, or this special free will or pseudo-free will which goes with absolute goodness? I suggest the latter is clearly more preferable.[40]

A similar position is advocated by J.W. Steen. He claims that if "the matter comes down to deciding which is better, evil with freedom, or goodness without freedom, we may ... decide for the latter."[41] Here both McCloskey and Steen fail to take into consideration the theist's claim that the final beatitude which comes through struggle and suffering is infinitely more valuable than a "comfortable" life (if that is possible) without free will and moral evils. But that is not all. I have already pointed out that it makes no sense to say that God could have created men with good wills so that whatever temptations they might encounter, they would always choose the right. But what of "goodness without freedom"? Could not men be made in such a way that they may avoid the evils which follow from freedom? I think it is highly doubtful that there really can be goodness without freedom. The "absolute goodness" which McCloskey sees as the result of a lack of freedom is not only beyond conception, but is simply

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40. H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil", in N. Pike, ed. God and Evil, pp. 79-80.

41. J.W. Steen, "The Problem of Evil: Ethical Considerations", Canadian Journal of Theology, Vol. XI, No. 4, 1965, p. 262.

not goodness. For in the first place goodness without freedom cannot be moral goodness. And if it is not moral goodness, it cannot be used to speak about human beings without gross equivocation. We can imagine a robot or a puppet doing various things correctly — that is, doing what it is programmed to do. To call such a robot "good" is to use "good" in the same sense that we use it to say that a knife or a car is good. N. Smart correctly observes that "people who effortlessly sailed through life serenely 'virtuous'" cannot be properly described as good.[42]

If this is the sense in which McCloskey and Steen are using the term "goodness" then our worries are over; for it cannot be attributed to "men" but only to robots or puppets. And as we have already argued, creatures without freedom of some sort (or at least some understanding of freedom) cannot rightly be called men. Whether or not men are in fact free is beside the point. What is important is that they at least act and plan their entire lives on the assumption that they are free. If men were programmed so to act that they always did what is good or right, they would be no more than robots or puppets. They can only be called good if they performed correctly whatever actions they were "made" to perform. A man who jumped into a river to save a drowning child may have caused the child to drown by jumping on him, but we do not, because of that, fail

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42. N. Smart, Philosophers and Religious Truth, p. 144.

to call him good. A good man is one who "chooses" to do certain actions — chooses, that is, to do what is good or right without being forced or coerced. If we realize that a man was commanded or forced to do what he did, his action ceases to be good in the moral sense. If some Robin Hood-like gang threatened to kill a rich man if he did not give to the poor and he did so, we call him good only if we are ignorant of the circumstances which led up to his giving. But once these circumstances which led up to his giving are revealed to us we can no longer call him good. Goodness insofar as it presupposes some sort of choice in the matter cannot be conferred on people, but must be developed. Goodness, then, (moral goodness) without freedom is absurd -- absurd because it is highly ridiculous to believe that God could confer goodness or morality upon people who inhabit and are part of an evolving world. And that he cannot do this is no adverse reflection on His goodness or power.

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to show how the claim that man's freedom or free will is the cause of evils can be defended. I have done so by pointing out that not even an omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God could have made men without free will. I have also shown that the idea of God making man in such a way that he would always choose rightly is self-contradictory. (The phrase "Made to choose" is also logically contradictory). In other words, if men are free, it is logically possible that they might choose to do what is wrong or evil; they might also always choose rightly or wrongly, but they

cannot be made to do so. What all this amounts to is that the freedom with which men are endowed logically entails the possibility of moral evil. Thus the fact that there is moral evil in the world does not in any way count against the existence of a God who is all-good, omniscient and omnipotent.

I have also pointed out that Christian theism presupposes that only men who are free can respond to God's love in such a way to become "children of God". But the critic can always point out that an omnipotent God could have created a perfect world thereby reducing the amount of pain and suffering. It is enough, he might point out, that men, insofar as they are free choose what is evil causing war, hatred, persecutions, poverty and starvation. Why should God add to all this by creating a world in which there are earthquakes and tornadoes, in which men and even innocent animals suffer? Why did He not create a perfect world? This is the question with which we shall deal in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

EVIL AND THE IDEA OF A PERFECT WORLD

In the last chapter we contended that man, truly speaking, is free and this freedom entails the possibility of moral evil. It was also maintained that this freedom is of such a nature that not even an omnipotent, all-good God could make man free to do always what is right. Thus, if men are to be free, at least the possibility of moral evil cannot be denied without contradiction. This puts the theist in a very serious position. The critic of theism may now be willing to grant that moral evil is a possibility in a world inhabited by men but still ask why could not an omnipotent, all-good God create the world in such a way that natural evils would have no place. Why could not God have made a perfect world — a world free of tornadoes, earthquakes, flood and hurricanes? Surely a God who is all-good would not want to add physical evils to the moral evils already in the world. And if this is true, then why did not God create a perfect world?

Now there is one sense of "perfection" that we must dismiss at the very outset, viz., unqualified perfection. A world perfect in this sense would be a world so perfect that it would be unthinkable. Indeed, such a world would not really be a world at all; for it would be God himself. Such a world would be too perfect to be created; for as was already pointed out, the very act of creation implies finitude in that which is created and this in turn implies at least one form of imperfection.

In this sense, then, God cannot create a perfect world. In order to do this he would have to create that which is identical to himself, that is, himself. This, I submit, is logically impossible. But be that as it may, it can always be pointed out that if God could not create such a perfect world why did he create one which, by the very act of creation, is not perfect? In other words, why did God create the world in the first place? Would it not have been better if he had not created it at all?

I must confess that I do not know of any way that such a question can be answered. I do not know how one would set about debating whether in fact it was better for God to create or not to create. What standards would one appeal to in order to answer such a question? It is my opinion that even if such standards exist, they are beyond human imagination, and if so, they cannot be used in order to answer our question. And a question which cannot possibly be answered is, after all, at its best a pseudo-question; at its worst, nonsensical. Austin Farrer has pointed out that when we speak about God's choice to create or not to create,

> All human analogy fails us. We can cast no light on the choice God makes in creating the world he creates, because we cannot, even in imagination, set up the experiment -- cannot put the alternatives for selection on the table, nor construct the selective mechanism. What we feel bound to say about divine decision merely serves to put it beyond the range of human conceiving.[1]

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1. A Farrer, Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, p. 59. C.S. Lewis makes a similar point. He says, "I am aware of no human scales in which such a portentous question can be weighed. Some comparison

It can be granted that it is nonsensical to ask whether it was better for God to create or not to create. But surely, it is not nonsensical to ask whether God could not have created the world differently so that the myriads of evils which occur now would not have occurred. Why did he not create the world in such a way that mosquitoes and germs, poisonous snakes, poverty, pain and suffering would not exist? Why did he not create the world in such a way that it could not be subjugated by humans for evil purposes; that men could not engage in oppressions, slavery and persecutions; that atom bombs and napalm bombs would not operate? This is the question H.J. McCloskey seems to have in mind when he says:

> There is no reason why better laws of nature governing existing objects are not possible on the divine hypothesis. Surely, if God is all-powerful, He could have made a better universe in the first place, or one with better laws of nature governing it, so that the operation of its laws did not produce calamities and pain.[2]

Now, the phrase "better laws of nature" is totally ambiguous and simpleminded. It seems to suggest that all God had to do was to make the laws of nature such that no evils could occur and all would

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1. (con't) between one state of being and another can be made, but the attempt to compare being and not being ends in mere words." (The Problem of Pain, p. 24).

2. H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil", in N. Pike, ed., God and Evil, p. 70.

be well. But how can this be? How can laws of nature which are to be uniform (if they are to be laws of nature) be made to avoid evils and calamities? If all that is meant by better laws of nature is that they are such that evils and calamities are not produced, then I maintain that such laws cannot be violated, because it is the violation of the laws of nature which brings about most, if not all, evils. Now McCloskey wants us to believe that there can be laws of nature which cannot be violated — because as far as we know the violation of a law (or laws) of nature always results in some sort of evil. This, I submit, is absurd. To say that God could have made better laws of nature, meaning laws which caused no calamities, is to say that God should have made laws of nature which cannot be violated; that is, he should make laws which are not really laws — an absurdity. Furthermore, a world with laws which allowed no evils and even calamities would not be a world in which human beings could live. (We shall come back to this point later.)

Now to say that God could or should have made the world with better laws of nature so that bombs etc., would not work is to say that the laws of nature should be such that they would operate

only for the benefit of man; whatever is evil in any way should not occur. But what this amounts to is that the laws of nature should hold at some times and fail to hold at others; for the operations of the laws of nature which are necessary for life are also those which are responsible for the explosion of bombs and the existence of germs and diseases. And it is impossible to have the former and not the latter. If the laws were to fail to operate when a bomb was set off, it would also seriously affect human life. As F. R. Tennant has pointed out, "...the general suspension of painful events, requisite on the vast scale presupposed in the elimination of physical evils, would abolish order and convert a cosmos into an unintelligible chaos in which ...we should have to 'renounce reason' if we would thus be 'saved from tears'...." [3] It is also absurd to say that the laws could fail to operate in certain geographical locations and not in others. What I am suggesting is that a world which is operated by natural laws has to have some sort of uniformity; that is, the laws must operate at all times or else life would be impossible. And I do not think it makes any sense to speak about a world without natural laws; for such a world is hardly conceivable. If the world is to be "liveable", the laws of nature cannot be suspended sometimes to prevent evils and disasters. I say such a world could not be liveable because no one would know what to expect at any time; no one would know when to move or not to move; no one would know if he were sitting or

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3. F.R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 202.

standing, for the law of gravity would hold at some times but fail to hold at other times. What causes pain today may cause joy tomorrow; what is hard today may be soft tomorrow, and so on. John Hick puts it this way:

> Fire, whose heat gives us vital warmth but also hurts us if we put our hand in it, would suddenly lose its heat whenever this was about to cause pain. Water, which has certain properties in virtue of which it can both sustain life by slaking our thirst and destroy life by suffocation, would suddenly lose these properties whenever someone was in danger of drowning. Knives, which can cut both bread and flesh, would suddenly become blunt rather than cause a hurt. Food, which is pleasant to taste but hard to digest, and alcohol, which warms and cheers but which in excess, makes drunken sots and dangerous drivers, would cease to have any desirable effects; and no amount of tobacco would foster lung cancer. The density and hardness of things, which make it possible to walk and to build houses, but also to be killed or injured by a flying stone or a wielded stick, would be continually adjusted for the avoidance of pain. [4]

In other words life (i.e., if it is possible at all) in such a world would be nothing but a perpetual nightmare.

It might be objected that in saying that the laws of nature should be suspended each time some disaster is about to occur, I am committing what is sometimes called the "all-or-nothing fallacy"; that is, that the laws should be suspended at all times or not at all. But why not? It can always be argued that if God suspends the laws of nature to

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4. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, pp. 341-342.

prevent some evils then there is no reason why he would not (if he is all-good and omnipotent) suspend them at all times. It makes very good sense, it seems to me, to say that if an all-good omnipotent God could suspend the laws of nature to prevent some evils, he should be expected to do so to prevent all evils. And if so, the charge of the "all-or-nothing fallacy" fails.

Now if, as we have been pointing out, the idea of suspending the laws of nature proves to be impossible, it is still open to the objector to claim that the world could have ben created differently; that is, not as an evolutionary world. For, although the end product of the evolutionary process is the mutual adaptation of different organisms to each other and the balanced harmony of plants and animals, the means of achieving this end product must include a great deal of cruelty and waste. According to the theory of evolution the varying natures of animals and plants result in a struggle for survival among organisms, and only those that can adjust to each other or whose variations allow for their adjustment, will survive and multiply — those that cannot adapt are eliminated. The organisms that survive are the relatively few that can adapt to the environment. But what of the elimination of the many that cannot adapt themselves and fit in? There is progress in the evolutionary process but this comes about, presumably, only at the expense of degeneration and waste. Why did not God create the world so as to avoid such cruelty and waste? Why could he not find another alternative?

Now, the alternative to an evolutionary and changing world

is one that is not evolving and changing; that is, one that is static in the sense that it is not developing.[5] And although it is not an easy matter to imagine what such a world would look like, we know for a fact that there would be no room for creativity or development or any such thing. Such a world would have to be created perfect in every sense of "perfection"; for there would be no room for change. This would mean that men would have to be created fully developed and completely intelligent. But of course there would be no room for the use of this intelligence because there is no room for creativity and development — whatever is made is made permanently. There would be no destruction. And men, of course, would be immortals; for how can we speak of death in a static world? In other words, whatever such a world would look like and whatever creatures it may possess, it would not be anything like our world (i.e., a changing world); it would be something we know not what. For it is difficult for us to form an idea of a static, perfect world — a "ready-made" world, because our concept 'world' includes change. And if it is

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5. I am using the word "evolution" here in a broad sense to include change as well as creativity, development and progress. What this means is that creativity, development and progress cannot take place in a world that is not somehow changing — a world in which things must remain forever as they are. If, then, there is to be progress and development there must be change. And where there is change there will also be destruction, decay and subsequently evil. And even if there is change in the form of augmentation which does not involve decay there will still be evil involved in the very act of this augmentation. It is possible that a world that is not evolving may include change, but change that does not involve "progress" or "novelty", etc.

difficult for us to form an idea of a "ready-made" world, it makes no sense to say that such a world would be better than our evolving world. Furthermore, the only concept of a world we have is that of an evolving and changing world. And if this is correct, then the notion of a "ready-made" world or a world finished and complete at once is contradictory: the idea of the world that we have is one that is evolving - we do not know of any other.

If, as I have been maintaining, a static perfect world is not only unintelligible but logically impossible, it would be foolish to think that God could bring into being such a world. And if a static perfect world (granted of course it makes sense to say such a world is perfect) is unintelligible then we are left with an evolving, changing world. And it is the very nature (as far as we know) of an evolving world that some things are eliminated and others preserved. If what I have been saying so far is correct, it would be futile and irrelevant to ask whether an evolving world is better or worse than a static perfect one. I say it is futile because we know of no other world but an evolving world.[6] And an evolving world, a world whose fundamental character is evolutionary, cannot at any stage of its development, have the perfection toward which it is developing and moving.[7] In such a world, then, evil is inevitable.

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6. Ninian Smart holds a slightly different position. He claims that "the cosmos as it is (is) a theatre for the creation of values", and that "the evolutionary ways of realizing them may be perchance better than a statically perfect world, and is certainly more intelligible." (Philosophers and Religious Truth, p. 159, my underlining.)

7. See James Ward, The Realms of the End, pp. 350-351.

Someone might object, however, that even if evil is inevitable in an evolving world, why is there so much of it? Although this is a serious and pointed objection, I do not think that it is crucial. For while it is true that there are many evils, these evils cannot be shown to be unnecessary or pointless unless we can cite particular instances of evil which are not necessary to the evolutionary process. And I know of no way that such evils can be pointed out or cited. Furthermore, if it were true that there are too many evils in the evolutionary process, the world might have been destroyed by now. In any case, the important question, as far as I can see it, is not the amount of evil in the world, but the fact that there are evils at all.

Up to now I have been examining the claim that the world could have been built differently. Such a claim we have seen is ambiguous. It is all well and good to say that the world could have been built differently, but once we begin to spell out the implications of such a claim we soon find that it cannot be maintained with any kind of logical consistency and coherency. This becomes more evident when we consider a world inhabited by "living" creatures as opposed to one that is not; when we consider it in relation to the type of creatures which inhabit it. Indeed, I do not think it is possible to speak about a world that is <u>not</u> inhabited by "living" creatures as being good or evil; that is, we can only speak about the world as being good or evil in relation to the living creatures which inhabit it. A world is not good or evil in itself. What I

mean is this: When we say of a world that it is good or evil, what we mean is that it is good or evil for the proper inhabitation of certain living creatures. The type of living creatures which inhabit the earth will not normally survive on the moon. In this respect the earth is better than the moon. Thus, whenever we speak of a world or a planet as being better than another or as being good, it makes perfectly good sense to ask, "Better for what?" or "Good for what?" Without these questions or similar ones in mind, we cannot sensibly speak evaluatively of the world.

The moon qua planet is no better nor worse than the earth qua planet. It is only when we take into consideration that certain living creatures can survive on the earth but not on the moon that we can say the former is better than the latter. It might be objected that I have been belabouring a very trivial point, and this might be so. But it is not at all trivial when we take into consideration that the world we are talking about is inhabited, to a great extent, by a particular type of creatures, viz., human beings. (Let us put aside the order of lower animals for the moment.) And if we speak of the perfection of the world, we can only do so if we mean perfect for the development of these human beings who by definition are supposed to be free and rational and hence, moral; for it is logically impossible to have moral value in a world in which the agents are not free and rational. Such creatures must occupy the central spot of any discussion which concerns the physical world evaluatively. In any such discussion the central question must be something like this: "Could

a world which human beings inhabit have been made better; that is, better in the sense that there would have been no evils or calamities?" Is human life which entails moral and rational development possible in a world which was so made as to avoid all evils, disasters and calamities?

Some theists point out that this world is a place of "soul-making", and if so, all evils cannot be avoided. John Hick, for example says,

> ...this world must be a place of soul-making. And its value is to be judged, not primarily by the quality of pleasure and pain occurring in it at any particular moment, but by its fitness for its primary purpose, the purpose of soul-making.[8]

But all this talk about morals and rational development and "soul-making" as important as it is, cannot escape the inevitable difficulty, viz., the pain and suffering which occur among the lower animals. These brutes are not moral and rational, nor can it be said that "soul-making" applies to them since it is assumed that they have no

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8. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 295. At the outset, I should make it quite clear that I am not rejecting the "soul-making argument." I am only pointing out the difficulty which arises (concerning animal pain) when it is said that this world is primarily a place of "soul-making". Anyone who claims that this world is primarily a place of "soul-making" and uses this as a full-fledged theodicy cannot escape the inevitable problem of animal pain. Such a person either has to discount the brutes altogether (a highly dubious position) or claim that they are somehow necessary to the whole idea of "soul-making". The only way out, it seems to me, is to adopt the latter course which is not without its difficulties. My argument throughout most of the thesis substantiates to a certain extent the idea of soul-making insofar as it applies to human beings. My major query is with its applicability to the lower animal kingdom.

souls. Surely, it would have been a better world if it had been built in such a way as to avoid such unnecessary pain. And the fact that it was not so built certainly goes against (it might be said) the power and goodness of the Deity who designed it. This objection was raised by J.S. Mill. He wrote:

> If there are any marks at all of special design in creation, one of the things most evidently designed is that a large proportion of all animals should pass their existence in tormenting and devouring other animals. They have been lavishly fitted out with instruments necessary for that purpose; their strongest instincts impel them to it, and many of them seem to have been constructed incapable of supporting themselves by any other food. If a tenth part of the pains which have been expended in finding benevolent adaptations in all nature, and been employed in collecting evidence to blacken the Creator, what scope for comment would not have been found in the entire existence of the lower animals, divided, with scarcely an exception, into devourers and devoured, and a prey to a thousand ills from which they are denied and faculties necessary for protecting themselves. [9]

Mill's arguments are very crucial not only to the design argument but more so to the "vale of soul-making" theodicy. For it is not clear how this spectacle of "nature red in tooth and claw" can be explained by this theodicy. Indeed, it seems that the problem of animal pain is intensified by such a theodicy. If the world is (as Hick pointed out) primarily a place of "soul-making", then

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9. J.S. Mill, Three Essays on Religion, "Nature", p. 58.

animal pain becomes so much more difficult to explain.[10] For a world which is primarily a place of "soul-making" positively excludes the whole lower animal kingdom unless it can be shown that such a kingdom is also necessary for "soul-making". John Hick claims that this is the case. He says:

> ...from the point of view of the divine purpose of soul-making, animal life is linked with human life as the latter's natural origin and setting, an origin and setting that contribute to the "epistemic distance" by which man is enabled to exist as a free and responsible creature in the presence of his infinite Creator.[11]

Various answers have been given to the question of animal pain. It has been pointed out that since these creatures possess no souls or selves it cannot rightly be said that they really suffer. For example, C.S. Lewis points out that "...a great deal of what appears to be animal suffering need not be suffering in any real sense. It may be we who have invented the 'sufferers' by the 'pathetic fallacy' of reading into the beasts a self for which there is no real evidence."[12] Now it might be that animals do not

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10. Not only is animal pain inexplicable by the "soul-making" theodicy, but various human evils. For example, the untimely death of a five-month old baby, the suffering of an eighty year old man, those born with mental deficiencies, etc. It is not easy to see how these can be explained on the "soul-making" thodicy: It is difficulties like these which seriously limit theodicies. It is true, of course, that no one theodicy can explain all kinds of evils, but this is something which those who make theodicies must always bear in mind.

11. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 352.

12. C.S.Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 121. The naturalist Theodore Wood makes a similar point. John Hick cites the following passage from Wood: "When a crab will calmly continue its meal upon a smaller crab while being itself leisurely devoured by a larger and

really suffer but this we do not know. It is true that these animals cannot use "pain-language" but this is no reason to conclude that they do not suffer. When we see animals tearing each other apart, when we see some animals being devoured by other animals, when we see animals groaning with swollen limbs, we cannot help concluding that such animals are suffering. To call this the "pathetic fallacy" is an obvious subterfuge. To say, then, that animals do not really suffer because they have no souls or selves is not to give an answer to the problem of animal pain, but to avoid it. I think John Hick is right when he points out that there is "...sufficient evidence for the presence of some degree of consciousness, and some kind of experience of pain, at least throughout the vertebrate kingdom, to prohibit us from denying that there is any problem of animal suffering." [13]

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12. (con't) stronger; when a lobster will voluntarily and spontaneously divest itself of its great claws if a heavy gun be fired over the water in which it is lying; when a dragon-fly will devour fly after fly immediately after its abdomen has been torn from the rest of its body, and a wasp sip syrup while labouring — I will not say suffering — under a similar mutilation; it is quite clear that pain must practically be almost or altogether unknown." (See John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 348.)

13. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 346. And so too, Ninian Smart. He says: "One cannot escape by the subterfuge of saying that the animals do not really feel pain. Admittedly, we tend to be too anthropomorphic in our approach to animals, and to ascribe to them the kind of experiences which we ourselves have. And it may well be that animals do not suffer as intensely as we might at first think. But to take the subterfuge seriously would mean that, when we saw a cat lying injured on the road, we could quite justly pass by on the other side." (Philosophers and Religious Truth, p. 156)

The question of animal pain, then, cannot be brushed aside but must be taken seriously. And when taken seriously the only sensible answer that can be given is that these animals no less than human beings are part of this world and as such they must be affected by its constitution and natural laws. (And as was pointed out above, evil and suffering are inevitable in such a world.) And such pain and suffering must necessarily affect everything that is in the world. It is utterly foolish to believe that God who is "...the God of hawks no less than of sparrows, of microbes no less than of men", [14] should spare the lower animals all pain and suffering while allowing the higher ones to suffer. The winds, the rains, the atmosphere, the natural laws must affect all living creatures in the same way — the elements cannot be tapered to suit individuals without resulting in utter chaos and confusion. And as to the charge that nature is "red in tooth and claw" we can only say that if such is part of the evolutionary process, then, it must necessarily be. (I have already pointed out that it makes very little sense to speak of a world that is not evolving.) And according to the evolutionary process, those organisms which cannot adapt are eliminated in some way or the other — there is absolutely no evidence for believing that the devouring of animals by other animals is in any way malicious; it is simply part of the evolutionary process. We are surely talking nonsense if we say that God should spare these lower animals all suffering.

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14. A. Farrer, Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, p. 94.

Animal pain cannot be avoided if animals form part of the cosmos. It seems that the only point that can now be made is that God should not have created these creatures in the first place. The whole question of animal pain, then, centres around their very existence. John Hick admits that this is the central question but contends that animal existence is a problem.[15] I would not go so far as to say with Hick that animal existence is a problem. The question whether God should or should not have created the lower animals is, like the question whether he should or should not have created the world, a pseudo-question. It is futile to speculate whether God should or should not have created the world or whether he should or should not have created the lower animals. Moreover, even if it makes sense to ask whether God should or should not have created the lower animals, there is no reason to believe that a world devoid of such animals is better than one with them. It is at least logically possible that a world with lower animals is far better than one which has none. It can also be argued that the different parts of an evolving world are not-independent of each other; that is, that each part affects the other parts in such a way that no one part can be subtracted without interrupting the whole system. And animal life, as part of the world cannot be eliminated nor left out without drastically affecting the whole system. We will come back to this later.

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15. Hick points out that the crucial question for theodicy is not "why animals are liable to pain as well as pleasure — for this follows from their nature as living creatures — but rather why these lower forms of life should exist at all." "Their existence," he concludes, "remains as a problem." (Evil and the God of Love, p. 350.)

I want now to consider further a point which I alluded to earlier, viz., the type of world which is necessary for human life. I have said that it is not possible to conceive of a world that is not governed by natural laws or a world that is not evolving. And in such a world, it was also pointed out, evil is inevitable. A further claim can now be made, namely that only in an evolving world governed by natural laws is human life, insofar as it includes moral development, rationality and intelligence, possible; morality, rationality and intelligence cannot simply be implanted; they must develop. And if so, they cannot be possible in a static perfect world or one in which the laws can be suspended so as to avoid evils. Morality, as far as we know it, is learned and this presupposes a world or an environment which is uniform. To this extent, the laws of nature cannot be interrupted. Ninian Smart puts it this way:

> Without the pattern of consistency in the cosmos, there would then have been no development of men's intellectual powers; and by the same token, no development of morality. In short, a regular background is necessary for the exercise of creativity and freedom. A random and haphazard world, if this can be conceived, could not contain rational and moral beings.[16]

It can be granted that morality and rationality are not possible in a world that is not uniform or one that is not evolving, or one free of evils. But still the objector may be concerned about the great amount of evils in the world. Surely, he might point out,

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16. N. Smart, Philosophers and Religious Truth, p. 154.

God could prevent most of the major evils without interfering with the laws of nature or without interfering with the evolutionary process. And if he could do this and does not, how can we say that he is perfectly good and powerful? Anyone who fails to prevent an evil when he could prevent it is often blameworthy. Why should it be different with God? At first sight this seems to be a very strong point, but after a short reflection it can be seen to be untenable. It is untenable because there is an obvious difference between saying that men should prevent evils if they could and saying that God should do so also. For while it is not possible for men to be in situations to prevent all or even most would-be evils, a God who is all-good and omnipotent would not (let us say) have this limitation. It will be open to him then to prevent all evils. As John Hick has pointed out "unless God eliminated all evils whatsoever, there would always be relatively outstanding ones of which it would be said that He should have secretly prevented them". [17]

Now, I suggest that a world in which God prevents all would-be evils would be an impossible state of affairs, if only because it would render causal connection, which is necessary to human life, meaningless. In the case of man, we know that only a few evils can be prevented, and the prevention of these evils is not surprising to us. But in the case of God we do not know what to expect if he were to prevent would-be evils. And even if he prevented only some evils,

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17. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, p. 363.

this would still present an impossible state of affairs. For either he would prevent specific evils, in which case we would know that certain evils or disasters cannot and would not occur, or he might prevent evils arbitrarily, in which case evils might occur at some times but fail to occur at other times. I suggest that in either case the situation would prove chaotic and utterly confusing. A flood which killed thousands of people today might fail to do so next month, and molten lava from an erupted volcano which destroyed an entire city last year may prove utterly harmless this year. But such occurrences would severely upset the uniformity of nature and thus make life chaotic. And not only that: it is highly dubious, it seems to me, that some disasters can be prevented or eliminated without affecting human life and the workings of nature as a whole. The physical world (as was pointed out earlier) is not a simple system in which some parts can be eliminated without affecting other parts. And the evils insofar as they are part of the physical world cannot be exempted from this whole scheme. This is very forcefully put by Austin Farrer. He says:

> In thinking of the world as something which might be cured of its general evil, we are tempted to treat it as though it were a simple system from which external interferences might be banished, or internal incoherences eliminated; a beast with a thorn in its paw or a fault in its digestion; a car with nails through the tires or a misfit in the cylinders; even a molecule of some substance, broken down by external pressure or collapsing by some

> internal disintegration. But the world is not a system, it is an interaction of systems innumerable. [18]

And once we grant that the physical world is not a simple system but an interaction of systems it becomes obvious that each part of the world is necessary to every other part or to some part at least, so that if the one is removed the other cannot continue functioning. What this amounts to is that in a world in which there are evil situations and good situations, you cannot have the one without the other. You cannot have, that is, good without evil — you cannot take away the evils out of the world without, at the same time taking away the good, the good being logically connected in some way to the evil. For example, the same properties in water or in the wind, or in wood or in clay, in stones, etc., which benefit man, without which man cannot survive, are the same properties which are harmful to him. Thus the harmful effects cannot be prevented without preventing the beneficial effects. F.R. Tennant points out that "if water is to have the various properties in virtue of which it plays its beneficial part in the economy of the physical world and the life of mankind, it cannot at the same time lack its obnoxious capacity to drown us." [19]

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18. A. Farrer, Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, p. 49. John Wisdom holds a similar position. He writes, "We could not remove a fact, F_e from a world, W_1, without removing certain other facts logically dependent upon F_e. It may not be at once apparent that any fact, F_e, in W_1, will have logical dependents, but a little reflection makes this clear. By a logical dependent of F_e is meant any fact, F_x, such that F_x without F_e is a mathematical or logical absurdity, is inconceivable. (See "God and Evil." Mind. Vol. 64, No.173, 1935, p.6.)

19. F.R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 201.

The important question which crops up now does not deny the fact that water should have the capacity to drown us or the winds to blow away our houses, but concerns the fact that such situations arise in the first place. If we cannot have the benefits of the elements without the dangers which go along with these benefits, we might very well have to learn to put up with this situation. But what about the disasters which come about not simply because of the elements but because of an excess of any one element. [20] For example, only a certain amount of water is necessary for our comfort, but how often there are such raging floods which wipe out towns and cities, killing so many people? Why do winds have to blow at hurricane velocity? This objection was forcefully advanced by David Hume in his Dialogues. He pointed out that the winds are necessary for navigational and other purposes,

> but how oft, rising up to tempests and hurricanes, do they become pernicious? Rains are necessary to nourish all the plants and animals of the earth. But how often are they defective? How often excessive? Heat is requisite to all of life and vegetation; but is not always found in the due proportion. On the mixture and secretion of the humours and juices of the body depend the health and prosperity of the animal: But the parts perform not their proper function....[21]

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20. The question of excess or surplus evil need not detain us here for the simple reason that "surplus evil" or "excess evil" is ambiguous. In order to speak of surplus evil we must be prepared to say what would count as surplus evils. This calls for a criterion of some sort for deciding when evils are to be classed as surplus and when not. The only other alternative (it seems) might be to claim that every case of evil is a case of surplus evil, but this is absurd for obvious reasons.

21. D. Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed., N. Kemp-Smith, p. 210.

The seriousness of this objection cannot easily be denied; for surely it is not hard presumably to conceive of a world in which things were so arranged that there would be no floods or hurricanes. But the crucial question is whether human life is possible in such a world. For such a world there would be no major disasters, no troubles, no difficulties, etc. The situation we are picturing is one in which there is no excess of rain, no droughts; no difficulty with the formation of the earth so that no one is challenged in any way. In other words, such a world would be a sort of paradise in which suffering would be impossible. Now, I am not saying that such a world might not be desirable; for clearly it might be. But what I am trying to point out is that although such a world is logically possible, it is highly dubious that human life would be possible in it. Some sort of life might be possible, but it is doubtful whether this would be the best form of life, let alone human life. For, while it does seem that the world contains extreme and severe evils, these evils we have pointed out are part of the world in so far as it is changing and developing. No one knows exactly why such severe evils must be, but it is enough to point out that insofar as they form part of an evolving, developing world, they cannot count against God's goodness and power. It is sheer nonsense to say that God could have made an evolving, developing world without including in it what seems distasteful and destructive, when it is of the very nature of such a world to have some distasteful and destructive effects. Be that as it may, it still does not seem likely that a world in which

the elements were controlled so as to avoid disasters (for this is what Hume's objection amounts to) can furnish the type of situations which are presupposed by the moral development and moral virtues necessary for human life.

I have pointed out above that we cannot take away evils without taking away good. This is precisely the situation with moral virtues and moral values. For it is clear that a hedonistic paradise could not provide the challenges and problems without which moral virtues and moral values would not be possible. A world in which the elements did not bring about occasional disasters, a world in which struggles are unknown, is a world in which men would not be faced with situations in which such virtues as compassion, true friendships, pity, courage, endurance, fortitude, even love, would be possible. [22] For how can love, pity, courage and friendship be possible in a world in which men are not faced with problems and challenges, which are logically necessary for the presence of such virtues? [23] And it cannot be argued that people can be without

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22. And, of course, in such a world it would be impossible for men to steal or to commit adultery, for each man would be allotted his share and would have no desire for another's. But as tempting as such a world might seem to us, it is obvious that the creatures which can inhabit it cannot be human beings like ourselves — they would have to be built differently. Ninian Smart puts it this way: "How would men, in such a world have to be built if they were never to steal, never to commit adultery and the like? Would they have to be such that a man became inevitably infatuated with the first unin-fatuated girl he met, and conversely? And that people arrived in the world each with his own store of provisions, of such a nature that another person's things seemed repellent to oneself? It does not take much of such fictionalizing to see that we would end up with very peculiar creatures. Would they truly be human?" (Philosophers and Religious Truth, p. 143.)

23. See John Wisdom, "God and Evil", Mind, Vol.64, No.173, 1935, p. 17.

these virtues and still be happy. For happiness is inconceivable in a world where these virtues, which presuppose some sort of freedom, are not present. And of course it makes no sense to say that men could exercise freedom in a world which did not contain any sort of trials or challenges or problems or evils. In such a world, both choice and responsibility would be meaningless and pointless. Everything, then, comes down to man's nature. Of course, we do not know that we have this sort of ultimate freedom, but the important thing is that we do not know that we do not have it. And as John Wisdom says:

> It may therefore be this freedom which compelled God to allow evil. It may be that this ultimate freedom is not so valuable as to compensate for the amount of misery and degeneration it produces. But we do not know this. Much evil, no doubt is a result not of the imperfectness of persons but the blindness of matter — for example the misery caused by an earthquake. But it may be that these disasters are the only reasons of bringing persons with the natures we have to a state of perfection without interfering with these natures. [24]

And it can only be claimed that such a world; that is, a world which contains evil, is not the best logically possible world if it can be shown that only a world free of evils is the best logically possible world. [25] But this, alas, cannot be shown nor proved. For,

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24. Ibid., p. 10.

25. There is, I believe, a very important sense in which the notion of the best logically possible world is incoherent. A world, X, is the best logically possible world just in case it contains all possible good, G. But it is possible to conceive of a world, Y, which contains G+1 possible good and a world Z which contains G+2 possible good and so on. What this amounts to is that for every good world we can conceive, we can always conceive a better world, viz., one which contains one more good than the previous. In this way, it would be impossible to conceive of the best logically possible world — hence the charge of incoherency. (See K Yandell, Basic Issues in the Philosophies of Religion,

if by "best logically possible world" or "perfect world" we mean a world which contains the highest amount of moral value, then such a world must contain free agents; and it must be possible for free agents to make evil choices (or else they would not be free). Thus the best logically possible world insofar as it contains free agents cannot be free of evils. And by the same token, a "perfect world", if this means one free of evils, is logically impossible.

Throughout this chapter I have been trying to analyze the concept of a "perfect world" to see to what extent such a world is possible. Such a world insofar as it does not mean an evolving, developing world, I have claimed, is not only impossible but also inconceivable. I have also claimed that a "perfect" world insofar as it means a world free of evils is not only logically impossible, but is not the kind of world which free agents can inhabit. It is, then, logically impossible that God should create such a world.

It remains now for us to consider to what extent a world containing evils counts against the existence of an all-good, omnipotent God. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

EVIL AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

I pointed out in chapter one that the "problem of evil" is a logical problem. The problem arises when the following propositions are taken together:

(1) God Exists;

(2) God is omnipotent;

(3) God is omniscient;

(4) God is all-good; and

(5) Evil exists.

These five propositions, it is claimed, when taken together form a logically inconsistent set. Now, it is clear that although these five propositions are essential to Christian theism, they do not by themselves entail a formal contradiction. That is to say that propositions (1) - (4) by themselves do not entail the falsity of (5); that is, that evil does not exist. This point was recognized by J. L. Mackie. He agrees that "the contradiction does not arise immediately; to show it we need some additional premises, or perhaps some quasi-logical rules connecting the terms, 'good', 'evil', and 'omnipotent'. These additional principles are that good is opposed to evil in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do." [1]

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1. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence", in N. Pike, ed. God and Evil, p. 47. H. J. McCloskey ("God and Evil" in N. Pike, ed. Op. Cit.,) however, does not seem to recognize the need for an additional premise in order to deduce a contradiction.

It will be recalled that I pointed out that the additional premise required cannot be any premise whatsoever, but must be a premise "which is either necessarily true, or essential to theism, or a logical consequence of such propositions." [2] Any additional proposition which does not meet the conditions, or at least one of them, cannot when taken together with (1) - (5) yield a formal contradiction. Let us take the following propositions to see if any one of them together with (1) - (5) entails a contradiction.

(6) An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God could and would always eliminate evils.

(7) An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God could and would always prevent evils.

(8) "An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God would have no morally sufficient reason for allowing instances of innocent suffering." [3]

(9) An omnipotent, all-good God would have "good reasons" for allowing any evil to exist at all.

We will take these propositions separately.

If the conjunction of propositions (1) - (5) plus (6) yields a formal contradiction, then theism is clearly refuted; that is, it would be shown that theism is both irrational and inconsistent.

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2. A Plantinga, God and Other Minds, p. 117.

3. This proposition was formulated by K. Yandell ("A Premature Farewell to Theism", Religious Studies, Vol. 5, 1969, p. 251.)

The crucial question is whether (6) meets the above requirements. Now, it is quite obvious that (6) is not essential to theism, nor does it follow from (1) - (5). On the face of it, (6) does not seem to be true, far less necessarily true. For it is not unusual for a good parent to inflict pain on his child in the cause of his training. A good parent may scold his child when he does something wrong; he may refuse his child certain requests simply because he thinks these may be harmful to him. A good music teacher may cause his pupil pain because of long hours of practice. In the same way, a doctor may cause pain to his patient while attending to some greater filness. If it is true, then, that pain (or evil) is sometimes caused by good people without any loss of moral excellence, then (6) is clearly false. Of course, it can be pointed out that God is omnipotent and therefore there is no need for him to inflict pain on people. Surely he could accomplish ends without using pain and suffering as means. And if he is omniscient, he would know how to accomplish these ends without causing pain. But while it is true that God, insofar as he is omnipotent and all-good, is different from good parents and good teachers, it is not at all clear that he could accomplish certain ends without causing pain.

God could eliminate an evil only if that evil is not necessary to a good which is greater than the evil. There are many instances of good which come about because of pain and suffering. For example, the brilliant display of courage, fortitude and bravery in the face of danger; the display of compassion and pity for those who are

suffering. When we think of the compassion which one person shows another, we are always conscious of the fact that this compassion is a good which is greater than the pain and sorrow without which it is not possible. And this good cannot be preserved if the pain and sorrow are removed. John Wisdom gives the following example of friendship and sympathy:

> A and B are on an Arctic expedition, blizzard coming on, hunger, intense cold, dogs done, B unable to go further, A almost exhausted, food depot a mile off. If A tries to drag B to the depot they will probably both die, if he leaves B he will die in the blizzard. A tries to drag B. Here ... we have loving empathy and gladness from demonstration of affection. Also we have A's courage — a considerable item. The empathy consists in the unity which lies in the fact that each feels "we are in the same bloody boat". This requires that each man speak of this hunger, this exhaustion, this fear. Further, A's courage could not be exercised except against present pains or fears of the future. Here again much of the good cannot be obtained without the evil.[4]

No one would deny that display of bravery, courage, sympathy, compassion and friendship are virtues which are highly honoured in life. And if these cannot be had without pain and suffering, then not even

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4. J. Wisdom, "God and Evil", Mind, Vol. XLIV, No. 173, Jan. 1935, p. 17. Wisdom refers to this situation as one of "joint-tonition: by tonition, he means "when I observe, imagine, remember or expect a situation and feel pleased or displeased with or feel some emotional feeling such as anger or fear or sorrow towards it, then the complex whole made up of (i) the cognitive fact of my observation, say, of the situation toned by (ii) my feeling towards the situation, of the Tonition".) (Ibid., p. 10.)

God could eliminate the latter without at the same time eliminating virtues. In other words, it is logically impossible for God to eliminate certain cases of evil without at the same time eliminating good which are greater than the evils eliminated. This also holds true for those evils which result from men's misuse of this freedom. We have seen that these evils cannot be eliminated by God without total infringement on man's freedom. God, therefore, is compelled to allow evil if men's freedom is to remain intact. And if this is so, then it is false to say that an omnipotent, omniscient, all-good being can always eliminate evils. Proposition (6) then, is not a necessary truth and as such cannot yield a formal contradiction when taken together with (1) - (5). Proposition (6) may be amended to read:

> (6a) An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God could and would eliminate every evil if it were the case that although this evil is entailed by a good, there is a greater good which does not entail it.

Now, if the conjunction of (1) - (5) plus (6a) is to yield a formal contradiction, they must jointly entail the denial of (5); that is, that no evil exists in the world. But, alas, this is not the case. The set (1) - (5) plus (6a) does not entail the denial of (5). What it does entail is that "every evil E is entailed by some good G such that every good greater than G also entails E." [5] And if this is true, then the set (1) - (5) plus (6a) cannot yield a formal contradiction. Let us see what the situation is with proposition (7).

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5. A. Plantinga, God and Other Minds, p. 122.

According to proposition (7):

> An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God could and would always prevent evils.

Again, it is not very difficult to see that (7) is not essential to theism, nor does it follow from any proposition essential to theism. Now, we have pointed out above that certain evils cannot be eliminated because they are necessary to some good greater than those evils. This implies that these evils cannot be prevented either. A dentist might refuse to prevent pain if the only way to do this is to extract a series of teeth. Such a dentist may still be a good dentist, even though he does not prevent an evil (pain) which he could prevent. It is not at all true, then, that a good person who could always prevent evils would do so. And if so, then (7) is clearly false.

But it might be pointed out that a person is often blameworthy for failing to prevent evils which he could prevent. And if we hold people blameworthy in such cases, why do we not hold God, who is all-good and omnipotent, blameworthy for failing to prevent at least some of the major evils, if not all evils? This is a serious objection and merits our attention. For while it is not possible for men to be in situations to prevent all or even most would-be evils, a God who is all-good and omnipotent would and could. And as I have already made quite clear, a world in which God prevents all would-be evils would present an impossible state of affairs because it would render causal connection null and void. For example, an evil which is committed today might not be possible tomorrow; a man might shoot another man today, but tomorrow, his bullets may turn to water or the

firing mechanism of the gun may fail to work, in which case no harm can be done to the intended victim. But what if only certain evils were prevented by God, let us say, murders. It would be established then that no matter how people tried, they could not murder each other. Thus, although I may want to murder someone, I would not be able to do so.[6]

But why, it may be asked, does not God prevent the very thought of committing murder? Surely it makes good sense to say that if God is all-good and omnipotent, it would be better if he had prevented the very thought of committing murders and other evils by controlling men's dispositions so that it does not arise in the first place. Such a suggestion as I have already pointed out (Chapter 3) is not only absurd, but (on the assumption of man's freedom), logically impossible. To say that God could or should prevent evils is to say in effect that he should violate man's free will not occasionally (as in the case when one person violates another's free will to prevent an evil), but always. And God would be guilty of the greatest of evils (just in case it is evil to violate a persons's free will). From what we have said so far, I think it is quite obvious that proposition (7) is not a necessary truth. And if so, it cannot, when conjoined with (1) - (5) yield a formal contradiction. We turn

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6. I am not denying, of course, that this might be a better state of affairs than what we have now, but it could be brought about only by curtailing man's freedom with respect to certain actions, viz., murder. But I am not at all sure that such freedom with respect to which man is only free to do certain acts is freedom as we normally understand it.

now to proposition (8).

According to proposition (8):

> An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God would have no morally sufficient reasons for allowing instances of innocent suffering.

Now (8) is clearly not essential to theism, for all the theist has to do is to point to the case of Job — a glaring example of innocent suffering. And once this is accepted, it is at once obvious that (8) is not a necessary truth. Roland Puccetti willingly grants that (8) is not a necessary truth, but he still contends that all that has to be shown is that the explanations offered by theists and theodicists to explain why God allows innocent suffering are seriously lacking.[7] For it is not enough to say that God has morally good reasons for allowing innocent suffering without specifying these reasons. The theist simply cannot claim that there must be reasons why God allows instances of suffering or innocent suffering without being able to specify those reasons; for this would lead to moral scepticism. If a person kills someone, we would absolve him of his guilt only if morally sufficient reasons are given for his act. It is not enough to point out that there may be reasons for this act. Of course, there may be reasons, but they must be specified. Failure to specify these reasons can only lead to moral scepticism. R.J. Richman claims that if we are to "avoid moral scepticism, the burden of proof must be placed on the defender of one who has committed or permitted a reprehensible

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7. R. Puccetti, "The Loving God, Some Observations on John Hick's Evil and the God of Love', Religious Studies, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1967, p. 267.

act to specify morally sufficient reasons for the act." [8]

Richman seems to think that the case is the same with regard to the theist. But this is to ignore the obvious difference between specifying morally sufficient reasons for human actions and specifying morally sufficient reasons for God's actions. In the case of the former, we are often in a position to specify these reasons, but in the case of the latter, we are not, simply because we are not gifted with God's point of view. It is for this reason that the theist cannot always specify morally sufficient reasons why God allows certain instances of suffering.

It is worth mentioning, moreover, that there is a difference between not having a reason X and having a reason that not-X; between not being able to specify why God allows certain cases of innocent suffering and being able to say that no such reason can be found. We may not have a reason for claiming that Jones is a member of the Mafia, but also have no reason for claiming that he is not. Thus, the theist may not be able to specify reasons why God allows certain cases of innocent suffering, but this does not mean that there are no such reasons; nor does it mean that God has no moral reasons for allowing cases of innocent suffering. The latter claim can be established only if there is a definite criterion for cases of suffering permitted as punishment for wrong doing, so that any case of suffering which is

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8. R. J. Richman, "The Argument from Evil", Religious Studies, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 1964, p. 20.

not covered by this criterion is classed as innocent suffering. And it is not at all clear to me that such a criterion can be stated. We will come back to this point shortly.

Now, the critic's claim that there are instances of innocent suffering; that is, sufferings which are not punishment for any kind of wrong doing, is true. There are many cases of innocent suffering; for example, the case of animal suffering, the suffering of a ten-month old baby, the suffering of some brilliant pianist, and so on. The crucial point here has to do with God's having morally sufficient reasons for these cases. Now, it was pointed out in the last chapter that the world is a complex, evolving system governed by natural laws. What this means is that all creatures in the world could be subjected to suffering at any time. The laws of nature and the elements cannot be adjusted on an individual basis, nor can every instance of suffering be neatly explained. For as F.R. Tennant has pointed out:

> If we could trace the utility of particular sufferings with their varying degrees of endurableness or discern any adaptation of pain to a person's sensibility ... then philosophy might be able to agree with the simple-minded piety which assigns a special purpose to every instance of suffering, and finds therein the visitation or appointment of an all-wise and all-good God. But the wind is not tempered to the shorn lamb ... "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked" -- to those who may be unable, and to those who are unable to profit by severe trial.[9]

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9. F. R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 201.

It is preposterous to think that God spies on individuals to see when they do wrong so that he could punish them.[10] Yet this is what the objection based on the suffering of innocent people would have us believe. But Christian theism knows of no such God — a God who punishes only wrong-doers. Indeed, the whole idea of suffering and punishment for evil-doing was refuted once and for all in the Book of Job. I conclude, therefore, that proposition (8) is false, and cannot yield a formal contradiction when conjoined with (1) - (5).

Perhaps proposition (9)

> An omnipotent, omniscient, all-good God would have "good reasons" for allowing any evil to exist at all

is what the critic is looking for. Both the theist and critic would agree that there is a great deal of evil in the world. And if it could be shown that some of these evils are unjustified, then we could establish inconsistency in the set (1) - (5) plus (9). But as soon as we start speaking of unjustified evils, we are faced with

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10. The word "spies" here might be a bit strong because of its pejorative sense, but I do not think we can ignore the pejorative sense of it without ruling out the word altogether. The word, "spies", is primarily pejorative. I do not know if the word can be properly used in a sense in which the pejorative sense has been ignored. But be that as it may, the claim that part of the Providence of God is a particular knowing of what each person does, does not go against my argument here, namely, that evils are punishment for sins committed. To claim that God somehow keeps track of people's sins and metes out punishment accordingly is to make a ridiculous claim. Part of the providence of God might be a particular knowing of what each person does, but this is quite different from the claim that this knowing involves some kind of "merit chart" for meting out punishment and/or rewards. But this is precisely what the claim that evils are punishment for sins forces us to believe, and it is this claim (when it implies God's spying or knowing what people do) that I maintain is preposterous.

the difficulty of stating an exhaustive criterion for an evil being a justified evil. And it is not at all clear that such a criterion could be stated. The theist is often at a loss to explain what God's reasons are for allowing so many evils to exist. Thus, if the theist cannot explain God's reasons for allowing a ten-month baby to die of cancer of the throat or for allowing a rabbit to be torn to pieces by a cat, it is not because there are no explanations, but simply because he does not have a set of sufficient conditions which evils are supposed to fulfil if they are to be justified, and failing which they are to be termed unjustified. It is only if there were a "closed definition" for justified evils that the theist or anyone could point to instances of evil which do not satisfy this definition. But such a definition can only be given if men viewed the world sub specie aeternitatis. This is obviously impossible since men are not endowed with God's power and knowledge. It is up to the critic who claims that there are instances of unjustified evils to provide a definition for justified evils. But this, alas, can only be done if our critic views the world sub specie aeternitatis. But this we have seen is impossible.[11]

So far we have seen that the critic cannot pinpoint particular instances of evil as unjustified evils because there is no exhaustive criterion of justified evils. He might claim that

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11. Keith Yandell points out that the theist's failure to provide an exhaustive criterion for justified evil because he does not view the world sub specie aeternitatis, can only be detrimental to theism if the critic possessed such a criterion. But the 'possession of such a criterion would also require that its possessor come close to being able to view the world sub specie aeternitatis. That anyone does possess an exhaustive criterion for justified evils, which he knows not to be satisfied by a case of evil is to put it mildly, highly dubious.' (see, Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion, p. 56.)

(9a) if there are any evils at all, then there are unjustified evils.

But it can easily be shown that (9a) is false. In the first place, I am not sure that it makes sense to speak of unjustified or pointless evils in a world which is a complex, interacting system. For it is not possible to subtract an instance of evil from the whole system without interrupting the system. If this point holds, then (9a) cannot be shown to be a necessary truth. Nelson Pike claims that this cannot be shown. He says:

> If the proposition, 'There is a good reason for evil in the theistic universe' (i.e., 'there are motives or other factual conditions which, if known, would render blaming God for evil inappropriate) could be true, then the logic of the phrase 'perfectly good person' allows that the propositions, 'God is a perfectly good person' and 'God allows evil in the world even though he could prevent them' could be true together. This point rests on the fact that a perfectly good person can allow evil, providing he has a good reason. Since the first of these three propositions just mentioned is clearly not contradictory and this could be true, the conjunction of the latter propositions is also free of contradiction and the contention that a perfectly good person would of necessity prevent evil if he could is shown, beyond question, to be in error. [12]

Proposition (9a), then, is false. The critic has failed to show what is to count as a case of unjustified evil, let alone that there are cases of unjustified evils. The upshot of this is that the conjunction of propositions (1) - (5) plus (9) or (9a) does not yield a formal contradiction.

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12. Nelson Pike, "God and Evil: A Reconsideration", Ethics, Vol. LXVIII, No. 2. (1957-8), p. 119.

The claim of the critic of theism, it will be recalled, is that the existence of God is logically incompatible with the existence of evil, so that if evil exists, then God does not. In other words, the statements

(a) God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient and all-good, and

(b) There is evil in the world

are logically incompatible, so that if one is true then the other is false. And since (b) is true, (a) is false. I have been maintaining throughout this chapter that the claim of logical incompatibility has not been established. I have shown that the truth of statement (a) (replaced by propositions (1)-(4)) is compatible with the truth of statement (b). I have done this by showing that proposition (a), propositions (1) - (4), and (b), propostions (5) plus (6) or (7) or (8) or (9), do not yield a formal contradiction. What follows from this is that the existence of evil in the world does not entail the non-existence of God. The "problem of evil", then, as we formulated it in chapter one, is not a threat to the theist. This can be substantiated further by the following reductio ad absurdum of the "problem of evil".

It was pointed out that the "problem of evil" arises only when the following propositions are held together:

(a) God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient, all-good;

(b) There is evil in the world.

Thus if a person claims that God does not exist, or that he is not

omnipotent, or omniscient, or all-good, the "problem of evil" would not arise for him. The "problem of evil" further claims that propositions (a) and (b) cannot both be true; that is, they are logically contradictory, so that if one is true, the other is false. And since we know that (b) is, as a matter of fact true, then (a) must be false. In other words, the existence of evil in the world entails the non-existence of God. But notice what has happened here. The "problem of evil" entails both the truth and falsity of (a) — a reductio ad absurdum. When put formally, the argument runs like this:

> Let P represent the problem of evil and (a) God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient and all-good, and (b) there is evil in the world.

We have:

1. P implies (a) and (b), and
2. P implies not-(a) and (b), and
3. P implies (a) and not-(a) and (b), and
4. P implies (a) and not-(a),

which is clearly a reductio ad absurdum.

If this argument is sound, then the "problem of evil" is shown to be logically absurd in that it denies the law of non-contradiction. And if this is so, the "problem of evil" cannot be a threat to the theist in the sense of implying the non-existence of God.

So far, we have been maintaining that the problem of evil as a logical problem does not entail the non-existence of God. But it might be claimed that although the joint assertion that God exists and evil exists is not self-contradictory, the presence of evil in the world does provide evidence against the existence of a God who is all-good and

omnipotent. It might be claimed that the fact that there is evil in the world is good reason to conclude that God does not exist, or if he does exist, then he is not all-good or all-perfect. But such a claim, it seems to me, can be established only if God's existence is a matter of inference from the way things are in the world; that is, where God's existence is a matter of proof or demonstration. The classic example of this is found in Parts X and XI of Hume's Dialogues. Here Hume clearly demonstrates that the existence of a God who is all-good and omnipotent cannot be inferred from a world in which there are evils, suffering and deformities.

It is interesting to note that Hume was not concerned with showing that God does or does not exist but only with showing that the design argument as a proof of God's existence is logically inadequate. He was not disproving the existence of God by showing that evil and benevolence are logically incompatible.[13] Actually, he was pointing out that there is no way that the attributes of God or the existence of God could be proved by inference from observable phenomena. Philo (Hume's mouthpiece) makes this quite clear when he says:

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13. It is interesting to note that some philosophers (e.g., N. Pike, "Hume on Evil" in N.Pike, ed., God and Evil, pp. 85-100) have claimed that Hume wanted to disprove God's existence by showing that evil and benevolence are logically incompatible. This, it seems to me, is a misinterpretation of Hume's discussion of the problem of evil. What Hume really wanted to prove via the problem of evil was that it is impossible to infer the existence of an all-good, all-powerful God from a world which is in fact filled with evil.

> Look around the universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment of parental care, her maimed and abortive children. [14]

Thus Hume makes it clear that the existence of evil, while it does not prove that God does not exist, nor that he is not loving or benevolent, does, however, make it impossible to infer from observable phenomena that he exists, or to infer anything about his moral character.

The argument from evil can only establish the non-existence of God if God's existence is a matter of demonstration. But where Christian theism is not concerned with philosophical-rationalistic proofs for God's existence, but is concerned with the relationship of man to God whose existence is an article of faith, the argument from evil cannot establish the non-existence of God. Nelson Pike correctly points out that "within most theologies the existence of God is, in the last analysis, an item of faith taken on authority,

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14. David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religions, ed. N. Kemp-Smith, p. 211. Hume denied that religion was founded on rational foundations. For him, the basis of religion was man's emotional and psychological needs, longings and fears. Hume says: "...the first ideas of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the events of life, and from the incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind ... The anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst of revenge, the appetite for good and other necessaries...." (A Natural History of Religion, in R. Wollheim, ed. Hume on Religion, pp. 38-39.)

embraced after experience, or accepted via some other prediscursive device." [15] The person who sees belief in God as a result of deliberation or consideration of evidence would always find the argument from evil a stumbling block. [16] But unlike that person, the theist does not weigh evidence for and against a "God hypothesis" — a hypothesis that can be strengthened or weakened, depending on the number of instances of evil he comes across. But the existence of God for the theist is not established in this way; it is not the conclusion of a long process of inference, but is an item of faith and personal experience. In other words, the theist affirms the existence of God by faith and committment; for him God's existence is not a matter of proof or demonstration, but is a "leap of faith", a committment to a way of life.

This seems quite strong, but I am not convinced that it is too strong. For if there are huge sections of Christianity for which belief in God is a matter of proof or demonstration, then such sections

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15. N. Pike, "God and Evil: A Reconsideration", Ethics, Vol. LXVIII, No. 2, (1957-58), p. 122.

16. The force of the argument from evil against the existence of a God who is thought of as an intelligent designer of the world or whose existence is arrived at by inference from signs of design in the world is most clearly revealed by Ivan in F. Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov. Here, Ivan asks his brother Alyosha, "Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature — that baby beating its breast with its fist for instance — and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth?

"No, I wouldn't consent," said Alyosha softly. (See "Rebellion", in The Brothers Karamazov, Trans. C. Garnett, BK.V, Chapt.IV. p. 258.

of Christianity can at best be sections filled with "skeptics" and "agnostics". For there is no proof for God's existence that is not subject to major criticisms, in the same way that there are no disproofs that are not subject to major criticisms. What this amounts to is that whatever sections of Christianity that depend solely upon proof or demonstration for God's existence must consign themselves to skepticism or agnosticism — for it is widely held by both philosophers and theologians that it is impossible to prove or disprove God's existence.

Now, from what I understand of the Christian tradition (based upon Scriptures), skepticism and agnosticism are ruled out. A person who claims he is skeptical with regard to the existence of God is ipso facto admitting that he is not a Christian. And if he maintains that he is a Christian but is still skeptical with regard to God's existence, then he is either basically confused about what it is to be a Christian or he is simply joking. If there were indeed "huge sections of Christianity" which maintained skepticism (and this is what it must be if knowledge of God's existence is a matter of demonstration) with regard to God's existence, then most of the major critics of Christianity would have had nothing to criticize. For the point which a lot of these critics (e.g., Russell) are wont to make is precisely that people should remain skeptical with regard to God's existence. But it is Christians who maintain belief in the existence of God and many of them have been willing to stake and have staked their lives upon such a belief. If, then, my claim that God's existence is not

a matter of proof or demonstration wipes out huge sections of Christianity and the Christian tradition, this may be how it should be -- unless of course, we are willing to say that huge sections of Christianity and the Christian tradition are skeptical with regard to God's existence. This latter claim is much stronger than the former and it is this that would invoke cries of horror from Christian theologians and philosophers. The modest point I wish to draw from all this is that if a person claims that God's existence is for him a matter of proof or demonstration, then he would have to consign himself to skepticism or agnosticism for obvious reasons, and forfeit all claims to Christian theism. And if a person is bold enough to claim that it is possible to be a Christian without holding belief in a transcendent God, I say he is either fooling himself or he simply does not know what he is talking about. God's existence, then, is not a matter of evidence, inference or demonstration, but of personal committment, faith and encounter; "The theological thesis is not being offered hypothetically and the argument from evil has no point." [17]

This does not mean, however, that the critic of theism would cease to cite the amount of evil in the world as evidence against the existence of God. He might never cease to be impressed by the unreasonableness of belief in a God of love when he contemplates the amount of evil there is in the world. But he cannot use this feeling of unreasonableness to refute theism. He cannot because he is not able to show that there is a logical connection between evil in the

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17. N. Pike, "God and Evil: A Reconsideration", Op. Cit., p.122.

world and the existence of God. In the final analysis, all that the critic can say is that he cannot believe in a God who is all-good and perfect in the face of all the evils in the world. He could claim that the amount of evil in the world is reason enough for him not to believe in the existence of God. But he cannot claim that the theist is faced with any serious difficulty here, unless he could show that the existence of evil entails the non-existence of God, or that it makes it highly probable that God does not exist. It has been our claim that he could do neither.

The fact that the critic is impressed by the amount of evil in the world to the extent that he finds belief in God unreasonable cannot be a criticism of the theist's position, for it is not too much for the theist to grant him that much. Indeed, it is not at all unusual for the theist himself, on occasions, to hold such a position. Theists are sometimes so impressed by the amount of evil in the world that they feel their belief in God somewhat shaken — witness Job. But such an impression is a far cry from establishing the non-existence of God. The classic example of such impression is found in Part XII of Hume's Dialogues. Here, Philo, after advancing some of the most severe criticisms of the design argument seems to have made a complete turnabout in rejecting it. He says:

> A purpose, an intention, or design strikes everywhere the most stupid thinker: and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems as at times to reject. That nature does nothing in vain is a maxim established in all schools, merely from the contemplation of Nature, without any religious purpose; ... and thus all sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge a first intelligent author; and their authority is so much the greater as they do not directly

> profess that intention ... if the infidelity of Galen, even when the natural sciences were still imperfect, could not withstand such striking appearances, to what pitch of, pertinacious obstinacy must a philosopher in this age have attained who can now doubt of a Supreme Intelligence.[18]

On the face of it this represents Philo (the Skeptic) as being a staunch supporter of design theology, but it is hard to believe that this is so. All that Philo is pointing out is that the numerous signs of design and contrivance in the world do strike people with great force and some are led to infer the existence of God from this. But he is not saying that these signs of design entail or make probable the existence of God. In the same way that one person may be impressed by the signs of design in the world another may be impressed by the amount of evil and destruction. The former may infer the existence of God from these signs of design while the latter may infer the non-existence of God from the amount of evil in the world. But in neither case is there any form of logical connection or entailment. Moreover, it is quite common for two people to have different impressions from the same set of phenomena; in which case one might infer A while the other might infer B, where A and B are completely unrelated to each other. What follows from all this is that impressions are nothing more than strong feelings and, as such, are alogical. And while some people may find such alogical evidence convincing at certain times, others may not. As Keith Yandell correctly points out:

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18. D. Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, pp.214-215. The passage as it appears here was cited by K. Yandell in Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion, p. 59. The initial point, however, was made by the present author, independent of Mr. Yandell's discussion. See my "A Critique of Hume's Analysis of the Design Argument" submitted to the Department of Philosophy, McMaster University (unpublished thesis), 1970, pp. 13-15.

> Some men find this alogical reasonableness so compelling in one case when they note the order of nature and the values of human experience that they are relatively unaffected by any impressions arising from the fact that there are many evils which seem pointless to us; others are so compelled by the latter that they are relatively unimpressed by the former. Still others may be unwilling to draw any conclusion from such impressions or even fail to have any such impressions. But plainly, under such circumstances as these, it is impossible to correctly say that one group is justified over the other. [19]

The critic of theism may be so impressed with the amount of evil in the world that he finds it positively unreasonable to believe in God, but this cannot be used against the theist's position. This does not mean that the theist is being irrational (as some seem to think) because he refuses to admit that the existence of evil counts against or falsifies his belief in God. It does not because there is no logical connection between the existence of evil and the non-existence of God. (This brings up the question of the meaningfulness of religious language in the face of the falsification challenge which we will have occasion to deal within the following chapter.) And once this has been established, the theist's belief in God is no longer threatened by the amount of evil in the world. To say that it does is ipso facto to say that one is not a theist in the first place; it is to say that one is not a member of the community of faith.

The conclusion which follows from what has been said in this chapter is that the "problem of evil" is not a logical threat to the theist's belief in God; nor does the argument from evil make it probable that God does not exist. We have claimed that the existence of evil

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19. K. Yandell, Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion, p.60.

in the world can only count as evidence against the existence of God if belief in the existence of God is a hypothesis which can be strengthened or weakened by the presence of relevant evidence. But we have seen that such is not the case. Belief in God is a matter of faith and committment — it is a matter of personal encounter and trust. The theist does not believe in God in the absence of evil, but in spite of it, and in many cases because of it. And to realize this is at the same time to realize that evil cannot be used as evidence against God's existence. To say that the amount of evil in the world is evidence against the existence of God is to say in effect that belief in God can be held only in the absence of evil, or only if there were few and minor evils with which man can easily cope. But apart from the fact that such an idea is foreign to Christian theism, it is not at all clear that there would be any point to belief in God if evils were very few and insignificant or if there were no evils at all. I conclude, therefore, that neither the argument from evil nor the "problem of evil" can establish the non-existence of God.

There are two problems which come up as a result of the discussion thus far. Firstly, I have claimed that the propositions, "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent", and "there is evil in the world", are not contradictory. I have also claimed that the evil in the world does not count as evidence against the existence of God. What this means is that religious statements and assertions, e.g., "God exists", "God loves us", are compatible with every state of affairs and as such

cannot be shown to be false. And according to the falsification principle statements and assertions which are not falsifiable are meaningless and nonsensical. For to claim "God loves us" or "God is good", while asserting that evil and suffering are not evidence against these claims is to empty them of their meanings. The problem of the meaningfulness of religious language then, is brought to the fore once it is claimed that the problem of evil does not entail that the propositions, "God exists and is all-good and omnipotent", and "There is evil in the world", are not logically contradictory.

The other problem which comes up at this point concerns the attitude of the theist in the face of evil. For, if the theist admits (and he must) that evil and suffering are real and that he is affected by them, how does he cope with them? How does he maintain his faith in God in the face of evil and suffering which surround him? These are problems with which we must now deal.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

I concluded the last chapter by saying that the presence of evil in the world does not and cannot show that God does not exist or that he is not a God of love or that he is not good. What seems to follow from this is that statements like "God exists", "God is love", "God is good" are not falsifiable. For, on the face of it, we would expect that the occurrence of evil and suffering in the world would be the most obvious state of affairs which would be excluded by such statements, but this we have seen is not the case. This brings us face to face with one of the most serious objections brought against theism in recent times; viz., that religious or theological statements are cognitively meaningless since they are not falsifiable. For the statement "God loves us" is presumably compatible with any and every state of affairs.

The religious believer keeps on claiming that God loves mankind no matter what catastrophe or disaster may occur. The occurrence of droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, wars, murders, diseases, famines, and accidents of various sorts does not make the believer change his mind and say "God does not love us after all," or that "There is no God." What he says is, "God's ways are not our ways," "We cannot fully understand God's love for us," etc. In other words, there seem to be no observable facts which can show the assertion "God loves mankind" to be false. It is because of this that the critic claims that religious statements are cognitively and

factually meaningless and nonsensical.

In his well-known essay, "Theology and Falsification", Antony Flew points out that "to assert that such and such is the case is necessarily equivalent to denying that such and such is not the case" (i.e., that "$p \equiv \sim\sim p$", p has the same truth value as not-not-p).[1] What follows from this, Flew claims, is that "if there is nothing which an assertion denies, then there is nothing which it asserts either; and it is not really an assertion".[2] The religious believer, then, must be prepared to say what would count against his claim that God loves mankind or else accept the fact that his claim is meaningless. But this, alas, he does not do. Flew says:

> Now it often seems to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event or series of events the occurrence of which would be admitted by sophisticated religious people to be a sufficient reason for conceding 'There wasn't a God after all' or 'God does not really love us then.' Someone tells us that God loves us as a father loves his children. We are reassured. But then we see a child dying of inoperable cancer of the throat. His earthly father is driven frantic in his efforts to help, but his Heavenly Father reveals no obvious sign of concern. Some qualification is made — God's love is 'not merely human love' or it is an 'inscrutable love', perhaps — and we realize that such sufferings are quite compatible with the truth of the assertion that 'God loves us as a father (but, of course, ...)'. We are reassured again, but then perhaps we ask: what is this assurance of God's (appropriately qualified) love worth, what is this

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1. A. Flew, "Theology and Falsification", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, eds. A. Flew and A. MacIntyre, p. 98.

2. Ibid., p. 98.

> apparent guarantee really a guarantee against? Just what would have to happen not merely (morally and wrongly) to tempt us but also (logically and rightly) to entitle us to say "God does not love us" or even "God does not exist"? I therefore put ... the simple central questions, "what would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or the existence of, God? [3]

Flew's challenge to the meaningfulness of religious language is directly connected to the problem of evil and especially so because my conclusion at the end of Chapter V, viz., that the propositions (1) "God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient and all-good", and (2) "There is evil in the world", are not contradictory or that (2) does not count against (1). For if these two propositions are contradictory then of course this renders religion irrational. And to claim that these propositions are not contradictory is to fall victim to Flew's charge of meaninglessness. And if proposition (2) does not count against proposition (1), then it (proposition (1)) is, according to Flew's challenge, cognitively meaningless, that is, nonsensical. And since Flew's challenge is concerned with meaning and meaningfulness, it is encumbent upon me to attempt to discuss this challenge briefly not only because of my conclusion at the end of Chapter V, but also to show that the problem of evil is not as formidable and devastating as it is often made out to be.

Now Flew's challenge involves the falsification principle as a criterion of meaning, that is that a statement is meaningful if it

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3. Ibid., p. 98-99.

is possible to falsify it or to indicate what would possibly falsify or count against it. The falsification principle, then, as a criterion of meaning, opens the door to the discussion of meaning and meaningfulness with which this chapter will be concerned.

Flew's challenge confronts the theist or the theologian with the following dilemma: on the one hand the theist can admit that his assertions and beliefs are unfalsifiable and hence meaningless or he can, on the other hand, claim that his assertions and beliefs are falsifiable, in which case they fit the category of hypotheses and, as such, are not religious. Attempts to meet Flew's challenge range from claiming that religious statements are not really assertions and hence are not falsifiable, but are attitudinal and emotive, to claiming that religious statements are verifiable and falsifiable. For example, I. M. Crombie, commenting on Flew's challenge, says that "suffering which was utterly, eternally and irredeemably pointless" would count decisively against the statement "God is good". But he informs us that we cannot conduct an experiment to decide whether there are evils which are pointless "because we can never see all of the picture." The Christian, however, can see the whole picture by getting into a position "called dying", but although we can do all that, we cannot report what we find. [4]

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4. Ibid., pp. 124-126. (For a detailed analysis of the discussion of the meaningfulness of religious language, see N. T. Blackstone, The Problems of Religious Knowledge.)

What Crombie's position amounts to is that religious beliefs are hypotheses which can be confirmed or disconfirmed after death. But as A. MacIntyre points out, such a position, if correct, shows that religious beliefs in this present life "could never be anything more than as yet unconfirmed hypotheses, warranting nothing more than a provisional and tentative adherence." [5] But as I indicated in the previous chapter, religious beliefs (e.g., "God exists", "God loves us") are not hypotheses arrived at by inference from evidence but are held on faith and trust. And to say that a person has faith and trust in God is to say that he has more than a tentative adherence to certain hypotheses. [6] It is to say, rather, that he is decisively committed to God. The attempt to show that religious beliefs, statements, etc., are falsifiable ends up making them "non-religious". It seems, then, that Flew is, according to R.M. Hare, "completely victorious" [7] on his own ground. For, once Flew's position is accepted,

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5. A. MacIntyre, ed. Metaphysical Beliefs, p. 171.

6. It is interesting to note Wittgenstein's remarks on the view that religious beliefs are hypotheses. Wittgenstein did not think that religious beliefs, e.g., in the last judgement are unreasonable, but he called those who held religious beliefs as hypotheses unreasonable. D.W. Hudson points out that those whom Wittgenstein considered unreasonable "in a sense implying rebuke" were apologists for, or against, religion who made the "ludicrous" assumption that religious beliefs can be corroborated or refuted by treating them as though they were scientific hypotheses." Wittgenstein referred to an attempt by Father O'Hara "to show that religious beliefs can be scientifically proved" and said: "I would say, if this is religious belief, then it's all superstition." (Cited by D.Hudson, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Bearing of His Philosophy upon Religious Belief, p. 50)

7. R. M. Hare, "Theology and Falsification", in A.MacIntyre and A. Flew, eds., Op. Cit., p. 99.

the conclusion to be arrived at is either that religious claims are unfalsifiable and hence meaningless or falsifiable and hence not religious.[8]

The other escape route is to challenge the falsification principle itself. This can be done by showing that the falsification principle is, after all, not really as formidable as Flew makes it out to be. For example, it can be pointed out that there are statements which are obviously meaningful, but which are not falsifiable, e.g., "Every effect has a cause." It can also be pointed out that there are statements which are verifiable and as such have truth value, but which are not falsifiable, e.g., "Someone living today will be alive tomorrow."[9] But in addition to these criticisms of the falsification principle, I believe that a careful analysis of the concept "meaning" will also reveal the shortcomings of this principle. In what follows then, I shall digress briefly to consider the concept "meaning" in general in order to show that religious statements (or any statements for that matter) need not be falsifiable in order to be meaningful (factually and cognitively), that religious statements are meaningful in the same way that any statement is meaningful. (I mean "meaningful" in the sense of a criterion of meaningfulness.)

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8. See D. W. Hudson, Op. Cit., p. 29.

9. This example was given by K. Yandell, (Basic Issues in Philosophy of Religion), p. 10. Yandell points out that "'Someone living today will be alive tomorrow' cannot be falsified, for it is not or will not be true then that no human being will be around to record this fact and so falsify it."

Most philosophers (I think) will agree that there is a problem with meanings, but there seems to be a lack of agreement among them as to the cause or causes of the problem. This fact is borne out in the various attempts by philosophers to specify what meanings consist in. As a result, there have been attempts to associate or identify meanings with what expressions refer to, stand for, denote (referential theory), with the ideas that have been aroused by these expressions (ideational theory).[10] But, although all these theories have shed a great deal of light on the meaning issue, the problem with meanings has not been solved. It has been prolonged simply because the roots of the problem themselves have not been affected. What I have in mind is this: the problem with meanings springs from two main roots which the different theories of meaning (mentioned above) have failed to destroy. Each theory presupposed a simple, general, uncomplicated language without taking into consideration (what Wittgenstein calls) different language-games (first root of the problem), and each theory was meant to deal with meaning as if it were some sort of mysterious entity (second root of the problem) which, once found, would set all hearts at rest.

It will be argued that religious language functions in such a way that it "makes a difference" to the religious person and it is with this idea of "making a difference" which is characteristic of religious

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10. See. W.P. Alston, "The Quest for Meanings", Mind Vol. LXXII, No. 285, 1963, p. 79.

language that its meaningfulness is connected. My primary concern is to point out that the reason why there is a problem with religious language is not simply because it is somehow peculiar or unique, (that is part of it to be sure), but also because the concept of "meaning" [11] itself is problematic and in need of clarification. And once we are free from the problem with meanings, that is, once we realize that there are no such things as meanings, we can then concentrate on the use of language and in this case, of religious language from which alone (it seems to me) its meaningfulness or significance can be ascertained.

In the Investigations, one of the most significant observations made by Wittgenstein concerns the elastic-like, open-textured nature of language. Our language, according to Wittgenstein, is not of the manner of a rigid calculus, but is elastic-like and as such can be used in many different ways. There is not only one language but many different "language-games". Wittgenstein says:

> It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle. — Or a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes and no. And innumerable others. — And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life. [12]

In order for a person to learn a language, he has to learn to play the

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11. There are many uses of "mean". For example, we speak of "mean" in connection with people, actions, events and words. Our primary concern, however, is with "mean" in connection with words.

12. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Section 19.

various language-games; that is, he has to learn to ask questions, make requests and commands, describe events. Wittgenstein also makes it clear that each language-game is a form of life -- a form of life, that is, including behaviour, attitudes and interests, which must be taken into consideration in order to understand the language. [13]

If I give the impression that Wittgenstein is a pluralist with regard to language-games and forms of life, this is only because it is implicit in what he himself has to say on this matter. Wittgenstein makes it quite clear in the Philosophical Investigations and in other works (e.g., On Certainty, Zettel, Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics) that there are different language-games and different forms of life. With regard to the former, he insists that there is no one common essence to all language-games which makes them part of one language, although it is true that in different language-games the same expressions are often used. [14] For example, he says:

> For someone might object against me: "You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game and hence of language is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the general form of propositions and of language." [15]

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13. A. M. Quinton, "Excerpt from 'Contemporary British Philosophy'" in G. Pitcher, ed., Wittgenstein, p. 13.

14. See Philosophical Investigations, II, p. 188; also Zettel, 160.

15. Philosophical Investigations, I, 65.

From this, it is clear that Wittgenstein is indicating that there are language-games and not just one language. He says,

> But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question and command? — There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. [16]
>
> If you do not keep the multiplicity of language games in view, you will perhaps be inclined to ask question like, "What is a question?" [17]

When we turn to the idea of forms of life, we find much the same thing . Wittgenstein refers to forms of life only five times in the Philosophical Investigation, (P.I. I, Sections 19, 23, 241; P.I. II, p. 174 and 226), and it is quite evident that he is speaking literally of forms of life (in the plural). The link between the concepts "language-game" and "forms of life" is explicit in Section 23 of Philosophical Investigations. Here Wittgenstein makes it clear that "speaking of language is part of an activity or a form of life."

> Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:
> Giving orders, and obeying them —
> Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements —
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) — ...

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16. Ibid., Section 23.

17. Ibid., Section 24.

> Making a joke: telling it —
> Solving a problem in practical arithmetic —
> Translating from one language into another —
> Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. [18]

He gives one specific example of a "form of life" in the Philosophical Investigations, II, page 174. In another passage, Wittgenstein points out the importance of "language-games" and "forms of life" in communication, and in matters of truth and falsity. He says:

> 'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?' — It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement on opinion but in form of life. [19]

Thus, by "forms of life" Wittgenstein is referring to basic human activities and actions like asking questions, hoping, wishing, measuring, etc. These for him (together with customs, etc.) are what have to be accepted as given, as forms of life. [20]

(See Appendix for justification of forms of life.)

It is quite clear, then, that Wittgenstein does speak of "language-games" and "forms of life" and to this extent he is a pluralist. And it really does not help much to say that what he means by "language-games" is different uses of one basic language simply because "different uses" brings up the whole idea of plurality again. The notion of one basic language becomes suspect when we take into consideration Wittgenstein's idea of "family resemblances". [21]

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18. Ibid.; Section 23; Cf. Lectures and Conversations, p. 2.
19. Ibid., Section 241.
20. Philosophical Investigations, II, p. 226.
21. Philosophical Investigations, I, Section 65 ff.

Now, given Wittgenstein's theory of language-games, it is obvious that one theory of meaning cannot be applied to these different language-games. For example, the referential theory of meaning applies to certain language-games (e.g., describing, naming), but not to promises, commands and requests. According to the referential theory of meaning, meanings are either associated or identified with what expressions refer to, stand for or denote. Promises, commands and requests are not meaningful <u>in this sense</u> at all. It is of very trivial importance that reference is implied in requests, commands, promises. When I say "Do that", of course I am implying that there is a <u>that</u> to be done, but the <u>that</u> has nothing whatever to do with the meaningfulness of the expression, "Do that". The command, "Come on!" might or might not imply any one state of affairs, yet any one hearing it knows what it means. Similarily, I can say "I promise" or "I beg you" and it might not be clear what is being referred to or if anything is being referred to, yet these expressions are meaningful. Reference might or might not be implied in these, but the point is that the referent(s) is not necessary to the meaningfulness of expressions made in commands, etc., in the same sense that it is important in the expression "This blue coat."

Referring is only one function of linguistic expression; that is, some expressions become meaningful because of some referring relationship (although what is referred to is not their meanings — we shall come back to this) but not all expressions are of this type. The expression "this blue coat" refers to an object and is meaningful because of this referring relationship, but the expression "Look

out!" does not refer to any particular thing or object and consequently the referential theory does not apply. Wittgenstein also makes it clear that words have a diversity of functions. The functions of words are as varied as the different uses of tools in a tool-box.

> Think of the tools in a tool-box; there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue pot, glue, nails, and screws. — The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. [22]

The fact that words have diverse functions and function in different language-games makes it clear that one theory of meaning cannot apply to all these different functions. The context in which a word is used will determine the meaning of the word in that context, and for each different context in which that same word is used, the meaning of the word will change accordingly. Words do not simply picture or describe as was suggested in the Tractatus, but are used to express feelings, give commands, to ask questions. In short, the meaningfulness of words varies with the different contexts in which these words are used. And because these contexts are themselves different and varied, no one theory of meaning can apply to all of them. [23] The foregoing theories of meaning have failed and must fail because none of them can (by itself) be made to apply to the different language-games. Thus we can no longer look to this theory or that theory, for they are all ruled out by the elastic nature of our

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22. L. Wittgenstein, Op. Cit., Section II. See also Section 23.

23. See W. P. Alston, Philosophy of Language, p. 18.

language.[24] In order to understand the meaningfulness of linguistic expressions, we have to turn to the "uses" in the different language-games. But more of this later.

We have seen that the elastic nature of our language makes it impossible for any one theory of meaning to apply to it. We shall turn to another problem which revolves around this nature of language. I shall contend that meaning-theories fail (or must fail) because they all seem to presuppose that "meanings" are some sort of entities which correspond to meaningful expressions. If this were the case (and given the elastic nature of language), it would not be very difficult to envisage the state of confusion that would result. Not only would there be confusions and complications, but utter chaos; moreover, communication among people would be almost impossible. What I am saying is that if we construe meanings as some sort of entities, changes in the meanings of our linguistic expressions which are so characteristic of our language would not be possible. In other words, the propositions, properties, and concepts (these being the meanings, or intentions, or logical contents) which correspond to individual linguistic espressions lead not only to confusions but also to absurdities.

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24. See Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 23, quoted under footnote 16.

Before going on to examine some of the meaning-theories, let us indulge in a bit of semantics to show how these confusions and absurdities come about. The property, blue, is supposed to be the meaning of the word, "blue". The colour of the sky is blue; that is, identical with blue. Here we have an identity statement, but the statements do not have the same meaning. That is to say that whereas the property blue is believed to be the meaning of "blue", it is not the meaning of "the colour of the sky" -- the meaning of "the colour of the sky" is not the property blue. In the same way (i.e., because of the identity statement mentioned above) the property blue is not the meaning of "blue." Again, "The author of Waverley" and "Walter Scott" refer to the same person, viz., the man Scott, but they do not have the same meaning; that is, although "The Author of Waverley" and "Walter Scott" have the same referent, their meanings are distinct from this referent. It would be an absurdity to think that the property blue is the meaning of "blue" in the same way that it would be an absurdity to think that the man Scott is the meaning of his name.[25]

We come now to consider the meaning-theories in order to substantiate the claim that meanings are not entities corresponding to linguistic expressions. The referential theory of meaning states that every meaningful expression names something or stands for

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25. These examples are borrowed from Professor N.L.Wilson. See "Property Designation and Description", Philosophical Review, Vol. 64, 1955, and "The Trouble with Meanings", Dialogue, Vol. 4, 1964.

something or has some naming, designating relationship to something or the other. For example, "this red coat" describes, designates a certain particular coat (although the coat is not the meaning) and as such is meaningful. But not all expressions or words refer in such a clear-cut manner. Everyone knows (or would agree) that conjunctions and other connective components of the language do not refer to anything but are still meaningful. What, for example, does "but", "and", "therefore" refer to? We can get rid of this problem in the way the Medieval logicians did; that is, by saying that these words do not have meanings "in isolation" but become meaningful in different contexts.[26] But this does not get rid of the problem; it only postpones it. For, there are others which cannot be explained in the same way as conjunctions. For example, the noun "pencil" and the adjective "courageous" do not refer to any particular pencil or character.[27] When we speak of "pencil" and "courageous", we are led to invoke classes and properties which further complicate the issue.

The problem (above) does not crop up only in connection with the referential theory, but also with the ideational-theory and the behavioural-theory. With regard to the former, which identifies meanings with the idea (or ideas) corresponding to the expressions, it is not always easy to say which ideas correspond to the expressions in question. For example, when I say, "It is raining," I am not simply stating a fact but could also be saying "You should put on your

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26. W. P. Alston, Philosophy of Language, p. 14.

27. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

coat," or "You should not go outside or else you will get wet," or "The picnic is cancelled." Which one of these many ideas do we identify with the meaning of the expression? With reference to the behavioural-theory the situation is much the same. This theory states that the meaning of an expression is identified with the stimuli which evoke these expressions and the responses to them. But even here it is not at all easy to identify the stimuli nor the responses to expressions. For example, if I said to a person, "My mother is a teacher," how is he to know in what way he is to respond? How is he to know what stimulus (or stimuli) evoked this expression? I do not want to involve myself in the intricacies of these theories here (I have already belaboured the issue), but simply to point out that it is not always easy to locate the entity or entities (granting of course that there are such entities) which correspond to linguistic expressions. J.L. Austin puts this rather succinctly when he says that "...there is no simple and handy appendage to a word called 'the meaning of (the word) "X"'." [28]

The problem is prolonged. We have seen that it is not an easy matter to locate the entities corresponding to linguistic expressions; in some cases there are no such entities there to be found. But even if we were to locate entities which correspond to our expressions (and this is the crux of the matter), these cannot be identified with the meaning of the expressions. For we have seen that, although "The Author of Waverley" refers to the man Scott, he is not the

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28. J. L. Austin, Philosophical Papers, (2nd Edition), p. 62.

meaning of that expression. If he were the meaning of the expression, we would have to say, "the meaning of 'The Author of Waverley' is five feet tall" or "was a brilliant scholar." But to speak of meaning in such a way is not only an ontological extravagance, but is clearly absurd. It is because of such an absurdity that we should avoid meanings like the plague. We should avoid meanings, I say, not only because they lead to absurdities, but because "... there are, in point of logic, no such things as meanings." [29] It is my contention that it is this failure to recognize this fact which is the disease that has crippled most (if not all) of the theories of meaning. For they all presuppose (or seem to presuppose) that thereare meanings which can be attached to words and linguistic expressions. Friedrich Waismann says,

> Speaking of meaning being attached to words is ... misleading, because it sounds as if the meaning were a sort of magical entity, united to a word very much as the soul is to the body. But the meaning is not a soul in the body of a word, but what we call the 'meaning' manifests itself in the use of the word. The whole point ... could be summed up by saying 'If you want to know what a word means, look and see how it is used.' [30]

Let us, then turn our attention to meaning as a function of use.

In dealing with meaning and use it should be made clear that we do not mean use as that which an expression has; that is, we do

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29. W. P. Alston,"The Quest of Meanings", Mind, Vol. LXXII, No. 285, (1963), p. 84.

30. F. Waismann, Principles of Linguistic Philosophy, ed., F. Harre, p. 156.

not mean use in the sense of "the use of 'y'", "The use of cars in large cities is dangerous," "The use of child labour is frowned upon by many." Nor do we mean it in the sense of "used for" — the use to which "X" is put; e.g., "Thank you" is used to express appreciation and gratitude. Another point that must be borne in mind when dealing with meaning and use is that use must not be identified with meaning. Wittgenstein seems to give the impression that the meaning of a word is to be identified with its use(s) in language when he says: "... the meaning of a word is its use in the language." [31] It is clearly misleading to identify meaning with use. For example, the meaning of "authentic" is "genuine", but the use of "authentic" is not "genuine". [32] If someone asked for the use of "authentic", it would be a very poor joke to say "genuine". Moreover, it is possible for a person to come to use a word or an expression without understanding its meaningfulness and vice versa. A person can learn a particular use of a word by heart without understanding the meaning of the word. Many people know how to use the word "Amen"; they know that it is used to end a prayer, but nonetheless, this word is not meaningful to them. It is also possible for a parrot to utter the words "Hello" or "Goodbye", but he certainly does not know the meanings of these words (not that there are meanings, of course; but the point is meanings are not to be identified with use). I do not mean to

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31. L. Wittgenstein, Op. Cit., Section 43, See also G. Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein, p. 251 f.

32. These examples are borrowed from W.P. Alston. See his "Meaning and Use", in G. Parkinson, ed., The Theory of Meaning, p. 158.

imply that meaning and use are not connected in some way or the other. This is clearly false. There are clear-cut connections between the meaning (sense) of a word and its use, "but these admitted connections between meaning and use are not strong enough to warrant identifying them ...." [33]

When we say that the meaning (the meaningfulness of ...) an expression is a function of its use, we mean that the meaning is manifested in the use or usage, we mean that we are to look to (what Ryle calls) "the utilization" of the expression in question "... in the actual sayings of things...." [34] That is to say that if we want to know how a word or expression becomes meaningful, we must look and see how that word or expression is actually used; we must look to the actual employment of the word or expression which has some sort of equivalence with the first. For example, "procrastinate" means put things off. Here we have an equivalence such that we can substitute the one for the other without changing the job(s) which each is used to do. [35] If we know how to use an expression (if we know, that is, when to and when not to use it) and we are told that another expression is used in the same way as this (former) expression, we can easily grasp what this new expression means. Let us take the

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33. G. Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein, p. 251.

34. G. Ryle, "Use, Usage and Meaning", in G. Parkinson, ed., Op. Cit., p. 114.

35. W. P. Alston, "Meaning and use", in G. Parkinson, ed., Op. Cit., p. 150.

above example again. If you ask what the word "procrastinate" means, and you are told that it is used in the same way as to put things off, (assuming of course, that you are familiar with the use of to put things off), you will have no difficulty in understanding what "procrastinate" means. It is in this way that meaning is a function of use. W.P. Alston says,

> It seems to me that when one tells someone what an expression means, he is, in effect, telling him that two expressions have the same use; but he uses the meaning formulation only when he supposes that his hearer already knows how to use the second expression. Thus the meaning statement is subject to a presupposition which distinguishes it from the mere statement of equivalence of use. The ultimate reason for the presence of this presupposition is the fact, noted earlier, that specifications of meaning have the primary function of teaching someone how to use an expression. Pointing out that 'u' has the same use as 'v' will do nothing to help you master the use that 'u' has unless you already know how to use 'v'. [36]

There are some objections to the use-theory which should be considered before going any further. It may be objected that the use of an expression is obscure and consequently is of little help in understanding the meaningfulness of the expression. [37] But I am not sure that I understand what it means to say that the use of an expression is obscure. For, if an expression has a use at all, then,

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36. W. P. Alston, "Meaning and Use", in G. Parkinson, ed., Op. Cit., p. 150.

37. See, for example, J.N. Findlay, "Use, Usage and Meaning" in G. Parkinson, ed., Op. Cit., pp. 117-118.

it is no longer obscure — it is that use to which we must look and nothing else. Furthermore, to speak of the obscurity of the use of an expression is to assume that there is only one use of the expression; but this is a mistake. Each expression has many uses and surely at least some of these (if only one) would not be obscure.

Another objection to the use-theory runs like this. In many cases we cannot say how an expression is used without saying what sort of things it is intended to refer to, or at least that it purports to refer to them.[38] But this objection stems from the basic misconception that use depends upon reference and hence, for an expression to make sense through its use, it must refer to something. This contention is based on a confusion between "sense" and "reference". In many cases people speak meaningfully without referring to anything. It is the actual use of an expression which is important and this does not depend upon what is referred to (as we saw above, this is not always easy to know), but the referring function is part of and included in this use. Use is not one activity and referring another (as the objection seems to imply) but the latter is intimately bound up with, and depends upon, the former. For instance, if I say, "It is raining," you do not first check to see if it is really raining (i.e., whether it is true or false) and then conclude that I am conveying some information; but the actual use (from the context —

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38. J. N. Findlay, "Use, Usage and Meaning", in G. Parkinson, ed., Op. Cit., p. 118.

use always presupposes contexts) tells you what it is that is being said. If you are going to the store you immediately think about waiting until the rain has ceased, or you put on your coat. I am contending that although our expressions, in many cases, do refer to something or some state of affairs, we do not first try to find out what that something or state of affairs is before deciding how the expression is used. If we did this, there would be no need to find out the use; for use then becomes superfluous. In ordinary usage we look to the way the expression is used in order to find out what is being said, referred to, or conveyed.

I have contended so far that there are different language-games which must be taken into consideration when speaking of meanings; for obviously no <u>one</u> theory of meaning can adequately apply to all the language-games. I have also contended that there are no such things as meanings, and as a result it is the actual uses of expressions in a language-game that constitute their meaningfulness or significance. I shall now attempt to show how all this applies to religious language.

The most severe criticism of religious assertions is, as was pointed out earlier, that they are not verifiable (not even in principle), nor are they falsifiable. The proponent of the falsification principle says that in order for an assertion to be meaningful we must be able to say what circumstances or what state of affairs make it false, what would count against it. The meaning of a statement, according to

the falsification principle, is somehow bound up with its falsification.[39] This is precisely where I think the falsification principle has gone astray. For, in attempting to identify meaning with falsification, the proponents of this theory are presupposing that meanings are some sort of entities, hence the need for empirical verification and falsification. This is so because the falsification principle makes it quite clear that meaning is directly connected with the particular state of affairs which falsifies a particular statement. A statement which cannot be falsified by any particular state of affairs is in fact compatible with all or any state of affairs and hence meaningless. In other words, every statement has a particular state of affairs which falsifies it and hence renders it meaningful. It is for this reason that I say that the falsification principle as a criterion of meaning presupposes that meanings are some sort of entities. (Verification in principle fares no better because it also depends on those circumstances which would, in principle, verify or falsify a statement).

It is interesting to note that the problem of the factual status or cognitivity of religious language and any language for that matter, the criterion of which is either verification or falsification is also questionable, once we point out that the falsification and verification principles treat meanings as entities. But once this version of meaning is ruled out, it becomes quite clear that religious assertions and all assertions mean in the same way — and this includes the factual status and cognitivity of language. For it is clear that to say that a statement is factually meaningful is just another way of saying that it is meaningful. The practice of limiting cognitivity to verifiable and falsifiable statements

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39. In some cases some verificationists go so far as to identify meaning with verification. M. Schlick says, "The meaning of a proposition is its method of verification" in "The Future of Philosophy", in Gesammelte Aufsätze (Vienna, 1938). Cited by W. T. Blackstone, The Problems of Religious Knowledge, p. 6.

is, it seems to me, not only too restrictive, but on the whole lacks justification.

What I am saying, then, is that if my contention that there are no such things as meanings is correct, then the falsification principle as a criterion of meaning fails. Incidentally, following the falsification and verification criteria of meaning, we should have to say not that religious assertions are "meaningless", but that they are "without meanings." For, "without meaning" is more appropriate as the opposite of "'X is the meaning of ...". But, as was pointed out above, there is no such "X". Meanings therefore are myths, and since they are myths, it is misleading and confusing to ask for the meaning of expressions". Thus, instead of speaking of "the meaning of ...", I shall speak of the "meaningfulness", "significance", "sense" of religious assertions. It is in this context that the use-theory comes in.

Now, use presupposes users and users presuppose a using community of some kind and it is to this community that we must turn our attention when we seek to understand the meaningfulness of a language. We must first of all realize that one language community is different from another. If this were not so, it would make no sense to speak of language communities. Consequently, we have a "scientific language", "religious language", "aesthetic language" in spite of Kai Neilsen's contention to the contrary. Neilsen says,

> There is no "religious language" or "scientific language." There is rather the international notation of mathematics and logic; and English, French, German and the like. In short, "religious discourse" and "scientific discourse" are part of the same overall conceptual structure.[40]

40. Kai Neilsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism", in Philosophy, (Vol. 42, No. 161, July 1967), p. 201.

While I agree with Neilsen that "religious discourse" and "scientific discourse" are part of the "same overall conceptual structure", I must protest that this does not rule out "religious discourse" and "scientific discourse" as somewhat self-contained units within this overall conceptual structure. We all agree that there is only one human race, but we do speak of "the Caucasian race", "the Negroid race" and "the Mongoloid race", which in turn are all part of the human race. We would think a person peculiar who said, "There is no Caucasian race or Negroid race" (I mean this anthropologically). In the same way it is rash to say that there is no "religious language" or "scientific language."

The whole idea of different forms of life, different linguistic frameworks, different language games is useful and often very convenient for purposes of understanding what goes on in different disciplines, e.g., art, business, physics, etc. There is, however, the serious danger of emphasizing these differences to the point of complete confusion at the expense of similarities. When we speak of forms of life, etc., we are at the same time saying that insofar as these forms of life are social, some sort of medium of communication is needed. The medium of communication is referred to as "language" and so we have "religious language", "scientific language". But it is very important to note that "language" here is being used in a metaphoric sense. Religious language and scientific language are not on par with English, Sanskrit, German and French. The latter are languages in the primary sense, but the former are not; they are

somehow derivative. The scientist and the religious person do not understand each other not because they are speaking "different languages" -- they both speak one natural language (e.g., English, French, German) or another -- but because of what we might call their "technical vocabularies". The scientist and the religious person use the same words, generally speaking, but they use them differently in each discipline. But the one natural language (e.g., English) is the basis, the substratum of religious and scientific languages. If not, it is not at all an easy matter to explain how communication could take place. In this sense, then, "religious language" is not a language like English, French or Spanish, but is a derivative of any one of them -- it is, if you like, a religious use of language in the primary sense. It is clear that a person using religious language does not need a translator, at least not in the sense that a person who speaks French might need one in order to understand what the other who speaks German is saying. There is, then, no religious language or scientific language, but only religious and scientific uses of language -- each superimposing a technical vocabulary upon natural language.

There might be one overall conceptual structure, but within this structure we do, as a matter of fact, use language differently. Neilsen seems to agree with this (or something close to it) but objects to the compartmentalizing of the different uses:

> I indeed believe that religious discourse, moral discourse, legal discourse and the like are all part of the same overall conceptual structure <u>in the sense that</u> they are not compartmentalized and that, when we engage

> in such discourse, we almost always discourse in some natural language such as English, Swedish, German and the like. And I also believe that these languages have distinctive syntactical and semantical structures. [41]

I do not see how Neilsen can speak of "religious discourse", "moral discourse", "legal discourse" without allowing for some sort of compartmentalizing (not necessarily completely compartmentalized, for there could be family-resemblances). But Neilsen cannot have it both ways; that is, he cannot grant different discourses on the one hand, but refuse to allow for some kind of compartmentalizing on the other. What sense is there in speaking of religious discourse, moral discourse, if there are not, at least, some distinguishing features, compartments of some kind? I conclude, therefore, that there are "religious discourse" and "scientific discourse".

The scientist and the theologian operate from certain beliefs which may be called premises or presuppositions, and which are ultimate in the sense that they are not deductively demonstrable, nor are they falsifiable or verifiable by sense-experience. [42] By "presuppositions", I mean those principles (Hume called them natural beliefs) which are basic to our way of life — without which life as we know it would not be possible. My claim is that the scientist no less than the religious person presupposes these principles, but

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41. Kai Neilsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism Again, A Reply to Hudson", Philosophy, (January, 1969), Vol. XLIV, No. 167, p. 64.

42. See R. Demos, "Religious Faith and Scientific Faith", in S. Hook, ed., Religious Experience and Truth, p. 130 f.

each also has other principles which are important and basic to his whole discipline. Now, it is obvious that the scientist cannot continue his investigations if he does not hold belief in the reality of the physical world, but I know of no "proof", qua proof (there are many attempts, but these are far from satisfactory, e.g. G.E. Moore's proof of the external world) for the reality of the physical world. In addition to this the scientist presupposes the law of causal connection and other laws of nature, the uniformity of nature, the principle of induction, etc. Without these principles and others, scientific investigations come to a halt. But the important point to bear in mind is that none of the principles which are so basic to the scientific method is provable or verifiable in sense experience. The scientist holds these on "faith". Now, in much the same way, it is my contention that the theologian presupposes certain principles which are ultimate to his whole discipline. (It is interesting to point out that the theologian presupposes a lot of what the scientist presupposes, but not vice-versa, but this need not bother us — the important point is that each has presuppositions which are necessary in order for any sort of investigation to be possible.) For the theologian, the existence of God, the belief that God created the world, the belief that God loves mankind, the belief that evil and suffering are not final, but that in the end good will triumph, the belief that God revealed himself in the Christ, etc. are such presuppositions. He accepts these as given and goes on to elucidate and explicate the whole complex of his religion.

Now, it is clear that I am restricting myself to the Christian religion and it is because of this restriction that I can go on to say that the religious believer (Christian believer) has no doubts concerning the existence of God. For it is clear that, if he has doubts concerning God's existence, he cannot rightly be a Christian (neither in the Biblical sense, the traditional sense, nor the contemporary sense). A person who has doubts concerning God's existence is either a skeptic or an agnostic (he might even be an atheist) and both of these are ruled out in Christianity. A person might have doubts in the sense that he is not quite clear about the intricacies of the reality of the existence of God, but he nonetheless believes that God exists. A person who says that he does not know whether God does or does not exist is admitting from the outset that he is not a Christian. We might allow a lot of activities to go by under the label of Christianity, but doubts concerning God's existence cannot be one of them. It is extremely odd for one to say that he is a Christian, but that he has doubts regarding God's existence or he really does not believe in God because God's existence has not yet been properly demonstrated to him. Such a person is much better off in being content to call himself a concerned human being or a humanist or some such thing. It is idiotic to want to be called or to call oneself Christian simply because it is fashionable. (This is precisely what the person who has doubts concerning God's existence seems to be doing.) Belief in God, then, (or theism) is a basic presupposition of Christianity.

In the theological sphere, these presuppositions are articles of faith which the believer accepts as his basic point of departure.[43] For example, the religious person accepts as basic presuppositions "God loves mankind", "God created the world and all that in it is", "God exists". The religious believer (and here I restrict myself to the Christian religion) has no doubts concerning God's existence and it is for this reason that the traditional "proofs" are not popular among many religious groups.

Proofs for God's existence are on the whole irrelevant to the Christian believer because, for him, God (i.e.the God of the Bible) is not an object of proof and disproof; He is not to be reached by a process of inference but through "committment" and "personal encounter".

The point here is simply that religious beliefs (and particularly belief in God's existence) are not the sort of things which are provable or disprovable in the way scientific theories are provable. If it were the case that these proofs were essential to these beliefs,

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43. By faith, I do not mean "blind" faith or Fideism, but a faith which seeks to understand. Unlike the Fideist, who believes without really caring what he believes, belief (in the sense I mean it) consists in seeking to understand what is believed. For if the believer does not understand the utterances (he makes through faith), then he cannot reject or accept them, for he would not really understand what it is he is rejecting or accepting, I agree with Kai Neilsen when he points out that these utterances should be intelligible at least to some men. That is to say, if we do not understand what we mean by "God loves us", then to say we accept it on faith is like saying we accept "There is a Blog" on Faith. (See Neilsen, "Can faith Validate God-Talk" in New Theology, No. 1, ed. M. Marty and D.G. Peerman, p. 135.)

then of course people should and ought to be affected by them one way or the other. But the very fact that they are not affected one way or the other is enough to cause us to take a second look — so to say — at the purpose of proofs and demonstrations for God's existence. In the case of flat earth devotees, it is quite evident that they are being unreasonable about the whole matter — it is evident because there are ways of deciding the issue quite accurately, and this has been done in many different ways. That the world is round is no longer a matter of guess work — there is a great deal of evidence to substantiate the claim that the earth is round (or at least elliptical) and not flat. Those who ignore this evidence and continue to say the world is flat are simply flying in the face of facts — they are utterly unreasonable. But notice that this is not the same as belief in God and other religious beliefs. "Evidence" is not appropriate to religious beliefs in the way it is appropriate to scientific theories and to the shape of the earth. This does not mean of course, that evidence has no place in religion, for clearly it does. But whatever place it has in religion and theological matters, it must always be borne in mind that evidence is not essential to the forming of religious beliefs, claims, etc. in the way it is in science, history, etc.[44]

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44. For example, when a person says, "God loves me" he is not drawing a conclusion on the basis of a number of instances of God's love; he is not saying "Because of these instances of God's dealings with me, I conclude that he loves me." Believing that God loves him is part of his understanding of God and of his religion. Belief in God's love is part of this person's religious committment. And evidence (in the above sense) is irrelevant to this committment and belief, but is useful for purposes of the elucidation of such a belief and committment. Evidence (empirical evidence) is useful then, in that it provides actual instances of religious beliefs which count for reassurance and elucidation on the part of the believer. But it is not relevant in the formulating of these beliefs in the way it is in the formulating and establishing of scientific hypotheses.

And it is because of this that those who are unaffected by the amassing of evidence for and against religious beliefs are not being unreasonable. For them, such "evidence" simply does not apply. It is in this sense that I believe they ought to remain unaffected by attempts to prove or disprove God's existence. It is not that they are ignoring important evidence or facts, but that they are pointing out that such evidence or facts do not apply -- do not fit the case. Of course I am not saying that proofs and demonstrations for God's existence are useless. Philosophical proofs for God's existence and philosophical discussions about the attributes of God are useful and necessary if they are meant to clarify important philosphical issues such as determining the limit of human knowledge. But if they are used as arguments for and against religion, it is in this sense that I believe they are irrelevant. A remark by Kierkegaard is very pertinent here. He once pointed out that any attempt to prove or demonstrate the existence of God is "an excellent subject for a comedy of the higher lunacy."[45] This is so because if "... God does not exist, it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it."[46]

Philosophical proofs for God's existence do not seem to make a difference one way or the other to religious believers. Proofs for God's existence are defended and refuted all the time, but the non-

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45. S. Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, ed., D.F. Swenson, p. 54, note 3.

46. Ibid., p. 49.

Christian or non-religious person, and the Christian or religious person are virtually unaffected; they go on as if nothing has happened. When a proof is well defended unbelievers do not become believers because of it, and when a proof is refuted, believers fail to become unbelievers because of it. In other words, proofs for God's existence seem to make no difference to anyone one way or the other. And what fails to make a difference, it seems to me, is of little or no value to anyone. The point behind all this is that the Christian religion rests on faith and revelation and philosophical proofs and natural theology as a whole must presuppose this. I think Rush Rhees is right when he says that the difficulty in trying to understand theology has to do with talk about "first causes". "The fault", he says, "is in thinking of natural theology as the FOUNDATION of the rest of religion, in some sense."[47]

I have said that religious language functions in a special way and those who understand this function are those who are aware of the basic presuppositions of this language. This does not mean that this language is "closed" to all but those who use it (i.e. the religious believers); there is no "stop sign" to prevent outside investigation. But it does mean that in order for someone outside his language community to understand it, he has to come to terms with the presuppositions and subsequently its function. It is usually the practice of those who discuss religious language to neglect the way in which

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47. Rush Rhees, Without Answers, p. 111.

religious or theological concepts arise and become meaningful in the religious experiences in the religious community. But it is precisely these experiences in the religious community that are necessary for the understanding of the language. This is not characteristic only of the Christian religion alone, but of all religions; that is to say that every religion prescribes a pattern of practices (sometimes varying in great detail) which, following a particular set of presuppositions, brings one to a realization of what is meant by the statements or propositions which express the truths of that particular religion.[48]

In the same way, if one is to understand science, one has to understand it only in the light of scientific presuppositions. For example, in trying to understand what scientists are doing, one has to take into consideration the rules of induction, the uniformity of nature, the universal application of the principle of explanation, which the scientists presuppose. In other words, a language becomes meaningful only when we are aware of the way or ways in which that particular language functions, and how it is used by its participants. In the case of religious language, "... it is a question of the role which our statements about God play in our worship or in our lives. Or if we are outside religion and discussing it, the reference is still to the use the language has among those who practice it."[49]

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48. Daya Krishna, "Religious Experience, Language, and Truth", in S. Hook, ed., Op. Cit., p. 231.

49. Rush Rhees, Op. Cit., p. 130.

One point of clarification. In speaking of religious language and the religious community as being somewhat special, I do not mean to imply that the language is not problematic to the users. The Christian religion is not only problematic, but its language is sometimes incoherent and the users are often perplexed and frustrated as they strive to understand their religious beliefs. But this does not rule out religion and religious discourse as Neilsen seems to think.[50] The Christian theologian is constantly struggling to understand his faith. Like Job and the prophet Jeremiah, the Christian believer is always seeking to understand why there are suffering and pain. It is this questioning attitude from within the religious community which differentiates the Christian faith from fideism. But the Christian does not doubt the basic presuppositions or (what Neilsen calls)"the first-order discourse itself."[51] If he does this he is ipso facto admitting that he is not a member of the religious language community; that is, he really does not know how to play the language-game. He is not really a member.

Although there are difficulties with religious language, religious people communicate successfully among themselves -- they obviously understand their language because it makes a difference to them. And if it makes a difference to them, then it must be performing

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50. See Kail Neilsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism", in Philosophy, (July, 1967), pp. 196, 204 f.

51. See Kai Neilsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism Again, A Reply to Hudson", Philosophy, (January 1969), p. 63.

its function; if not, they would obviously try to change it. A person who stands outside the religious community may not understand what is going on in the religious community, but he can see that these people understand their language and communicate successfully with each other. They are not fooling themselves -- there is no need to. Their language really does make a difference to them and this is exemplified in the way they live in society.

Religious beliefs and religious language make a difference to religious people in much the same way that belief in the existence of the external world makes a difference to people. Although we cannot prove that the external world exists, we still believe that it does, for without such a belief, life, as we know it, would not be possible.[52] Thus, believing in the existence of the external world makes a difference to the way we live. And what makes a difference is understandable and intelligible at least to those to whom it makes this difference. A language is meaningful because it makes a difference one way or the other. Meaningless expressions do not make a difference to anyone because no one understands them. "Irlig blog klok" does not make a difference to anyone one way or the other, but "God loves us" does. John Hick says "... the significance of a given object or situation for a given individual consists in the practical difference which the existence of that object makes to the individual."[53]

Religious utterances; e.g. "God is love", "God is just",

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52. D. Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, Part III, Section VII

53. John Hick, Faith and Knowledge, p. 100.

"God is merciful", "God loves us as a father loves his children" makes a difference to the religious believer. When the believer says "God loves us as a father loves his children", he is saying that it makes a difference to him — a difference in that his life differs from what it might be if there were no God to love Him. He does not allow the occurrence of evil and suffering to change his belief in God because his belief in a God of love is not formed in the absence of evil and suffering, but in the midst of them and in spite of them. The believer (when he utters the above statement), in spelling out the difference that the existence of a loving God is alleged to make or have made in the past within human experience, is at the same time indicating the meaningfulness of the statements.[54] Similarly, belief in the Resurrection of Christ makes a difference to Christian believers. Whether the Resurrection of Christ was physical or not is not really important. What is important is that something happened that day which made a significant difference in the lives of many people. It called the church into existence and, through it, continues to make a difference to people morally, socially, politically and otherwise.

The foregoing was an examination of "meanings" and religious language. I have contended that there are no such things as meanings. I have also contended that it is only through the use of language that the religious community operates from presuppositions (articles of faith) and its experiences are interpreted on the basis of these

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54. John Hick, Philosophy of Religion, p. 106.

presuppositions. To interpret something should not give the impression that the resulting experiences are merely subjective or "private" lacking objective correlations because interpretation is not limited to some forms of experiencing (eg. in religion or aesthetics) but is involved in all forms of epistemological enquiries. Every act of experience, every epistemological act involves interpretation of some form or another. As John Hick puts it:

> It is a familiar philosophical tenet, and one which may perhaps today be taken as granted, that all conscious experience of the physical world contains an element of interpretation. There are combined in each moment of experience a presented field of data and an interpretative activity of the subject. The perceiving mind is thus always in some degree a selecting, relating and synthesizing agent, and experiencing our environment involves a continuous activity of interpretation.[58]

It might be objected, however, that all this has a circular ring to it; that is, that religious utterances can be understood only because other religious utterances (presuppositions) are understood and accepted on faith. While it is true that this is circular, I do not think it is viciously so. For, as was pointed out earlier, the religious believer is constantly trying to understand his beliefs in the light of experiences that constantly challenge them. He does not simply accept them on blind faith. What I shall suggest is that it is probably the nature of religious language to be circular and question-

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58. John Hick, Faith and Knowledge, p. 108.

begging. That is to say that the nature of the subject matter lends itself best to what might be called "the circle of faith".[56] Religious language, then, is intrinsically bound up with the religious experiences of the religious community, and to attempt to understand the former without the latter is like trying to understand a football game without ever having seen one.

Thus the fact that the religious believer maintains his belief in a God of love even though there are myriads of instances of evil and suffering does not mean that such a belief is unreasonable, empty or meaningless. To be sure, the believer is appalled at the amount of suffering and evil in the world, but he does not conclude from this that God does not exist or that God is not a God of love after all. But instead, his faith in God is strengthened. As A. MacIntyre points out, "to the believing mind the facts of evil apparently constitute not evidence against, but a motive for belief."[57] Thus although statements like "God exists" and "God loves us as a father loves his children" are held to be true by the believer in spite of the world's evils, they are nonetheless meaningful because they are uttered on the basis of faith and trust — the faith and trust which are central to the believer's way of life.

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56. See J. Hick, "Meaning and Truth in Theology", in S. Hood, ed. Op. Cit., pp. 208-209.

57. A. MacIntyre, ed., Metaphysical Beliefs, p. 174.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In the last chapter, I contended that even though certain fundamental religious statements and utterances, e.g., "God exists", "God loves us" are not falsifiable, they are nonetheless meaningful because they make a difference to the lives of those who utter them. I also contended that religious beliefs are not the result of a long chain of reasoning nor are they explanatory hypotheses which are formulated by believers to account for the way things are. It is obvious that if religious believers give reasons for their beliefs in the same way that scientists and historians give reasons for their theories, there could be very little reason for holding on to the beliefs. If the belief that God loves mankind were a matter of reasoning based on evidence from the way things are in the world, it would be the most unreasonable of all beliefs, for most of the evidence one finds does not seem to support such a belief, but rather its opposite. W. D. Hudson correctly points out that the "weight of empirical evidence for a prediction does not appear to be either a sufficient or a necessary condition of religious belief." [1]

1. Hudson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, p. 48. A. MacIntyre holds a similar position. He says: "We ought therefore not to be surprised that to accept religious belief is a matter not of argument but of conversion. Conversion, because there is no logical transition which will take one from unbelief to belief. The transition is not in objective considerations at all, but in the person who comes to believe. There are no logical principles which will make the transition for one. There are no reasons to which one can appeal to evade the burden of decision. And just as for the man who asks for a justification of belief the only thing to be done is to offer a description of

A person may have very sound reasons for holding a particular belief so that his belief may be on the whole "reasonable", but we would not call him a religious believer because of this. We would not call him a religious believer because his belief would lack the personal decision and committment which are characteristic of religious beliefs. A belief for which there are good reasons and sufficient evidence is not a belief which calls for personal decision and committment; one holds such a belief because it is "reasonable" to do so in the same way one holds the belief that the sun will rise tomorrow morning. Wittgenstein was very clear on the difference between religious beliefs and other beliefs — beliefs which really are theories or hypotheses. He wrote:

> Suppose, for instance, we knew people who foresaw the future; made forecasts for years and years ahead; and they described some sort of Judgment Day. Queerly enough, even if there were such a thing, and if it were more convincing than I have described ... belief in this happening wouldn't at all be a religious belief.[2]

On the other hand, there are people who hold religious beliefs for which there is little or no empirical evidence, so that when

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1. (con't) what religion is, so the man who has come to believe can only give us his reasons for his believing by relating a segment of his autobiography." Metaphysical Beliefs, p. 199.

2. L. Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations, p. 56; cited by D. Hudson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, pp. 48-49.

compared to the scientist or the historian, such people would appear quite unreasonable in holding these beliefs. But these are the beliefs which Wittgenstein instanced as the most genuine religious beliefs — they are the beliefs which guide and sustain the religious believer. Such beliefs, Wittgenstein remarked "must be called the firmest of all beliefs because the man risks things on account of it which he would not do on things which are by far better established for him."[3]

It is clear then that religious beliefs may lack the sort of indubitable evidence which one finds in science or in history and still affect the believer's entire way of life. To the religious believer, his beliefs are central and fundamental to his whole life; everything that he does or anything that happens to him are interpreted in terms of these religious beliefs. As A. MacIntyre points out, religion "is always concerned with how men are to live and with what their fundamental attitudes are to be."[4] Wittgenstein was also convinced that religion and religious beliefs are fundamental to the believer's whole way of life. He says,

> Suppose somebody made this guidance for life: believing in the last Judgment. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind. In a way, how are we to know whether to say he believes this will happen or not?
> Asking him is not enough. He will probably say he has proof. But he has what you might

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3. Ibid., p. 54.

4. A. MacIntyre, ed., Metaphysical Beliefs, p. 191.

> call an unshakeable belief. It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for in all his life.

Religious beliefs, then, are held in spite of evidence to the contrary because they are fundamental to a form of life — a way of life to which the believer is committed. And it is in terms of this form of life that the believer interprets everything that happens to him, everything that he may encounter. Thus when the believer or the theist says "God is good" or "God loves mankind", he is not saying that God loves mankind insofar as mankind is happy and free from evils and suffering, but that God fails to love mankind whenever there are evils and suffering. He is saying that God loves mankind no matter how many evils there are. If he were to change his mind about God's love or God's goodness every time he encountered instances of evil and suffering, he would be admitting that his were not religious beliefs at all. The religious believer or the theist does not say "God is good insofar as ..." or "God loves mankind inasmuch as ...". He does not believe that God's love for mankind is provisional, that is, that God loves mankind only when things are favourable, but when things are unfavourable that God's love for mankind has somehow ceased.[6] Believing that God exists, that He is a God of love or that

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5. L. Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations, pp. 53-54.

6. Religious beliefs are never provisional because they are not factual beliefs. It is only when a belief is factual that new evidence can affect it one way or the other. It is always possible that new evidence pertaining to the facts of beliefs in historical events may turn up because such beliefs are factual. According to A. MacIntyre

He is a good God can never be beliefs that can be tested to establish truth or falsity.[7] Believing that God exists or that He is a God of love is not a matter of believing that something is the case but it is a fundamental attitude — a committment to a particular way of life.

Now, a life led in accordance with religious beliefs and the practices of a religion becomes (in the final analysis) the truth of that religion. Religious truth is tied up with religious beliefs and practices. This is so because there are no external checks or guidelines to which the believer may appeal. The following of his religious beliefs and the seriousness with which he adheres to these beliefs are what the truth of his religion is all about. This is so precisely because religion is not a description of the way things go in the world nor a description of facts in the world, but a way of interpreting the world. His religious beliefs are what determine what his attitudes to the world are to be. For it is through these beliefs

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6. (con't) religious beliefs or religious faith is never provisional. We do not "find Christian believers accepting the Resurrection conditionally or provisionally; the gladness of Easter morning is never a conditional joy." (Metaphysical Beliefs, p. 197.)

7. According to Wittgenstein, "Whatever believing in God may be, it can't be believing in something you can test, or find means of testing. You might say: 'This is nonsense because people say they believe on evidence or say they believe on religious experiences.' I would say: 'The mere fact that someone says they believe on evidence doesn't tell me enough for me to be able to say now whether I can say of a sentence "God exists" that your evidence is unsatisfactory or insufficient.'" (Lectures and Conversations, p. 60.)

and practices that the believer learns the language of his religious community to which he belongs, and shares his life and experiences with those of the other members of this community. And as long as the believer is convinced that he is living up to the standards and demands of his community, the more convinced he becomes of his beliefs and practices. And it is this conviction which forms the basis of religious truth for the believer. The conviction which the believer develops because of his religious beliefs and practices is what enables him to withstand whatever adverse criticisms may be brought against his beliefs; for it is this conviction which gives meaning and purpose to his life, nay, the very core of his life. The person who is convinced of his beliefs in this way does not need any other proof or evidence of their truth; for such a believer, the expressions "God exists" or "God is love" are fundamental. If he is asked why he believes these beliefs, all he can do is to give a thorough description of the content of his religion. And as A. MacIntyre says, "Either a man will find himself brought to say 'My Lord and my God' or he will not."[8]

If it seems that I have been belabouring the whole issue of the nature of religious beliefs, this is only because it is central to our understanding of the theist's reaction to evil and suffering in the world. For evil and suffering cannot be understood apart from the theist's beliefs and practices. Some familiarity with Christian

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8. A. MacIntyre, Op. Cit., p. 195.

theism will at once convince anyone that the theist's beliefs are not held in the absence of evil and suffering, but in the midst of them. Most critics who use the problem of evil as a source of criticism of Christian theism seem to give the impression that Christianity can be maintained and can survive only in the absence of evil and suffering. But such an impression is entirely misleading. The fact of evil is central to the Judeo-Christian religion simply because it is a religion which preaches about salvation, redemption from sins and the reclamation of sinners. Christianity, as a religion concerned with salvation and redemption, becomes null and void in an evil-free, morally perfect world. As Patterson Brown puts it, "a religion of salvation would be senseless in Paradise."[9] The Christian theist, then, is aware of the stark reality of evil and suffering because they are central to his understanding of his beliefs and religion.

A reading of the Old and New Testaments will be enough to convince anyone of Christianity's acquaintance with the reality of evil and suffering. The Old Testament prophets were well aware of evil whether as the result of God's wrath or as a result of the operation of the laws of nature — evil was nothing new or foreign to them. No one people knows more about suffering and evil than the people of Israel, the chosen people of God. And when we turn to the New Testament, we are faced with numerous references to evil and suffering. For example, St. Paul tells us: "We know that the whole

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9. Patterson Brown, "Religious Morality", Mind, Vol. LXXII, No. 286, 1963, p. 235.

creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."[10] Thus the existence of evil is not something which comes to the theist as a surprise — something independent of his beliefs which he is forced to face up to. Apart from the fact that we have no experience of God prior to our experience of happiness and suffering, pain and pleasure, the theist emphasizes the existence of evil more than anyone else and especially more than the atheist. For one thing, the theist is aware of the sins of mankind in a very important sense in which the atheist can never be — atheists can have and should have no concept of sin, for obvious reasons.[11]

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10. Romans 8:22-23.

11. The atheist cannot have a concept of sin because sin is a theological concept — a concept which can only be understood by one who believes in the existence of God. The theist, then, is in many instances more aware of the existence of evil than the atheist. T. Penelhum puts it this way: "The existence of evil is not something the facts of life force the theist to admit, in the way in which the facts of the fossil evidence forced some nineteenth century theists to admit the antiquity of the world. The existence of evil is something the theist emphasizes. Theists do not see fewer evils in the world than atheists; they see more. It is a necessary truth that they see more. For example, to the theist adultery is not only an offence against another person or persons, but also an offence against a sacrament, and therefore against God; it is therefore a worse offence because it is a compound of several others. Atheists can never be against sin, for to atheists there can be no sins, "sin" being a theological concept that only has application if God exists." ("Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil," Religious Studies, Vol. 2, 1966, pp. 95-96.)

The Christian theist is not ignorant of the fact that there are thousands of children starving in Africa, India and South America, that innocent people are dying every day in Viet Nam and other war-torn countries; the theist is not ignorant of the world's pain and injustice so that if these were brought to his attention his faith in God would be destroyed. A theist who is not aware of pain and suffering cannot rightly be said to be a theist, because he would not be able to understand that the central symbol of the Christian faith, the Cross, is characterized by pain, injustice and suffering. Without the Cross, there can be no Christianity and without pain and suffering, the Cross is meaningless. With the Cross, then, pain and suffering are brought to the fore and any theist or believer who knows his business cannot escape this reality. As J.S. Whale correctly points out, "At the Cross, the whole human problem of suffering and sin comes to a burning focus .... The Cross shows forth as does nothing else in history, the heinous actuality of sin, the nature of evil and its consequences."[12]

Evil and suffering, then, are present at the very heart of the Christian Faith, but they do not destroy the theist's faith in God's love. Rather, they are the very expressions of such love and goodness. It is in and through the suffering of Christ and the Cross that the theist sees the fullness of God's love and goodness. For it is here at the Cross that the love of God is seen transforming

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12. J.S. Whale, The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil, p. 59.

evil into good. This does not deny, of course, that people are able to choose to do the good -- for clearly they are able and they do choose the good. What it means is that whatever evils there may be (especially physical evils) in the world are not final, but can be overcome by God and transformed into good. How this transformation takes place depends on how the theist interprets events which occur in the world. If the theist does not believe that evils can be overcome, he is admitting in a very important sense that he is not really a theist after all.[13] To believe in a God who is not able (among other things) to overcome evils or to give meaning to the world is senseless. It is senseless because belief in such a God is no more than "excess baggage" — it is unnecessary. Atheism would be a much more consistent position to maintain. The theist's beliefs in God, then, must include the belief and conviction that God is able to overcome evil, to transform

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13. That God is good, that He is love, that in the end good will triumph over evil are fundamental beliefs which the theist holds on the basis of committment. If the theist depended on empirical observation, on the way things go in the world in order to formulate these beliefs, he would always be in a state of indecision with regard to them. Empirical observation provides instances of love and hate, good and evil, and because of this it would be extremely difficult to come to a conclusion about God's love or goodness. At a given point in time all that the theist can say is that the evidence to this point indicates that there are more instances of love or goodness in the world than hate or evil, there it seems that (so far) God is love or God is good. But this is not the way the theist goes about his business — he does not believe that God is good when things are fine and that He is evil when things are not. He would have to do this only if he formulated his belief in the same way the scientist formulated hypotheses. The theist, then, must hold the beliefs that God is love, that He is good, that good will triumph over evil, as fundamental belief — beliefs which determine how he would subsequently interpret things in the world.

evil into good.[14] It is for this reason that Christian believers do not see evil and suffering as finally insurmountable problems. For Christian believers, evil and suffering are not insurmountable problems because they are convinced that with the Resurrection of the Christ, evil and suffering were conquered and transformed into good. This does not mean, of course, that the Christian does not see evils as evils, that he is not appalled at the suffering and pain in the world. For the Christian, evils never cease to be evils, nor do wrong deeds cease to be wrong deeds, but for him, evils are as real as ever, but he does not succumb to their destructive power because he believes that they can and will be overcome. And once he knows this, it can no longer be a serious threat to him. Nelson Pike, it seems to me, is correct when he says,

> The fact of evil in the world presents no undue pressures or strains on the faith of well-informed believers. It demands no radical spiritual adjustments or revisions. His religious faith must simply include a faith that there is <u>some</u> good reason for evil in

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14. The belief that God is able to transform evil into good is fundamental to the Judaic-Christian tradition. For example, the Psalmist cries: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23, v.4; cf. Psalm 91.) And Isaiah, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind ... I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress." (Isaiah 65, vv. 17 ff., Also John 16:33 and Romans 8:28 ff.)

> the theistic universe. Certainly this is not an extravagance for one already committed to theism."[15]

It might be pointed out that saying that one's faith should convince one that there is some good reason for evil and suffering might be cold comfort to the mother whose only child is dying of cancer of the throat, or those whose bellies are burning with pangs of hunger. The person for whom evil and suffering are the rule rather than the exception might laugh at such a glib, easy answer. But this is only because such a person might be expecting some sort of answer to the question of evil and suffering. But the only reason why the theist has to satisfy himself with something like "there must be a good reason for evil" is because he knows of no ready-made "pat" answers.

Now, someone may say that it is the will of God that people suffer, that it is all for a purpose which men cannot understand because God's ways are mysterious to us. But this must be rejected not only because it is too glib, but because it makes God out to be some sort of monster. It is bad enough, it will be pointed out, that people suffer, that innocent children are starving and dying slow deaths

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15. N. Pike, "God and Evil: A Reconsideration", Ethics, Vol. LXVIII, No. 2, 1958, p.123. The Christian theist struggles with evil but he does not allow it to triumph over him because his faith tells him that the love and power of God which transformed the crucifixion of Christ into man's redemption is the same love and power which will give him courage and strength to face up to his present evils without despair, knowing that they too will be overcome and transformed to some useful end.

because of incurable diseases, but to say that all this is for a purpose planned by a God of love is the greatest of all evils. This is exactly what Ivan points out to his brother, Alyosha, in The Brothers Karamazov:

> And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price ... I don't wan't harmony. From love for humanity, I don't want it ... Besides too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket.[16]

It will not do then, to tell those who are suffering that God causes such suffering because he wants to achieve some end because of it or that such is simply the will of God or that all this is for some special purpose. It will not do because it is too difficult for the theist to reconcile to himself the fact that all the evil and suffering in the world are for a special purpose, a part of some gigantic scheme. It is one thing to be convinced because of one's faith that there is some good reason for evil in the world, but it is quite another to be told that God wills it for some special purpose. For to say that there is some good reason for evil and suffering in the world is to say that when one takes into consideration the nature

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16. F. Dostoevsky. "Rebellion" from The Brothers Karamazov, Bk. IV, Chapter IV, Trans. C. Garnett, p. 258.

of human beings and the type of world necessary for them to live properly, evil and suffering are inevitable. But to say that God wills evil for some special purpose (as it is often claimed) is to say that He deliberately causes people to suffer in order to achieve some particular end. This not only questions God's omnipotence, but it also makes him out to be a villain of some sort.

The theist does not seem to understand why there is as much suffering as there is in the world, and he may never understand this. All he may be able to say when misery and disasters strike is what Job said when he found himself in the same situation: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."[17] Like Job, the theist's faith is tested in the face of evil and suffering, but it is not seriously threatened. It is not seriously threatened because his faith is one of conviction and committment and not one of reasoning and consequently, whatever evil and suffering he encounters, he interprets in terms of his theistic committment. Evil and suffering are seen for what they are; they are not somehow changed or made simpler, but they are not seen as threats to the theist's faith. It is the faith of the theist which enables him to cope with the pain and suffering, the miseries and misfortunes which he encounters in the world. Once it has been shown that evils in the world and a God who

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17. Job 1:21

is all-good and all-powerful do not cancel each other, the religious person's belief in such a God is not at all unreasonable. What matters is how he manages to cope and live with the evils and suffering in the world. If he is honest in his faith in such a God, then he must believe that evils will somehow be overcome. If he does not believe this, then his belief in God is somehow mistaken. There is no other way for him to cope with evils except by faith in God — faith that good will triumph and evil will be crushed. And if it is true that it is one's religious faith which determines what one's fundamental attitudes to life are to be, then evil and suffering cannot be seen as threats to this faith. For the theist knows that God is always working for good with those who put their faith and trust in Him.

I have been maintaining that the theist does not arrive at his beliefs in the same way that the scientist or the historian arrives at his hypotheses. I have also been maintaining that evil and suffering do not count against the theist's beliefs in God nor do they destroy his beliefs. These positions do give the impression that no amount of evidence to the contrary will be considered relevant to the question of the truth or falsity of religious beliefs. There are many objections to this position. For example, it can be claimed that it is impossible to decide on the truth or falsity of religious beliefs if evidence to the contrary is ruled out. This is a very serious objection but one which calls for a separate discussion. My concern has been with the actual attitude of religious people towards the problem of evil and suffering. To this extent, I have not concerned myself with establishing the above position with arguments, but with providing a phenomenological description of what these religious people actually say and do, how they behave, when

faced with instances of evil and suffering. Whether or not the attitude and claims of these people are philosophically respectable or acceptable is a separate issue and goes beyond the discussion here.

The attitude of religious people towards evil and suffering, then, does give the impression that no amount of evidence to the contrary will be considered relevant (at least this is what must be said with regard to my understanding of religious belief) to the question of the falsity of religious beliefs or of the objective status of these beliefs. This might not be a philosophically respectable position to maintain, but it is nonetheless the sort of position that is characteristic of religious belief. This does make it difficult for religious people to show that their basic beliefs are more correct than those of superstitions or witchcraft, but it does not make it impossible. For, it seems to me, it is always open to religious people to indicate that their beliefs are not incompatible with already well-established theories in science and other disciplines, but that it is very likely that those of witchcraft, etc., are. And if it is possible (and I think it is) for religious people to spell out in what way or ways, or to what extent their beliefs are compatible with well-established theories in science, this I suggest, would be reason enough to reject witchcraft and other superstitions, while maintaining religious beliefs.

The theist, then, is affected by evil and suffering but these do not count against his belief in God nor do they destroy his beliefs. He may never understand why there is suffering; he may never find a solution to the problem; he may never be able to find answers to his questions

concerning evils and suffering, but his faith is never destroyed. For, the Christian believer knows that the evils which are present can be overcome and no amount of them will ever be able to separate him from the Love of God. When faced with evils, he joins with St. Paul and says:

> No, in all these things we are more than conquerers, through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. [18]

And this is neither a subterfuge nor an unreasonable position for the theist to hold — it is the only position he can hold in order to maintain consistency with the basic tenets of his religion. This position would be unreasonable only if it were shown that evils in the world logically rule out faith in an all-good, all-powerful God. But it is precisely this which I have argued has not and cannot be established. And once this is recognized, the charge of unreasonableness immediately loses its force. What we have now are two different people with different attitudes about God and evil; one who believes in an all-good, all-powerful God in spite of evils in the world, and the other who does not. There is a fundamental disagreement between the two, but the position held by one does not rule out the position held by the other because disagreement is

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18. Romans 8:37-39.

not an argument against any position nor is it a criterion for establishing the reasonableness of any position (the matter of reasonableness is a separate issue — see Appendix). The theist is not being unreasonable when he continues to believe that evils will be overcome when he continues to believe that God is good and that He loves him no matter what evils he encounters. He cannot believe otherwise and continue to be a theist. His is an "either/or" position, either he believes that evils can be conquered or he does not. If he does, he is admitting that he is a theist — a religious believer; if he does not, he is not a theist, and there is an end to the whole matter.

APPENDIX

The question "X is a form of life (and therefore a language-game), but ought it to be played?" is very important and central not only for religion but for all disciplines. It does not simply ask "Ought one to be religious?" but "Ought one to play any language-game?" or "What language-game(s) ought one to play?" Now, as important and central as this question is, I think that it is considerably beyond the scope of the discussion in my thesis. Indeed, the question, "Ought one to play the religious language-game?" comes before the discussion in this thesis. It is by accepting the fact that the religious language-game is played that the problem I am discussing is a problem. If, however, the problems of evil and religious language are the most basic problems which will decide whether the religious language-game ought or ought not to be played, then my whole thesis is relevant in that it is attempting to show that these problems do not constitute a refutation nor any serious criticism of the religious language-game.

In order to provide an answer to the above question, I think it is necessary to provide two different sets of criteria. On the one hand, we need a set of criteria (or a criterion) for deciding when a particular activity is or is not a form of life and hence a language-game, and on the other, we need a set of criteria (or a criterion) for establishing a theory of rationality so that we may decide whether or not a particular form of life or language-game is

rational or irrational. We might want to say that a language-game should only be played if it is rational, and irrational language-games ought not to be played. It does not follow from this, however, that there would be no irrational language-games -- in fact, there might be a lot. All we can say is that those who participate in such a form of life and play such a language-game are being irrational.

Deciding, then, that X is a form of life or language-game has nothing to do with whether it ought or ought not to be played. We need something more. We need to decide whether or not X is rational. We are then led to ask (what I believe is an important question), "Why should only rational language-games be played?" or "Why ought we to play only rational language-games?" Ignoring this question, we are still faced with the difficulty of deciding on a theory of rationality (a criterion of rationality) that is independent of all forms of life or language-games in order that we may decide whether or not such forms of life, etc. are rational or not. The reason why the theory of rationality must be independent of the different forms of life is to avoid the sort of criticisms made by Carnap and others; that it is illegitimate to apply what is appropriate to one form of life to another form of life. It is obvious that if we allow that each form of life possesses within itself what is to count as "rationality" or "irrationality" or that "rational" and "irrational" and their cognates have meaning only within a form of life, we would license the rationality of anything that is a bona fide form of life, or part of such a form of life. What happens in such a case is not

that we can speak of a theory of rationality, but there would be as many theories of rationality as there are forms of life. Now, this is the sort of thing that Peter Winch seems to indicate in his The Idea of a Social Science and "Understanding a Primitive Society."[1] Winch accepts the fact that in order to participate in a form of life, one has to accept, inter alia a set of concepts and rules (ISS, p. 41), but he goes on to say that these criteria which determine the use of the concepts do not have an independent status, for the world itself "is for us what is presented through these concepts." (ISS, p. 15.) He goes on:

> Criteria of logic are not direct gifts of God, but arise out of, and are only intelligible in the context of, ways of living or modes of social life. It follows that one cannot apply criteria of logic to modes of social life as such. For instance, science is one such mode and religion another; and each has criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself, so within science and religion actions can be logical or illogical ... But we cannot sensibly say that either the practice of science itself or that of religion is either logical or illogical; both are nonlogical. (ISS, pp. 100-101; See also parallel in "UPS", P.11;30-31).

It is not my intention to criticize Winch's position, but simply to point out that given his criterion of rationality or intelligibility which is a coherence theory of rationality, any form of life or language-game (whether it be magic or witchcraft or whatever) in

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1. Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (Routledge, 1958), abbreviated ISS. "Understanding a Primitive Society" in D.Z. Phillips, ed. Religion and Understanding (Blackwell, 1967), abbreviated "UPS".

which there is this internal coherence is rational and therefore, presumably ought to be accepted and played. It is obvious that this leaves the door wide open to a lot of activities, many of which might be highly questionable. It is for this reason that I say an independent theory of rationality is needed. The problem is how do we go about formulating such a theory, or is it even possible to do so? — a problem which at the present moment, I am not prepared to discuss for obvious reasons.

The idea that different forms of life have different criteria of logic and forms of intelligibility is clearly developed from Wittgenstein's remarks on the subject.[2] Wittgenstein does give the impression that forms of life, etc. are to be accepted as something that we do and that it is illigitimate to ask for a general justification of a form of life.[3] According to Wittgenstein, a form of life does not depend on grounds, but "It is there — like our life." (On Certainty, p. 559). "What has to be accepted, the given, is — so one could say — forms of life." (P.I. II, p. 226). Or again, "Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon.' That is, where we ought to have said: This language-game is played." (P.I. I, 640). Elsewhere, Wittgenstein seems to favour some sort of "relativism", claiming that people with a different

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2. See for instance, D.Z. Phillips, Concept of Prayer, p. 83 ff, Peter Winch, ISS, pp. 100-103; and "UPS" in D.Z. Phillips, Religion and Understanding, p. 14f.

3. See D.Z. Phillips, Concept of Prayer, p. 23, where he cites Wittgenstein, P.I. I, 226.

education from ours might have completely different concepts from ours. (Zettel, 383, 387; cf. Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics, I, 152; hereafter, RFM.) He also seems to give the impression that very little can be said to people who believe in all sorts of fairy tales, or those who believe that they can cause the rain to fall or do wonders in their dreams or those who prefer to consult oracles rather than science. (On Certainty, 106, 132, 212-217, 607). This view is well summed up thus:

> But what men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters. At certain periods men find reasonable what at other periods they found unreasonable. And vice versa. But is there no objective character here? Very intelligent and well-educated people believe in the story of creation in the Bible, while others hold it as proven false, and the grounds of the latter are well-known to the former. (On Certainty, 336.)

There is, however, another aspect of Wittgenstein's thought which seems to give the impression that he is not simply advocating an attitude of tolerance with regard to different forms of life, so that any and every activity which qualifies is allowed an equal place alongside the others. Here he seems to suggest that forms of life are not simply "given", but that they must somehow conform to facts about the world. These facts are somehow basic to our lives, basic to our language-games. For example, Wittgenstein speaks of "ungrounded behaviour" (On Certainty, 110; cf. RFM 418), and parts of our history eg. thinking, walking, eating, commanding, playing, bringing up our children. (P.I. 25. 467; cf. RFM, V 3, RFM, V 1, RFM, II, 74-75.)

Wittgenstein refers to "Induction" which is made possible by the regularity of events (On Certainty, 618) — a point which goes to substantiate the claim that a form of life or a language-game depends upon certain facts about the world.

Another point which Wittgenstein makes in connection with the dependence of language-games and forms of life upon facts about the world has to do with trying to imagine what things would be like if the world were somehow different from what it is now:

> If we imagine the facts otherwise than they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important (On Certainty, 63; also 513, 558).

And again,

> It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly prescribed; we know, are in no doubt, what to say in this or that case. The more abnormal the case, the more doubtful it becomes what we are to say. And if things were quite different from what they actually are — if there were for instance no characteristic expression of pain, of fear, of joy; if rule became exception and exception rule; or if both became phenomena of roughly equal frequency — this would make our normal language-games lose their point. (P.I., 142; cf. 230 and Zettel, 371-379.)

The point of all this is that it does not seem that Wittgenstein is simply saying that "the game is played" and that's all, but that forms of life — language-games are connected somehow with facts about the world. Whether it is possible to reconcile these two aspects in Wittgenstein's thought cannot easily be decided. The important point is that he did not simply say that language-games are simply "given", as thinkers like Winch and Phillips seem to indicate.

From the foregoing remarks, I think it is clear that the problem of deciding when a language-game ought or ought not to be played is a very broad and complex one. It is not enough to show that X is a bona fide form of life or language-game and therefore ought to be played. We must go further than this to decide whether X is rational or irrational or possibly non-rational. This in turn calls for a theory of rationality which is somehow independent of the different forms of life. It is not clear whether such a theory is to be determined in terms of logic, criticizability, the ability to solve problems, or all of these. And even if we came up with a theory of rationality, in terms of one or all of the foregoing points, it is still an open question whether only rational language-games ought to be played. What about non-rational language-games, eg. loving, etc.?

We could say that a language-game ought to be played only if it can be "justified", but then we are faced with equally difficult tasks of deciding what is to count as "justification(s)" of language-games (it might well be 'idea of rationality').

Now, there is a sense in which a language-game or a form of life cannot as such be said to be rational or irrational. In the same way, propositions (in the sense that propositions are said to express beliefs) can be true or false, but not rational or irrational. Rationality or irrationality is applicable only to people who participate in language-games, forms of life, who hold this or that belief. Thus when we ask if a particular belief is rational or irrational, what we are really asking is whether those holding that belief are doing so rationally or not. In other words, is it rational to hold this or

that belief, play this or that language-game, etc.? When put this way, we are asking if these people can justify their beliefs or if they have adequate evidence for holding these beliefs. This in turn means that each case of believing has to be scrutinized separately. For it is possible that Jones might be rational in believing X while Smith might not be. The conclusion I wish to draw from this is that beliefs are by nature not provable or demonstrable (if they were, they would not be beliefs), and as such are not in themselves rational or irrational. This includes not only religious beliefs but also "natural beliefs" — beliefs which are central to our way of life; for example, belief in the existence of the external world.

One of Hume's most significant contributions to philosophy concerns his analysis of natural beliefs. According to Hume, there are certain fundamental beliefs, for example, belief in the uniformity of nature, belief in the continuous existence of the external world, belief in causality, which are neither provable nor demonstrable but which are nonetheless essential to human life. Although there is no rational justification for these beliefs, people who hold them are not dismissed as irrational but are considered rational.[4] They are believing rationally because these beliefs arise from and are compatible with their normal everyday perceptual experiences.[5] Moreover, without these

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4. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, Book 1, Part IV, Sec. 1.

5. David Hume, Enquires: An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, Sec. XI, p. 142.

beliefs, human life as we know it would not be possible. Now I shall simply suggest (further development is not possible here) that there is a definite parallel between natural beliefs and religious beliefs such that if the former can be accounted "rational", there is no reason why the latter should not be as well. Most religious people have held and still do hold that their lives would not be possible (albeit not in the same sense that human life is not possible without natural beliefs) without belief in God. For them, life would be purposeless, meaningless and unintelligible without this belief. This belief, then, is fundamental to their whole way of life in much the same way that natural beliefs are fundamental to human life as a whole. The latter beliefs, as we have seen, are accounted rational because they are compatible with our everyday experiencing of the world. Now in much the same way, the former belief and religious beliefs as a whole can be accounted "rational" because they too are compatible with a religious way of experiencing the world. For the person who holds belief in a God, all experiences of the world would be experiences of God's dealings with him and his with God.

I do not wish to give the impression that the notion "religious experience" is not problematic, for clearly it is. But I think that we can put this aside for the present and rest with the foregoing brief indication of the role which "religious experience" can play in determining the rationality of religious beliefs, and subsequently whether or not the religious language-game ought to be played.

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