

THE PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE
IN THE WORK OF JOSEPH MARÉCHAL

By



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ABSTRACT

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In the work of Joseph Maréchal, S.J. (1878-1944) there are several approaches to a proof of the existence of God. These approaches occur in the course of Maréchal's carrying out of a larger philosophical task, to vindicate the possibility of a realist metaphysics on the grounds of speculative reason, and to show a "critical" justification of this metaphysics, against those who deny its possibility or label it "dogmatic". Here and there in the execution of this larger task, in Le point de départ de la métaphysique and in several shorter writings, Maréchal's approaches to God-proof appear in bits and pieces, with an occasional fuller development. The first purpose of this dissertation is to connect these bits and pieces, which requires an interpretation of Maréchal's thought on the subject. The interpretation is based on an investigation of two approaches to God-proof which are largely original to Maréchal, namely an approach through intellectual finality and an approach through the first principle of speculative thought (principle of identity or non-contradiction). We examine also

Maréchal's interpretation of the "five ways" of St. Thomas Aquinas, which according to Maréchal represent the type of all valid demonstration of God's existence. From this investigation it is found that a common core of argumentation links all of the "ways" of St. Thomas and is found in Maréchal's approaches from intellectual finality and the first principle as well. This common core comprises two elements: the discernment, in a finite reality, of an imperfect intrinsic intelligibility; and the application to this reality of a requirement of perfect intelligibility, which Maréchal considers the most basic requirement of objective thought as such. Maréchal equates imperfect intrinsic intelligibility with what is usually called "contingency"; thus the common core of argumentation is called a "proof from contingency". We agree with Maréchal that this "proof from contingency" is the logical core of all of St. Thomas' "ways", and we find it to be also the core of the original ways presented by Maréchal. In addition, we find those ways -- intellectual finality and the first principle -- to be tacitly operative in the "ways" of St. Thomas.

A second purpose of this study is to demonstrate the capacity of Maréchal's analysis of God-proof, an analysis we regard as particularly penetrating, to illuminate the meaning of other attempted God-proofs, to assist in the task of interpreting and evaluating them. For this purpose

we apply Maréchal's analysis, such as we have interpreted it, to some other proofs. Two proofs, Kant's Beweisgrund proof of 1763 and St. Anselm's proof in the Proslogion, are selected. We argue that Kant's proof shared some crucial points with Maréchal's but ultimately failed because, unlike Maréchal's, it rested on a "static" rather than a "dynamic" and "finalistic" conception of speculative knowledge. We argue that St. Anselm's proof is not the "ontological argument" according to the principal meaning of that phrase in modern philosophy. We find that it shares with Maréchal's argument the most important features: a dynamic and finalistic quality and a purely discursive (non-intuitive) starting point and procedure, centering upon the mind's need to affirm an infinitely intelligible being in order to satisfy its internal finality. Although in Maréchal the crucial points of the argument are more explicit, there is between Anselm and Maréchal a radical unity of intention.

We judge Maréchal's approaches to God-proof, his pivotal insights and the use he makes of them, to be adequate to the demands of philosophical reason and harmonious with the further demands of a properly "religious" conception of God.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Principal and Subordinate Purposes of Maréchal in <u>PD</u>	2
Characteristics of a Defensible Realist Metaphysics according to Maréchal.....	8
Three Principal Theses of Maréchal's Realist Metaphysics.....	15
First Thesis: Discursive Intelligence.....	16
Second Thesis: Intellectual Finality.....	17
Third Thesis: The Implicit Signification of Our Knowledge.....	20
Relevance of the Three Theses to the Proof of God's Existence.....	22
Relevance of the First Thesis.....	23
Relevance of the Second Thesis.....	25
Relevance of the Third Thesis.....	30
The Meaning of "God" in Maréchal.....	31
The Role of Contingency in Our Knowledge of God.....	38
CHAPTER II. TWO ORIGINAL MARÉCHALIAN WAYS OF PROOF....	44
Introduction.....	44
The Proof from the Internal Finality of Our Rational Nature, or from Intellectual Finality.....	45

	Page
The Proof from the Implications of the Speculative First Principle.....	64
CHAPTER III. MARECHAL ON THE THOMISTIC WAYS, PART ONE.....	78
Introduction.....	78
Many Ways of One Proof.....	84
St. Thomas' Proof from Motion.....	87
The Metaphysical Analysis of Motion.....	87
The Intelligibility of Motion as the Heart of the Argument.....	91
The Conclusion of the Argument.....	94
Defense of the Proof against a Critical Challenge.....	99
A Clarification: The Proof from Motion and the Proof from the First Principle.....	112
CHAPTER IV. MARECHAL ON THE THOMISTIC WAYS, PART TWO.....	121
The Thomistic Proof from Efficient Causality.....	121
General Comparison of the Ways of Proof from Motion and from Efficient Causality.....	122
Commentary on a Passage of Cahier V.....	126
Maréchal on the Other Thomistic Ways.....	145
CHAPTER V. THE SYNTHESIS OF MARECHAL'S APPROACHES TO THE PROOF OF GOD.....	152
The First Principle as the Formal Expression of Our Intellectual Finality.....	154
The Implicit Role of the Argument from Contingency in the Proof from Intellectual Finality.....	163

	Page
CHAPTER VI. CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS OF THE STUDY OF MARECHAL ON THE PROOF OF GOD.....	168
Introduction.....	168
Analysis of the Thomistic Ways and the Essence of All Speculative God-Proof.....	169
Maréchal's Proof and St. Anselm's Proof: A Rapprochement Perceived.....	181
First Conclusion.....	184
Second Conclusion.....	185
Third Conclusion.....	187
The Function of Anselm's Key Formula.....	192
The Dynamic and Finalistic Character of the Proof.....	195
Conclusion.....	205
APPENDIX. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MY INTERPRETATION OF ST. ANSELM'S PROOF.....	212
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	220

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about some approaches to the proof of the existence of God, contained in the writings of Joseph Maréchal, S. J. (1878-1944),¹ principally but not exclusively in the last volume (Cahier V) of his major work, Le point de départ de la métaphysique.² The purpose

¹The reader will find details of Maréchal's personal and intellectual history in the following sources:

- (1) E. Dirven, De la forme à l'acte. Essai sur le thomisme de Joseph Maréchal, S. J. (Paris and Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1965); passim but especially pp. 13-60.
- (2) A. Hayen, "Le Père Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944)", in Mélanges Joseph Maréchal (Bruxelles: L'Édition Universelle and Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1950), I, 3-21. (The title Mélanges Joseph Maréchal will henceforth be abbreviated as MM.)
- (3) A. Hayen, "Un interprète thomiste du kantisme: le Père J. Maréchal (1878-1944)", Revue internationale de Philosophie, VIII (1954), 449-469.
- (4) A. Milet, "Les Cahiers du P. Maréchal. Sources doctrinales et influences subies", Revue néo-scholastique de Philosophie, XLIII (1945), 225-251.
- (5) A. Milet, "Les premiers écrits philosophiques du P. Maréchal (1901-1913)", in MM, I, 23-46.

²The full title of this five-volume work is Le point de départ de la métaphysique. Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance. Henceforth we shall abbreviate this title as PD.

The individual volumes of PD are called by their author "Cahiers", and they are identified respectively by the Roman numerals I through V. For references to the

of this introductory chapter is to lay the groundwork for the treatment of Maréchal's specific approaches to the proof. A diversity of topics will be treated in this chapter, as is indicated by the diversity of the principal subheadings.³ The reader should not look for a strict unity of theme in the topics treated under these subheadings, although he will note many interconnections. The unity of the matters treated in this introductory chapter does not consist in their development of a common theme, but rather in their common relatedness to the later discussion, which it is the purpose of this chapter to prepare and facilitate.

Principal and Subordinate Purposes of Maréchal in PD

In the five volumes of PD Maréchal's principal and integral purpose was not directly to prove the existence

Cahiers of PD we shall use the following shorthand: I, 10 will mean Cahier I, page 10; V, 500 will mean Cahier V, page 500; and so forth.

Our references will be to the most recent edition of each Cahier. These most recent editions are as follows:

Cahier I — fourth edition (1964).

Cahier II — fourth edition (1965).

Cahier III — fourth edition (1964).

Cahier IV — first (and unique) edition (1947).

Cahier V — second edition (1949).

For full titles of the individual Cahiers and bibliographical information on PD see our Bibliography.

³See Table of Contents.

of God, but rather to prove that a realist metaphysics, defensible against the Kantian and other modern critiques of realist metaphysics, was possible along the lines which were traced historically by "Thomistic Aristotelianism".⁴ That is to say that his chief purpose was to defend the possibility of a realist metaphysics and to show in what concrete form it is defensible.

In order to show the possibility of this realist metaphysics Maréchal proposed to show the logical necessity and defensibility against criticism of its point de départ or "first step", that first step being the one at which the possibility of the whole venture (all the further steps) is decided. The first step of realist metaphysics is that which Maréchal calls the ontological affirmation.⁵ This affirmation is the primordial intellectual act, the

⁴"L'aristotélisme thomiste": phrase used repeatedly by Maréchal in Cahier V. See pp. 41, 463, 511, 515 (heading), 597. The precise meaning of the phrase is stated by Maréchal in I, 257 and V, 39. We quote the latter: "L'aristotélisme, précisé et complété — corrigé, si l'on veut — par les Scolastiques et plus particulièrement par S. Thomas . . .".

⁵Maréchal calls this affirmation by four principal names: "affirmation ontologique"; "affirmation métaphysique"; "affirmation absolue de l'être"; "affirmation objective absolue". All four expressions appear frequently in PD. The first expression ("affirmation ontologique") is, however, the most used, and Maréchal chooses it for the title of an important section of Cahier V (pp. 317-502, "Déduction de l'affirmation ontologique"). For these reasons we use it in our text by preference over the equivalent expressions.

positive judgment of reality, by which the mind implicitly relates all contents of consciousness to the ontological order, by assigning them a place in relation to being. Thus it is the implicit affirmation of the ontological order in general. It is Maréchal's principal contention, and it is his principal purpose in PD to prove, that this basic affirmation, which the mind spontaneously makes, possesses a theoretical and objective necessity which can stand up to any critique of knowledge.

In Maréchal's work the vindication of the possibility of a proof of God's existence is a consequence of the vindication of the possibility of realist metaphysics in its first step. In order to see this relationship one has only to recall that all further steps in metaphysics follow with rational necessity from the first step; and the proof of the existence of God is one such further step. So, in the course of vindicating metaphysical realism by proving the necessity of affirming the ontological order in general, Maréchal comes inevitably to the question of the base of the ontological order, that reality in which it is necessarily grounded or anchored. And so he develops several approaches (which we shall see) to the necessity of affirming that grounding reality (God). Accordingly the proof of the existence of God follows as a consequence of the proof of the necessity of affirming

the ontological order in general.

It is important to keep this order of relationships in mind in dealing with our topic (proof of God's existence) in Maréchal: his principal objective, to demonstrate the absolute rational necessity of the ontological affirmation, and consequently the sound foundation of realist metaphysics; and the proof of God's existence as a consequence of carrying out that principal objective — God being the ultimate reality to be concluded with necessity in a realist metaphysics, or, as Maréchal writes, "L'Être infini — clef de voûte de la Métaphysique" (V, 462). In Maréchal's eyes a metaphysical realism must always include God at least implicitly, since its first step is an affirmation of an ontological order, and an ontological order requires a base or grounding. By "God" we here mean merely "that reality which bases the ontological order". We shall justify this meaning of "God", in relation to Maréchal's work, in a later section of this chapter.⁶

In the last three paragraphs we have used the expression "the ontological order". By the ontological order we mean the order of noumenal reality as distinguished

⁶See below, pp. 31-37.

from the order of phenomenal appearance. In this dissertation, following Maréchal, we shall often distinguish, without separating, these orders. The same distinction will sometimes be made in terms of the metaphysical as distinguished from the empirical, or of the absolute order of being as distinguished from the relative order of appearance in empirical experience.

We further consider the ontological, metaphysical, noumenal order, in which objects are regarded in their fundamental relation to being, as the order of ultimate, absolute intelligibility.⁷ In other words, in our view an object is fully known when and only when its status in the ontological order is grasped. On the other hand, we consider the phenomenal, empirical order, in which objects are regarded precisely as appearances in empirical experience, without direct consideration of their ultimate relation to being, as an order of relative intelligibility. Objects considered precisely as phenomena are intelligible within the limited terms of this order, but they are not fully and absolutely intelligible unless they are further related to the ontological order.

⁷See below, pp. 40-41 and n. 37; p. 72; pp. 144-145.

This distinction of the ontological, noumenal, absolutely intelligible order of being from the empirical, phenomenal, relatively intelligible order of appearance is fundamental to Maréchal's interpretation of human knowledge. We repeat that it is a distinction, not a separation. To be precise, it is a distinction between levels -- if we may so speak -- of intellectual appropriation of the real: a level in which the ultimate relation of the appearance to being is not yet directly and consciously considered, and a level in which that ultimate relation is directly considered. The real to which the intellect relates at these distinguishable levels is one and the same; but only at the level of the ontological order does the intellect relate to the real integrally, ultimately and exhaustively. One of Maréchal's constant themes is that the intellectually necessary pursuit of integral intelligibility of anything empirical leads inevitably to the discovery of the metaphysical order underlying and sustaining the empirical. In this view the empirical is always, from the start, not just empirical but also implicitly metaphysical.

Characteristics of a Defensible Realist Metaphysics
according to Maréchal

Since the expression "realist metaphysics" and related terms like "philosophical realism" (epistemological and metaphysical at once) are used sometimes with several different meanings in discussions like this, we should make it clear what Maréchal means by these terms. Maréchal states as follows the essence of what he means by realism:

Le réalisme métaphysique présenté, dans cet ouvrage . . . suppose, par définition . . . que la connaissance humaine atteint le réel selon les déterminations de ce réel même: en ce sens l'homme connaît ce qui est et comme cela est. (V, 177, n. 1)

From this statement we may conclude that, for Maréchal, philosophical realism — both epistemological and metaphysical, as the statement suggests — is any position which says that we know the real as it is, or that in our knowledge we attain the real in its actuality, according to its own determinations.

Not all philosophical positions which can be called realism are identical, however. On the contrary there are profound differences between types of realism. Maréchal distinguishes between different kinds of philosophical realism on two bases.

The first basis for distinction is the answer

given, by different types of realism, to the question of how our mind attains the real. The answers to this question can be ultimately reduced to two basic alternatives, the intuitive and the discursive modes, respectively. Thus there are intuitive and discursive realisms, the former saying that the mind attains the real in the intuitive mode, the latter saying that the mind attains the real in the discursive mode.⁸

The second basis for distinction is the answer given, by different types of realism, to the question of where, or in what, the real -- which our mind can attain, according to all realism -- is ultimately grounded. To this question the following answers are possible:

- (1) The real is ultimately grounded outside the knowing subject;
- (2) The real is ultimately grounded in the knowing subject;

⁸Maréchal's realism is a discursive metaphysical realism. See below, pp.16-17. The intuitive metaphysical realisms are varieties of rationalism or ontologism, a philosophical type in which Maréchal finds two principal flaws: (1) a misinterpretation of the actual conditions of human knowledge, consisting in a tendency to assimilate the human mode of knowledge to the angelic or divine; (2) a tendency to give ontological priority to form (essence) over act (existence). The Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical realism, according to Maréchal, was outstandingly free of these flaws. See, e.g., V, 472-474.

- (3) The real is ultimately grounded partly in and partly outside the knowing subject.

We should not omit to mention that, if "the knowing subject" is understood to mean the human knower, which is our hypothesis, the alternative: "grounded (wholly or partly) outside the knowing subject" includes within its scope the possibility of the real's being grounded (wholly or partly) in another subject, for example a divine one. This explains why we have not presented this separately as a fourth alternative in our listing of possible answers to the question of where the real is ultimately grounded.

We shall not proceed to categorize the types of philosophical realism which can be distinguished by their different answers to the question of the ultimate grounding of the real. To enter into such a potentially elaborate development would take us too far afield from our immediate purpose, which is to characterize the type of philosophical realism which Maréchal exemplifies and defends. We wish to limit ourselves to the following observation, which has been prepared by our brief discussion of the two bases for distinction among positions which, according to Maréchal's definition, can be called realism: in spite of oppositions over where or in what the real is ultimately grounded, any philosophical position can be called a realism, by this definition, if it holds

that the real as it is, wherever it may be grounded and whatever the mode of our access to it, is attained by our minds. Our principal purpose in mentioning the different possible answers to the question of the ultimate grounding of the real was to show the range of possibilities which lie within the scope of what Maréchal would call "realism". Our brief listing of alternative answers, even without a further development which would classify actual positions exemplified in the history of philosophy, suffices to make this point. The importance of this point (namely, that "realist" positions can differ over where the real is grounded) for the precise characterization of the philosophical realism which Maréchal advocates will be made evident in the remaining paragraphs of this section, which characterize Maréchal's type of realism as also an idealism — a combination of terms which might be astonishing if one had not first established that a position is definable as realism because it affirms the knowability of the real, in itself, to our minds, and not because it affirms one, rather than another, of the possible answers to the question of where the real is grounded. Thus, as we shall see, a position which asserts that the real is ultimately grounded in thought (that is, in the act of thinking, in a divine or human subject) can be a realism by Maréchal's definition. A clear conception of the

criterion for a realism will help to avert a serious misunderstanding of Maréchal's position.

An important light is cast upon Maréchal's kind of realism when one adds to the discussion of its meaning a brief mention of idealism, which for Maréchal is not necessarily a name for a position opposite to realism. An idealism, in Maréchal's thought (and my own), is, most basically, a philosophical position which says that the real is ultimately grounded in thought (either divine thought or human thought, in different idealisms). But one idealism can say that our mind attains the real as it is, while another says that our mind does not attain it as it is. The former idealism would be a type of realism, but the latter would not be a type of realism.⁹

It follows that there is no essential contradiction between idealism and realism, although, of course, there can be contradiction between an idealism (a specific form or system) and a realism; just as, for that matter, there

⁹An example of the former is Spinoza, an idealistic realist, but whose realism, according to Maréchal, was faultily founded. See II, 89-128 and 245-246. An example of the latter is, in large part, Kant, whose "transcendental idealism" excluded a metaphysical realism in the sense we have defined. See Maréchal's succinct statement on V, 569. A longer discussion of Kant's relation to metaphysical realism is in III, 212-269. On V, 475 Maréchal acknowledges that there is a "survivance réaliste" in Kant's theory of the "Thing-in-itself".

can be contradiction between two idealisms. That there is no such essential contradiction is crucial for understanding Maréchal, who says expressly that the Thomistic philosophical realism, which he defends as a critically justifiable position, is idealist. Maréchal's words are:

On conclura sans doute . . . que le réalisme thomiste, tel que nous le comprenons, est essentiellement idéaliste . . . Mais cette alliance du Réalisme et de l'Idéalisme constitue justement un des traits les plus larges et les plus profonds de celles des doctrines scolastiques qui demeurèrent indemnes du virus nominaliste.
(V, 359) ¹⁰

Clearly, in Maréchal's view an idealism can be also a realism, a realism can be also an idealism.

The essential, dividing issue for Maréchal is whether the mind attains the real, in its reality. If it does, you have a realism, and you can proceed -- as does Maréchal in most of PD -- to distinguish between a critically defensible and a non-defensible realism. If it does not, you have an exclusive phenomenalism and an "agnosticism" about the noumenal or ontological order. Maréchal contends, throughout PD, that any thoroughgoing philosophical position of non-realism breaks up under reflective scrutiny, proving the ineluctable necessity of realism.

¹⁰Cf. MM, I, 245.

We can now characterize in a summary way the kind of philosophical realism which Maréchal exemplifies and defends as a critically justifiable position. The realism which he advocates is an idealist realism in the discursive mode. This is to say that he holds the following three positions:

- (1) All the real is, ultimately, grounded in a thought (namely, in the last analysis, the divine thought).¹¹
- (2) Our minds attain the real, as it is.
- (3) Our minds attain the real not by an act of perfect intellectual spontaneity, such as would be an intuition of its (the real's) essence -- a direct "vision", so to speak, of its intimate constitution -- but in an imperfect, indirect, progressive way, through the art of discourse.¹²

¹¹Of interest in this regard is Maréchal's acknowledgement, in much of Cahiers IV and V, of the partial truth which there was in the post-Kantian idealist systems. See, e. g., V, 557-558.

¹²The lack of perfect intellectual spontaneity does not mean that the human mind has no intellectual spontaneity. Indeed, Maréchal's theory of the a priori in human knowledge is a theory of intellectual spontaneity, but a spontaneity which is only partial, limited by dependency upon determinations extrinsic to itself (sense data). Cf. Maréchal's discussion of the "agent intellect" in V, 185 ff. Also see V, 596, where Maréchal directly mentions "les deux aspects, incontestables et opposés, de notre connaissance intellectuelle: la spontanéité et la passivité."

Of these three positions, the first indicates the sense in which Maréchal's thought is idealistic, in the basic meaning of that word which we have stated. The second expresses the essential realism of Maréchal's thought, according to the basic definition of realism. The third defines the mode of realism which Maréchal advocates: namely, a type of realism in which the mind attains the real discursively, not intuitively.

Three Principal Theses of Maréchal's
Realist Metaphysics

We are now in a position to articulate three principal doctrinal theses -- if we may so name them -- of Maréchal. These theses are: the discursive character of our intelligence; the teleological character of our intelligence, or intellectual finality; and the implicit signification of our knowledge. Each of these theses is a key doctrinal position which Maréchal holds, and upon them depends much of the rest of Maréchal's philosophy. In particular, these theses have direct relevance to Maréchal's approaches to the proof of God's existence. We shall now state the three theses in summary fashion and briefly develop their relevance to the proof of God's existence. The relation of these theses to Maréchal's God-proof, which is indicated here in a preliminary way,

will become clearer in the light of the exposition of specific approaches to the proof, which will be the topic of later chapters.

First Thesis: Discursive Intelligence

This thesis, which has already been introduced in the two paragraphs concluding our last section, can be stated as follows: human intelligence is discursive, not intuitive. The human mind affirms reality on the evidence of a necessary conclusion of a discursive judgment, but has no direct access to an "inspection" of the real in its intimate constitution, no intellectual intuition of essences, no innate ideas of real objects -- in short, no manner of direct intellectual "penetration" into the heart of the real.¹³

This thesis, stated and restated so many times by Maréchal, is by no means trivial. It has not been at all uncommon, in the history of philosophy, for the relation between human intelligence and the real to be conceived on the intuitive rather than the discursive model. In Maréchal's view the conception of human intellection as fundamentally intuitive is a very basic mistake, which entails a false conception of the nature and the possi-

¹³See, e. g., V, 350-351.

bilities of human knowledge.¹⁴ From this false conception, Maréchal argues at one point in PD, result, ironically, both the worst metaphysical "dogmatism" and its (seemingly) extreme opposite, a "hypercriticism" which leads to a more or less complete agnosticism about the metaphysical realm.¹⁵ In Maréchal's view a critically justifiable realist metaphysics is possible only if human intelligence is viewed as discursive; a metaphysics based upon a presumption of an intuitive apprehension of the real in itself can only be a "dogmatic" metaphysics, in the pejorative sense of that word which implies that the position so labelled cannot be critically justified.

Second Thesis: Intellectual Finality

A second principal thesis of Maréchal is that human intelligence operates according to an internal finality. This means that the relation between the intellect and the real is that between an active tendency and its goal, a dynamic relation, instead of a static relation, such as that between a mirror and that which it reflects.

Maréchal devotes many pages of Cahier V to an

¹⁴See above, p. 9, n. 8.

¹⁵v, 559-560

analysis of intellectual finality and to the justification of the thesis that speculative knowledge takes place according to a radical finality of the knowing subject.¹⁶ He sums up his thesis most concisely in these words near the very end of Cahier V:

la vie de l'esprit, chez l'homme, n'est pas une vie de possession naturelle et de plénitude débordante, mais avant tout une vie chercheuse et preneuse d'objets, une vie d'acquisition et d'assimilation activées: . . . pour expliquer la connaissance humaine sans l'appauvrir, il faut comprendre que le vrai, c'est-à-dire la possession intentionnelle de l'être, est pour nous une fin. (V, 596)

In the dynamic structure of a finality, according to Maréchal's analysis, there is a last and saturating end of the active tendency and there are proximate and partial ends, which are grasped in the motion toward the last end. In Maréchal's view our cognitive activity exhibits such a dynamic structure and can be properly described as the acting out of an internal finality.

In our knowledge, according to this interpretation, all objects are ends. All finite objects are partial ends, not saturating our cognitive capacity but grasped as stages on the way to that which would saturate that capacity and thus still our intellectual motion. This finalistic interpretation of knowledge introduces an absolute objective

¹⁶V, 357-468.

aspect into the account of our intellectual activity: an aspect according to which our mind is ever drawn to transcend its present object in a tendency toward a superior object.

Between these first two theses of Maréchal (discursive intelligence, intellectual finality) there is a relation of mutual relevance and correspondence. So close is this correspondence that it approaches, although in our view it does not completely attain, the level of a relation of mutual implication. To be precise about our meaning, we regard the second thesis (intellectual finality) as necessarily implied by the first (discursive intelligence); but we do not regard the first as strictly implied by the second, although, with Maréchal, we think it to be indisputably true as a designation of the mode of human intelligence. There is no intrinsic contradiction in the thought of an intuitive intelligence having an internal finality. But unlike the human intelligence, such an intelligence would be always in the condition of having its internal finality satisfied; it would be in constant possession of its ultimate object. That this is not the case with the human intelligence is abundantly evident. It is, in our view, peculiarly appropriate to combine, as Maréchal has done, the characteristics of a discursive mode and an internal finality in the interpretation of human cognitive activity. The progressive, gradual

character of the discursive process suggests the unfolding of a finality. Conversely, the thesis of an internal finality provides the key to the ultimate motivation of the progression of discourse.

Third Thesis: the Implicit Signification
of Our Knowledge

A third principal thesis of Maréchal is that our knowledge has an implicit content, or implicit objective signification, which goes beyond its explicit content. According to this thesis, the explicit content of our knowledge is that in the knowledge which is formally represented, and which is thus properly known through an intentional form adequate to it. As distinguished from this explicit content, the implicit content of our knowledge is that in the knowledge which is dynamically signified without being formally represented; and it is thus not known properly and directly, through an intentional form adequate to it, but — indirectly and analogically — it is known nevertheless.

This thesis is founded upon Maréchal's basic analysis of human cognitive activity as composed of formal and dynamic elements, that is to say, as being a synthesis of "form" and "act". According to this analysis, all our knowledge arises from the adoption of limiting forms

(intentional forms, representative of objects) by our basic active intellectual tendency, which is an unlimited capacity for objective forms and is thus not satisfied by any finite form. It follows that what our acts of knowledge formally represent (through the objective forms) is less than the whole of what they imply (through not only the objective forms, but also the unlimited tendency). This bivalence attaching to the whole of human knowledge — that is, this combination of two levels of objectivity: (1) the level of the object formally represented; (2) the level of the whole of what is objectively signified, including but also transcending the object formally represented — results from the coming together of an unlimited assimilative tendency with a limited object.

Just as there is a close relation between Maréchal's theses of the discursive character and the internal finality of human intelligence, so also there is a link between the latter thesis (intellectual finality) and his third thesis (implicit signification of our knowledge). As we have just said, the possibility of an implicit signification of our knowledge, transcending in its function of objective reference the limits of the object properly represented, depends upon the presence in our cognitive activity of an unlimited, assimilative, objective tendency. Such a tendency can be nothing other than the active expression

of a radical internal finality at the heart of our intellectual nature. Ultimately it is the presence of this finality in our acts of knowledge which makes possible a dynamic objective reference (signification) surpassing the limited object which is formally represented. We shall return in a later paragraph to the importance of Maréchal's third thesis (implicit signification of knowledge) for the proof of the existence of God. Without fully stating that importance, one can anticipate it on the basis of what has already been said. In short, if -- as is Maréchal's position and the position of many other philosophical theists -- God's existence is to be proved upon the basis of our knowledge of finite things, it must be the case that those finite things, as known by us, provide some basis for a transcendent objective signification. Maréchal's third thesis, interpreted in its intimate relation with the second, discloses the basis in our cognitive activity for such a transcendent signification.

Relevance of the Three Theses to the
Proof of God's Existence

Each of these theses has, as we have said, direct relevance to Maréchal's approaches to the proof of God's existence. To this relevance we shall now turn.

Relevance of the First Thesis

The first thesis — the discursive character of human intelligence — defines what kind of knowledge must constitute the proof of God's existence, if indeed there can be such a proof, for a human mind. Thus it indicates what kind of disclosure of God a human being may rightly look for (namely, an indirect disclosure, as of a reality implied in something else more proximate) and distinguishes it from a kind of disclosure which it would be quixotic for a human knower to look for and unreasonable for a critic to demand (namely, a direct, intuitive, face-to-face disclosure).

The substance of Maréchal's position on this indirect God-disclosure is as follows: for us, human knowers — discursive and progressively assimilative of objects, lacking the instantaneous and perfect objectivity of intellectual natures of a higher order¹⁷ — God's existence can be proved only as a necessary conclusion of a discursive reasoning process, starting from the finite things of which we have the experience and which are more readily known by us. The process, far from in-

¹⁷We have in mind the angels of Christian theological theory. Maréchal frequently compares human and angelic intelligence in Cahier V. See passages listed under the entry, "Anges. Leur mode de connaissance", in Index, V, 610.

volving a proper vision of God, consists of a progressive expansion or extension of our awareness of what finite and familiar things imply.¹⁸ Knowing first and properly these finite objects, we affirm as well their ultimate implications, and thus we know the reality of the latter, not properly and directly, but indirectly as implied in something else more proximate. For us human knowers — aside from the hypothesis of special revelation — only such an indirect knowledge of God is possible; God's existence can only be proved as demonstrably implied by something else. In a passage of Cahier V Maréchal succinctly states the essence of the implication we have just discussed, in terms which apply not only to our knowledge of God but to our knowledge of the whole of the metaphysical order. We quote:

Dans le domaine empirique (sensible) . . .
notre connaissance atteint, par immédiation,
l'actualité concrète des objets matériels;
dans le domaine métempirique, la réalité
ontologique n'est plus, pour nous, un fait
évident, mais une nécessité conclue. (V, 497-498)¹⁹

¹⁸Cf. this statement, excerpted from V, 450, n. 1: "en approfondissant quelque objet de pensée que ce soit — essence, relation, ou même privation — on rencontre Dieu, inévitablement".

¹⁹This passage could serve as a touchstone for distinguishing Maréchal's type of metaphysical realism from the metaphysical realism of some Thomists (we have in mind particularly É. Gilson and, to a lesser extent,

The necessary indirectness of our knowledge of the transcendent, which is indicated in the passage just quoted, is a direct consequence of the discursive character of our intelligence.

Relevance of the Second Thesis

The second principal thesis -- intellectual finality -- directly provides Maréchal with one of his entrées into the proof of God's existence and, more importantly, is present as an implicit factor in all the ways of God-proof which Maréchal develops. The relation

J. Maritain) for whom metaphysical esse itself is not something discursively concluded, but rather something directly perceived or "seen" -- as an evident fact -- in the concrete actuality of material objects. We do not wish to risk an oversimplification of the immensely sophisticated position of a M. Maritain or to exaggerate the difference between the positions of these Thomists and of Maréchal. Indeed many crucial positions of Maréchal, Maritain and Gilson are identical. See Georges Van Riet, Thomistic Epistemology, I, 315-339; II, 153-174. (See Bibliography for translation and publication information on this work.) Nevertheless one could argue that Gilson and some other Thomists, in their desire to preserve metaphysical realism from any taint of idealism (which they take to be the irreconcilable opposite of realism), run the risk of an overly "empiricistic" metaphysical realism, by which we mean one which insufficiently recognizes the distinction between our knowledge of reality at the empirical level and our knowledge of reality at the metaphysical level. Some light is shed on this delicate issue in J. Donceel, "A Thomistic Misapprehension?", Thought, XXXII (1957), 189-198. We take from Donceel the term "empiricistic" to characterize the position in question, but Donceel does not name the Thomists whose position he criticizes.

between this thesis and the proof of God's existence will be treated in later chapters.²⁰ Not wishing in this introductory chapter to anticipate the specific developments whose appropriate place is those later chapters, we shall restrict ourselves here to the following five summary comments, which indicate in rough outline the nature of the connection between intellectual finality and God-proof in Maréchal.

(1) The starting point for a proof of God on the basis of this thesis (intellectual finality) is a question about the nature of the ultimate end or the ultimate good toward which the intellectual nature necessarily tends.

(2) The pursuit of this ultimate end of our intellectual nature leads us through all actual and possible finite objects with the same result: they do not satiate our mind's capacity; our intellectual potential exceeds these objects and its active tendency surges beyond them. The conclusion toward which this inquiry moves is that only absolute being could fill our intellectual capacity, therefore absolute being alone could be our ultimate end.²¹

(3) In Maréchal's view, all men have some minimal,

²⁰See below, pp. 45-63 and 154-167.

²¹Cf. V, 376-380.

indistinct and inchoative knowledge of that which is their last end. And since that last end, absolute being, is a synonym for God, it follows that all men have a minimal, indistinct and inchoative knowledge of God. Maréchal's doctrine of mankind's universal possession of this confused, undeveloped, implicit knowledge of God recalls and reaffirms the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas on the same subject. In St. Thomas' words:

Cognoscere Deum esse, in aliquo communi, sub quadam confusione, est nobis naturaliter insertum, in quantum scilicet Deus est hominis beatitudo; homo enim naturaliter desiderat beatitudinem, et quod naturaliter desideratur ab homine, naturaliter cognoscitur ab eodem. (S. Th., I, 2, 1 ad 1)²²

The key point of the reason for this doctrine, in Maréchal as also in Thomas, is the relationship between a natural desire (the manifestation of the internal finality of a nature) and a certain at least minimal, inchoative knowledge of that which is the ultimate end of the desire. This relationship is expressed in the last clause of St. Thomas' statement, just quoted: "quod naturaliter desideratur ab homine, naturaliter cognoscitur ab eodem."²³ We must emphasize that this "natural" and primordial knowledge of God as our last end is minimal, inarticulate

²²Cited in V, 314.

²³We underscore the pertinent words for emphasis.

and undeveloped. It falls far short of a distinct knowledge of God. Nevertheless it is foundational to all our further and more distinct knowledge of God, a relationship which our next summary comment will elaborate.²⁴

(4) This first, indistinct knowledge of God, as the absolute being which alone could be the ultimate end of our intellectual finality, can be clarified through a reflection on that finality, a reflection which "anticipates", so to speak, the nature of the ultimate term from a scrutiny of the "lived" tendency itself. By this process of reflection the necessity of the existence of the intensively infinite being, a necessity which was initially only obscurely grasped, becomes known more distinctly.

(5) Because, in Maréchal's analysis, God is, in relation to our intellectual nature, not only a speculative object which could be contemplated with detachment, but an ultimate objective and end, the goal of our intellectual finality, it follows that, for us, the proof of his existence is a matter of vital interest. For us the proof of God's existence is the satisfaction of our deepest intellectual tendency, our natural desire for the plenary

²⁴A discussion of the relation between the intellectual desire for God and the inchoative knowledge of God, albeit from a perspective somewhat different from Maréchal's, is in J. Maritain, Approaches to God (New York: Macmillan, 1954, 1965), pp. 95-100.

possession of an object worthy of our intellect's full capacity. Thus, according to Maréchal's interpretation, the conclusion of the proof of God's existence is for our minds a moment of possession of their ultimate end. That the moment may be precarious and evanescent, because our minds cannot long maintain the vividness and clarity of their discursive conclusions, does not abolish the fact that, for a moment, there has been the intellectual possession of our end. ²⁵

These five summary comments have presented the relevance of the thesis of intellectual finality to the proof of God's existence only in rough outline. We reserve the full development of the implications of intellectual finality for later chapters, where the relation of this thesis to specific ways of proof utilized by Maréchal will be treated.

²⁵Strictly speaking, Maréchal regards the discursive knowledge of God as a still imperfect possession of the ultimate end of our intellect. Our intellect ultimately aspires to an immediate and intuitive mode of contemplation of God. But such a mode of knowledge is at most an "absolute possibility" or a "possibility in itself" from the viewpoint of our natural intellectual capacity -- an "absolute possibility" which we aspire to but which we lack the proximate means to obtain. The realization of this "absolute possibility" therefore depends upon a supernatural gift. See V, 412-424.

Relevance of the Third Thesis

The third thesis of Maréchal which we have noted — the implicit signification of our knowledge — is indispensable to a proof of God's existence, because the very possibility of a transcendent reference in our knowledge depends upon such a signification. In its explicit content, our knowledge is limited to what we can properly represent, and that depends upon sense information (as synthesized through the categories of the understanding). What we can explicitly represent in our concepts does not exceed the actual or possible empirical; it does not include the transcendent. Therefore we can know the transcendent if and only if there is in our concepts an implicit signification which exceeds their explicitly represented content.²⁶

One should add that an implicit signification can be made explicit. It would make no sense to speak of an "implicit" meaning which could not be made explicit. Such an alleged "implicit" meaning would be no different from no meaning at all. What Maréchal means when he speaks of an implicit signification is a meaning which is present but not consciously adverted to in direct knowledge, but which can be adverted to and made explicit by

²⁶Cf. V, 298; V, 574.

reflection upon direct knowledge. According to Maréchal all knowledge of the transcendent, for us human knowers, derives from this process of reflective explicitation of a meaning which was implicitly contained in our knowledge.²⁷

The Meaning of "God" in Maréchal

Before discussing the ways in which Maréchal approaches the proof of the existence of God, it is necessary to have a clear definition of the meaning which the word "God" has in Maréchal's usage of it. The purpose of this section is to provide such a definition.

What does "God" mean in Maréchal's work?²⁸ Does "God" mean the personal creator, beneficent providence, and powerful savior of Jewish and Christian piety, or does

²⁷For succinct statements on the "implicit" in our knowledge and the role of analytical reflection in disengaging it, see I, 250; V, 314-315.

²⁸By "Maréchal's work", in keeping within the limitations of our topic, we mean those writings in which his principal purpose was to explore and expound the epistemological foundations of a critically-justifiable realist metaphysics. We mean, therefore, principally PD and the shorter writings, many of which are assembled in MM, I, which relate to the themes of that major work. We are not considering, therefore, Maréchal's Études sur la psychologie des mystiques. (See Bibliography.) If "God", as used in the essays of that book, sometimes has an ampler, "religious" meaning which exceeds the meaning of the word in PD, that does not affect our question.

"God" mean something which is less religiously specified than that? Some answer to this question is provided by a review of the passages indicated under the entry "Dieu" in the "Index Alfabétique et Analytique" of Cahier V.²⁹ From these passages, which are representative of what Maréchal means by "God" throughout PD, results, with great clarity, the following conclusion: Maréchal means by "God" an entity which fulfills a certain metaphysical and epistemological function, not a specifically religious function.³⁰

What this function is — metaphysical and epistemological at the same time — can be seen by referring to just a few pages of Cahier V (pages 249-257), in which may be found a good sampling of the locutions which Maréchal uses with equivalency to "God" in PD. Expressions used synonymously with "God" in these pages are the following:³¹

²⁹v, 612.

³⁰It should be noted, however, that Maréchal does not separate these functions although he distinguishes them. Cf. V, 467: "Le 'Dieu des philosophes' n'est pas, en soi, un autre Dieu que le 'Dieu des chrétiens'."

³¹The context of the expressions here listed shows clearly that synonymity with "God" is intended, even when the word "God" itself is not used. I have excluded from the list some expressions whose synonymity with "God" is unclear from the context. For the reader's convenience page references are given immediately after each entry.

- (1) "l'unité objective suprême de l'intelligence" (V, 249).
- (2) "cette suprême unité objective, à laquelle tout objet pensé se rapporte" (V, 250).
- (3) "'unité' de tout le multiple créé" (V, 250).
- (4) "cet 'aliquid unum', ce terme principal, auquel aboutissent toutes les relations éparses dans les autres objets de notre pensée" (V, 252).
- (5) "sommet . . . de l'unité intelligible . . . absolument transcendant" (V, 255).
- (6) "un 'au delà' sans limites" (V, 256).
- (7) "esse purum, ipsum esse" (V, 249).
- (8) "L'Être absolu . . . terme principal de la relation d'analogie" (V, 250).
- (9) "Être créateur, qui est par essence" (V, 253).
- (10) "primum, per suam essentiam, ens et bonum" (V, 255).
- (11) "'être' purement et simplement" (V, 257).
- (12) "causa universalis" (V, 253).
- (13) "causalité absolument transcendante" (V, 255).
- (14) "universale principium omnium actuum" (V, 255).
- (15) "l'actualité pure" (V, 250).
- (16) "primus actus [Deus]" (V, 255)

I have arranged these expressions of natural theology, some of which are Maréchal's own and others of which are from St. Thomas, whom Maréchal is commenting in

these pages, topically rather than in the order of their appearance in Maréchal's text. Thus, numbers one through six identify God as the maximum of intelligible unity, thereby assigning to the God-concept its epistemological role — that of an ideal of unity, which, Maréchal will argue, must also be real.³² Numbers seven through eleven identify God with pure being, thereby assigning to the God-concept its central metaphysical role, from which follow its roles in analogical predication (expressed in number eight) and in causality (numbers twelve through fourteen). Numbers fifteen and sixteen stress God's metaphysical primacy as act. They could as well have been included with the expressions of God as pure being (numbers seven through eleven), since being and actuality are synonymous. I isolated them in order to feature their express usage of the concept of act.

One may compare these indications of the meaning of "God" with the expressions which Maréchal uses synonymously with "God" elsewhere in PD. For example, the following expressions are used in another section of Cahier V (pages 450-466), in which, like the pages just referred to, there is a concentration of references to God:

³²Cf. V, 588.

- (1) "l'Être nécessaire par soi (Acte pur)" (V, 450).
Compare numbers nine and fifteen in the prior list.
- (2) "l'Être absolu comme Fin universelle" (V, 462).
Compare numbers eight and ten ("primum bonum") in the prior list.
- (3) "l'Être infini -- clef de voûte de la Métaphysique" (V, 462). Compare numbers five ("sommet") and six ("sans limites") in the prior list.
- (4) "Fin universelle . . . Cause universelle" (V, 462-463). Compare numbers ten and twelve in the prior list.
- (5) "l'acte sans mélange de potentialité" (V, 463).
Compare numbers fifteen and sixteen in the prior list.
- (6) "vérité divine, unité de l'intelligence première et du premier intelligible . . . vérité première" (V, 464). Compare numbers one through five in the prior list.
- (7) "la Fin absolument dernière" (V, 466). Compare number ten in the prior list ("primum bonum": a correlative of "fin absolument dernière").

These passages for the most part simply repeat what we have seen from the first list about the metaphysical and epistemological function of the God-concept in Maréchal: namely, the function of God as pure being, pure act,

universal cause, maximum of intellectual unity. These passages go beyond the first group, however, by explicitly assigning to God his role in the order of finality. This is, in fact, a mere explicitation of the metaphysical role already assigned to God in the first group of passages. It simply elaborates the meaning of God's universal causality: he is the first in the order of final causality (as primum bonum) as well as in the order of efficient, productive causality (as universale principium omnium actuum). Thus, he is "Fin universelle . . . Cause universelle".³³

In the expressions cited in both lists, which are representative of the way God is spoken of throughout PD, God is most frequently spoken of in his metaphysical function as the base of the ontological order. Thus God is the maximum of actuality (pure act), and therefore the source of all causality³⁴ (first cause: efficient, formal

³³In elaborating the notion of transcendent causality Maréchal observes that, in speaking of God, efficient and final causality are merely two faces of one single ontological relation, since God, the First Cause, moves (efficient causality) by being loved (final causality). See V, 462-463.

³⁴Causality, in the ontological order, flows from actuality. Therefore that which is most in act has the most causal power. This does not imply that pure act must necessarily cause -- that is, necessarily have

and final) and the prime analogatum in metaphysical analogy. In his epistemological function, as related to our knowledge of the ontological order, God is the ultimate of intelligible unity, the "first truth" in which maximum intelligibility and maximum intelligence are united; and therefore, as the supremely actual in both these respects, he is the source of all potential intelligence, in finite subjects, and of all potential intelligibility, in finite objects. We may conclude that "God" in Maréchal's work means the entity which fulfills these particular ontological and epistemological functions: a meaning of "God" which is quite large, but not as fully characterized as might be desired for purposes of piety and worship. It should be stressed, however, that Maréchal sees no incompatibility between the God of philosophy and the God of religious devotion.³⁵ The concept of God proper to the latter is more ample but it includes the former.

effects -- ex necessitate naturae. To say this would be to posit a necessity of creation of effects in the divine nature. What we have said implies only that, if causal power is indeed exercised -- that is, if there are indeed effects -- the source of the exercised causal power is in an actuality, and its ultimate source is in pure act. This does not compromise the principle of the divine freedom in creation which is held in traditional Christian theology.

³⁵See above, n. 30.

The Role of Contingency in Our
Knowledge of God

How do we come to know this entity (God), of which, as we have seen, Maréchal speaks in terms restricted to its ontological and epistemological functions? The key statement of Maréchal is the following:

Nous pouvons, en un ^{sens} très réel, comparer Dieu à la créature sans le connaître immédiatement en lui-même. Supposons, en effet, qu'une relation définie rattache la créature à Dieu, et que cette relation, comme telle, se manifeste à nous dans son terme inférieur: alors, connaissant le terme inférieur comme relatif, nous aurions, par le fait même et dans cette mesure même, quelque notion du terme supérieur Voilà bien, en effet, ce qui nous arrive: nous connaissons les créatures comme relatives à un Principe absolu, comme contingentes, et par là -- par là seulement -- nous connaissons Dieu. (V, 258)

Let us spell out what this statement says about our knowledge of God. We know God only indirectly, Maréchal says, as the absolute principle to which our minds are "deflected", so to speak, from the contingency which we discern in creatures. In this passage Maréchal defines contingency -- if we may, without distortion, state his meaning a little more explicitly -- as a radical ontological condition of relativity to a higher principle, a condition which our minds discern in the objects of their direct knowledge. The discernment of this relativity forces our minds to rise toward an indirectly and

obscurely grasped absolute principle which is rationally required as a condition for the ultimate intelligibility of the relative objects. I say an indirectly and obscurely grasped absolute principle, in order to indicate that although this principle must be affirmed for the sake of the ultimate intelligibility of our finite cognitive objects, we cannot represent it in its proper essence or form a proper concept of it.

From this passage it is clear that, in Maréchal's view, all our knowledge of God (apart from the hypothesis of special revelation) starts from certain aspects of creatures as known by us, namely, aspects indicative of a radical ontological contingency, which reveals itself to our intelligence in the form of a rational insufficiency, requiring that the object be related to a higher principle in order to be ultimately intelligible. The nature of this starting point immediately places all possible ways of proving the existence of God in the track of the arguments "from effects", or arguments whose starting point is in something empirical,³⁶ rather than in the track of the famous "ontological argument", which we may preliminarily characterize as a proof from pure concepts,

³⁶The precise words are important. We wrote, "in something empirical", not simply, "something empirical". To be exact, the starting point for the proof of God's existence, according to Maréchal, is not simply the empirical as such, but a variously manifested, implicitly metaphysical aspect of the empirical. See below, pp. 135-136 and n. 22.

independently of any evidence from empirical experience.

It is evident from the passage on which we have just commented that Maréchal assigns a central role to the concept of contingency in the proof of God's existence. Maréchal states the centrality of that concept with even greater directness in the following words:

La contingence métaphysique, la radicale insuffisance dans l'ordre de l'être (qui est aussi l'ordre absolu de l'intelligibilité) constitue bien l'âme dialectique de toute preuve de Dieu à partir des créatures. (MM, I, 222)

The reader will note that the meaning which Maréchal in this passage assigns to the notion of contingence métaphysique both agrees with and expands his prior definition of contingency as an ontological relativity. The second passage makes it clear that a contingent entity is an entity which lacks within itself the sufficient reason for its existence and its actual determinations: that is, it does not possess, in and of itself, the adequate reason for its being, and for its being as it is. This radical condition of metaphysical deficiency is the same as the radical ontological relativity which was mentioned in the first passage. Both come down to the fact that the existence of the contingent entity is, ultimately, grounded outside itself; its sufficient reason must be sought in a principle extrinsic to it. This same ontological deficiency, expressed in

terms directly pertinent to our knowledge, means that the contingent entity as such is imperfectly intelligible. Lacking its sufficient reason in itself, it is necessarily deficient in intrinsic intelligibility; the condition for its ultimate intelligibility must be sought in a higher principle, extrinsic to it. This is Maréchal's meaning in the second passage, where he writes that the order of being -- the metaphysical order -- is identically the absolute order of intelligibility, so that the radical deficiency of the contingent entity in the one order is also a radical deficiency in the other.³⁷

From Maréchal's statements about the role of contingency it is clear that, in his interpretation of God-proof, the "proof from contingency" is not simply one way of proof standing alongside other ways of proof, but rather it is a common way of proof. By this is meant that the "proof from contingency" has a special role and a unique status among the ways of proof of God's existence, because it represents the nucleus of a reasoning process which the mind necessarily utilizes in every inference

³⁷We have already noted the identification which exists, in Maréchal's thought, between the order of being and the order of perfect intelligibility. (See above, pp. 6-7.) Indeed it could be said that, for Maréchal, the most basic meaning of being is "that which, as intrinsically perfectly intelligible, is the end of intellectual finality."

from the finite to the transcendent. The "proof from contingency" is tacitly contained in the logical process of all ways of proof of God's existence. It is, in Maréchal's words, the "dialectical soul" of God-proof.³⁸

In the chapters which follow we shall present and discuss the principal ways in which Maréchal approaches the proof of the existence of God. The order of treatment will be as follows. First we shall present two ways in which Maréchal does not utilize an express proof from St. Thomas, but develops in an original way some lines of proof which Thomas suggested without himself exploiting them. These are the ways of proof from intellectual finality and from the implications of the speculative first principle, quod est, est.³⁹ After this we shall comment at length on Maréchal's interpretation and utilization of the classic Thomistic ways, the "five ways" of St. Thomas.⁴⁰ In the course of our review of arguments utilized by Maréchal it will occasionally be possible to point out the interconnections among his approaches. At the end of our discussion of specific ways, however, we

³⁸Passage cited above, p. 40.

³⁹Chapter II.

⁴⁰Chapters III and IV. See Introduction to Chapter III for a more detailed breakdown of this topic.

shall devote a chapter expressly to these interconnections, in an attempt to demonstrate the underlying unity of his approaches.⁴¹ In the final chapter, in tentative and exploratory fashion, we shall utilize Maréchal's analysis of God-proof in order to shed some new light on two other famous proofs of God's existence, that of Kant in his Beweisgrund essay of 1763 and that of St. Anselm in the Proslogion. Between St. Anselm's proof and Maréchal's approaches we shall argue for a basic compatibility and an essential similarity.⁴² Finally in an Appendix we shall account for the provenance of the interpretation of St. Anselm's proof which we shall have utilized in our last chapter.

⁴¹Chapter V.

⁴²Chapter VI

CHAPTER II

TWO ORIGINAL MARÉCHALIAN WAYS OF PROOF

Introduction

In this chapter we shall present, in rapid sketch, two ways of proof of God's existence which are substantially original with Maréchal, although he credits St. Thomas with anticipating them: that is, Maréchal considers these ways of proof to be a mere development by explicitation of some avenues of proof which were implicit in St. Thomas' thought but which were left undeveloped by Thomas.¹ The ways of proof to which we refer are, respectively, (1) a proof from the internal finality of our rational nature -- or, more briefly, from intellectual finality; and (2) a proof from the implications of the speculative first principle, quod est, est. In presenting both of these ways of proof we shall omit much detail. We wish merely to sketch, in each case, the essential line of reasoning which leads to a proof of God's existence. If the essential lines of reasoning are presented accurately and without logical gaps, this chapter will have accomplished its purpose. In the interest of brevity and

¹Cf. MM, I, 213.

fluency of presentation, we have decided to present these two approaches principally in our own words, limiting our use of citations from Maréchal to what we consider the unavoidable minimum. The footnotes will refer the reader to pertinent passages in PD.

The Proof from the Internal Finality of
Our Rational Nature, or from Intellectual Finality²

In Cahier V of PD Maréchal develops a proof of the existence of God from an inquiry into the implications of the internal finality of our rational nature. About the role of the thesis of intellectual finality in Maréchal's thought, and about the relation of this thesis to a proof of God, I have already written in general terms.³ My purpose in the first half of this chapter is to present the substance of the line of reasoning which, according to Maréchal, leads from the fact of intellectual finality to the proof of God. The line of reasoning goes as follows:

²The locus of the line of reasoning presented here is mainly V, 373-438, the chapter entitled "Analyse de la Finalité dans l'Intelligence". It cannot neatly be confined to that chapter, however. The theme of intellectual finality recurs often throughout Maréchal's writings, including all volumes of PD and several of the writings collected in MM, I. The special value of V, 373-438 is that in these pages Maréchal "concentrates" the treatment of a topic which is almost omnipresent in his writings.

³See above, pp. 17-20 and 25-29.

Our nature has an end, which we may call our good, and all the operations of our nature are involved in the pursuit of this end.⁴ Thus the higher, rational operations which define human nature, those of the theoretical reason and the practical reason, are active in the pursuit of our end.

That the operations of the practical reason are teleological is clear. We may say in general that, by the practical employment of his intelligence, man seeks the good, or — which is to say the same thing — he seeks his end in the form of goods.

It may be less clear, at first glance, that the operations of the theoretical reason (speculative intellect) are teleological. Nevertheless, our intellect in its speculative employment does show a finality at work. That this is the case we can verify both by direct introspection and by an analytical inquiry into the necessities which follow from our mode of knowing: the discursive mode. Our direct introspection reveals to us that all our intellectual activity has a teleological character. And our analysis of discursive judgment shows that this mode of knowledge is rationally coherent only on the presupposition of an

⁴For the explicit connection between the notion of a "nature" and the attribute of "internal finality" see V, 310.

intellectual finality.⁵

We may say in general that, by the speculative employment of his intelligence (theoretical reason), man seeks the truth, or -- which is to say the same thing -- he seeks his end in the form of truth.

Now, good and truth are transcendental attributes of being, convertible with being: good is being as desirable or actually desired by a subject capable of desire; truth is being as tended to or possessed by a subject capable of speculative intelligence.⁶ The end of human nature is therefore being, and the different functions of that nature which we distinguish according to their type of operations -- for example, practical reason, speculative reason -- are simply an analysis of the ways in which human nature relates and actively tends to that end. Those distinguishable functions can therefore be called "appetites" relating to the end of human nature: the practical reason is the appetite for being as good, the speculative reason is the

⁵The approach by direct introspection is presented in V, 377-380. The necessity of a finality for a discursive mode of knowing is developed in several places in Cahier V. See, e. g., pp. 307-315; 351-355; 357-361; 367-372; 532.

⁶On V, 376 Maréchal quotes St. Thomas on the relation of the good and the true to being: "Et ideo, sicut bonum convertitur cum ente, ita et verum. Sed tamen, sicut bonum addit rationem appetibilis supra ens, ita et verum comparationem ad intellectum." (S. Th., I, 16, 3, c) Cf. also V, 455-456.

appetite for being as true. The actual object (the end) toward which our nature tends through both these functions is the same, but through the two functions we pursue it under different formalities (good, true).⁷

According to both formalities, the end toward which we tend is strictly infinite. Our speculative intellectual appetite is not permanently satisfied by the acquisition of this truth or that truth. No number, however large, of disparate truths (short of all truth) can put it to rest, leaving no more to be desired. Its curiosity is literally insatiable short of its possessing for its contemplation the form of all being.

The same is the case with the appetite of our practical reason. As long as it has not possessed all the good of being, there remains something more still desirable and desired. No human rational appetite is fully satisfied with an accumulation of finite goods or the possession of whole categories of such goods. For example, my daughter's love of strawberries is so great that one could think that an endless supply of them would make her perfectly happy. But in fact, although we have not tried

⁷For Maréchal's use of "appétit (naturel)", for his treatment of the distinction and relation of our two great rational functions and the unity of their end, see V, 310-314; 383-410.

it, I am sure that the delight of the berries would not prevent the stirring of other unsatisfied desires even in her; and she is only three. In a few years the possession (were it possible) of whole categories of goods will fall even shorter of satisfying the basically infinite desire. In this my daughter is representative of the whole human race. In short, the end to which man tends through the radical orientation of both his higher faculties — the speculative intellect and the will — cannot be identified with anything less than infinite truth, infinite good, infinite being.⁸ It should be stressed that this infinite end of our rational faculties is not conceived as intrinsically indeterminate or indefinite.⁹ True, we cannot determine and circumscribe it in the same way that we do when we conceive of the finite ends of our activity. But our inability perfectly to define it does not imply that it itself is intrinsically indefinite. On the contrary we think of this end as "intensively infinite being",¹⁰ by

⁸The infinity of the end toward which the speculative intellect tends is demonstrated in V, 377-380. The parallel demonstration of the infinite end of the appetite of the practical reason (will) is presented in V, 412-419.

⁹Cf. "L'infini de la raison discursive n'est pas un indéfini" (excerpt from a letter of Maréchal), in MM, I, 366.

¹⁰"L'Être intensivement infini": phrase used by Maréchal in I, 184-194 (in discussion of Duns Scotus). See also I, 208-209; I, 242; V, 584; MM, I, 168.

which phrase we mean, with Maréchal, the positive and simultaneous realization of the infinite virtuality intrinsic to the act of being. As perfectly actual realization, this ultimate end of our rational faculties must be, intrinsically, perfectly definite, although it is beyond our capacity of conceptual representation.

The teleological tendency, or internal finality, of our rational nature in both its speculative and practical aspects, leads, when it is scrutinized, to a proof of God's existence.¹¹ If and only if a God exists does this tendency, in either or both of its basic aspects, have any intelligible coherence. If a God does not exist, then both the speculative and the practical aspects of our nature's one, radical teleological dynamism¹² are strictly absurd, unintelligible, and in fundamental self-contradiction, because in that case they are aspects of an appetite for being, tending toward its own final frustration.

To see that this is the case one has only to reflect on the necessary presuppositions which go with a natural finality. For it is by such a finality -- an

¹¹We remind the reader that the word "God" here and throughout this dissertation is used in the sense defined in the introductory chapter. (See above, pp. 31-37.)

¹²See V, 429 and 531 for expressions of the unity of the radical "dynamism" which sustains both speculative and practical reason.

inner "law" of our constitution, so to speak -- that we tend, through our intellect and through our will, to the actual infinity of being which we have in these pages been calling "God". It is not by any exterior constraint nor by something accidental to what we are, but by the very core of our nature, as rational beings, that we tend, necessarily, to this end. Once one has recognized that the desire of the infinite being is natural and necessary, in the sense that we are "moved" toward that end by our very makeup, even before we become formally conscious of it as a goal to be pursued, one faces a logical disjunction: either the natural desire necessarily entails the real existence of its object (end), or it does not. If the end of the natural desire has actual existence or the real possibility of actual existence,¹³ then the natural desire is not in vain, is not frustrated at its core. But if the end of the natural desire is neither actually existent nor a real possibility, then the natural desire is in vain, radically frustrated from its origin and incoherent at its core.

¹³A "real possibility" (possibilité réelle) is something whose possibility of actual existence is authenticated by the actual existence of its ontological sufficient causes. In V, 420-424 Maréchal distinguishes possibilité réelle, which he also calls possibilité absolue (positive), from possibilité négative, which he defines as mere absence of internal contradiction in the concept of something.

In the case we are considering, the alternatives are narrower than those we have just stated. Because it is perfectly actual being, being intensively infinite, which is the end of the natural desire in question, there can be no consideration of the case in which its existence would be merely a real possibility. For it would be absurdity to speak of more fundamental ontological conditions such as could serve as sufficient causes for the existence of perfectly actual being. Ontological sufficient causes of real existence are in the line of act, and there can be nothing in that line more fundamental than perfect act. It, on the contrary, must be the ultimate ontological condition of the real possibility of everything else. So, the alternatives in the case at hand, and their respective consequences, are only these: either the end of the natural desire is an absolute impossibility in the real order, and the desire is totally in vain;¹⁴ or the end of the natural desire (God) is something actually existent, and the natural desire is not in vain.

¹⁴This barely begins to state the logical consequences of this alternative. For the real existence of a perfectly actual being to be an absolute impossibility means that there can be no ultimate intelligible ground for the real existence of anything at all, because the intelligible ground for any real existence must be in an actuality, and no being which is limited in actuality (ontologically finite) can completely justify its own existence or that of any other. Pursued to its end, this position entails the ultimate non-intelligibility of real existence.

But is it possible that the natural desire be in vain? It is at this point that Maréchal invokes (thus, clearly, affirming its truth in his view) the Thomistic axiom, Naturale autem desiderium non potest esse inane, a natural desire cannot be in vain.¹⁵

The truth of this axiom does not, I think, immediately impress itself upon modern readers and thinkers. It would be rash to try to remove all its difficulty, and I shall not so try. The concepts of a "nature" and of a "natural desire" are subject to much conceptual obscurity, and what the terms may legitimately mean would provide an issue for hot dispute among philosophers, and it is wiser for us, here, to avoid entering that dispute.

I shall limit myself to a more modest observation: that some (I do not say all) of the difficulty with the Thomistic axiom is that its exact meaning in Thomas and in Aristotelianism is often not seen, and therefore the unthinkable implications of rejecting it (which is to say: the reason for the necessity of affirming it) are not clearly focused and faced. The expression "natural desire" covers all the basic orientations, radical tendencies, positive predispositions of everything created. In man's case it covers, especially, his predisposition toward truth, through his intellect, and toward good, through his will --

¹⁵S. C. G., III, 57. Maréchal utilizes and comments on this axiom in V, 421-424.

or, in other words, his basic orientation toward being, thus analyzable in its transcendental properties relative to different functions of man's nature. Thus, man's "natural desire" is to be, as fully as possible, and this is to possess truth in knowledge and good in love and delight. This natural desire is one and integral, its aspects are interdependent.

The consequence of asserting that man's natural desire is or may be in vain is, thus, nothing less than the radical undermining of man's basic orientation and predisposition, one aspect of which is his orientation to truth through his mind. "A natural desire can be in vain" implies that man's aspiration to achieving truth may be in vain, the basic purpose of his mind may be vitiated.¹⁶

Pursue this line a little and one sees that this is a pseudo-position, impossible to affirm -- which means that its contrary: naturale desiderium non potest esse inane, vindicates and proves its truth. For no subject can say: "Thought may very well establish no contact with reality; truth may be completely inaccessible", because the very statement (any statement, even this skeptical one) must be

¹⁶This negative implication for theoretical reason is not its only implication. It is merely the one I wish to stress, for reasons of an emphasis to be developed later. (See below, pp. 58-63.) "A natural desire can be in vain" has negative implications for practical reason as well.

made on the basis of a certain insight achieved. Insight into what? -- Into truth, into the way something stands in reality. In the case in question, the insight into reality which might lead -- illegitimately -- to the assertion of complete skepticism or its possibility, would probably be the knowledge that some, even a great number, of particular judgments made were erroneous. The reaction of (supposedly) complete skepticism is an exaggerated reaction, involving a logical lapse, due to frustration, perhaps repeated, in achieving the truth. But, again, in strict logic it refutes itself. The mind cannot deny its capacity for truth, and even in verbally denying it, the capacity is vindicated by the content of the denial. Seen in the light of the untenable implication of its negation, the Thomistic axiom, when naturale desiderium is taken according to Thomas' meaning, attains a certain evidentness, one might even say an obvious truth.¹⁷

¹⁷This does not mean that the truth of the axiom is immediately self-evident from the inspection of its terms, as in the case of a tautology. The necessary truth of the axiom becomes evident only when it is related to the "performative" necessities of an actual or hypothetical subject. Its necessity consists not in a self-evidentness in terminis, but in the fact that every subject must affirm it, implicitly, in the act of committing himself to any cognitive object.

I am indebted to Prof. J. M. Vertin (St. Michael's College, University of Toronto) for pointing out numerous examples of statements which, like the statement "A natural desire can be in vain", disprove themselves (and prove their opposites) as soon as they are put in the context of "per-

The argument which Maréchal uses in order to show the necessary falseness of any position which says or implies that rational thought is absurd, and conversely the necessary truth of the position which says that thought engages and discloses being, resembles the argument by which Aristotle refuted the assertion of the skeptic, who said that there was no objective truth.¹⁸ Aristotle's argument was, basically, that no subject could consistently assert that there was no objective truth; the skeptic's very act of assertion, as well as any other purposeful act which he undertook,¹⁹ would contradict him, by immediately undermining the content of his negation. The proposition that there is truth, together with anything which the existence of truth necessarily implies, is self-establishing.²⁰

formative" necessities of any subject's actual affirmation. Examples of such statements are, "I always lie" and "All philosophical positions are absurd."

¹⁸Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. IV (Γ), chs. 4-8 (Bekker, Γ, 1005^b 35-1012^b 32). These chapters are in R. McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 737-751.

¹⁹For example, the act of rising early in the morning and setting out for Megara. See *ibid.*, ch. 4 (Bekker, Γ, 1008^b 14 ff. ; McKeon, pp. 742-743).

²⁰Maréchal discusses Aristotle's refutation of the skeptic in I, 21-49 *passim* and in V, 47; 499-500; 559. Commentary on Maréchal's use of this argument may be found in G. Isaye, "La finalité de l'intelligence et l'objection kantienne", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, t. LI (1953), pp. 43-46 and in E. Dirven, *op. cit.* (See above, ch. 1, n. 1), p. 154, n. 1.

The line of reasoning which we have just presented, which develops a proof of God's existence from the internal finality of our rational nature in general, including both its speculative and practical aspects, can be summarized in the following four steps:

- (1) The end to which the natural appetite of our speculative and practical faculties (intellect and will) propels us is the infinite being, God, as something to be possessed in contemplation and delighted in.
- (2) Either this end of ours (God) really exists or our natural appetite is in vain.
- (3) The proposition "the natural appetite is in vain" leads to absurdity. No subject can really affirm it, because to do so would undermine the whole of rational activity, speculative and practical. "The natural desire is not in vain" is thus necessarily true (that is, it must be affirmed by every subject).
- (4) It follows from this that our end (God) really exists.

The argument we have summarized can and does utilize the whole of our rational activity, that is, both the practical and the theoretical employment of our in-

telligence, because it is the implication of the finality of our integral rational nature which is in question.

The necessity of the real existence of our end could be demonstrated as implied either by one or the other aspect (practical or theoretical) of this finality taken by itself, or by the whole finality taken with both its aspects. Thus it would have been possible to make the argument on the basis of the finality of our intelligence considered in its practical aspect alone. That is to say, it is possible to isolate, by abstraction from a larger whole (the integral finality), a proof of God's existence from the finality of the practical reason.

We have not done this, however, but have for the most part presented the argument in terms of the integral finality of our rational nature. Toward the end of our presentation we began to stress the implication of the finality as seen especially -- and, again, by an abstraction from its totality -- on its speculative side, that is, the finality of our theoretical reason. In stressing this aspect we have followed the special emphasis which Maréchal placed upon it, an emphasis which is explained by Maréchal's interest in vindicating especially the rights of the theoretical, speculative reason -- not just of the reason in general -- against the excessive strictures placed upon it by Immanuel Kant.

That the existence of God is necessarily implied by the finality of the practical reason -- a thesis which Maréchal accepts as true²¹ -- would not carry the conclusion of the search for a possible proof of God's existence beyond Kant's end point: for Kant said that God's real existence could be proved as something necessarily implied by the practical reason. But Kant taught that God's real existence (that is, existence as something real in itself, not just as a hypostatization of an "ideal" need of reason) could not be proved on the grounds of speculative reason. And it was Maréchal's purpose to show that Kant was mistaken as to this "speculative agnosticism". Maréchal wished to show that even on the grounds of speculative reason alone the existence of God could be proved, provided the speculative reason were seen for what in fact it is, namely a dynamic, finalistic function of a rational nature in quest of its integral end.²²

²¹See V, 528-531.

²²On V, 37 Maréchal sums up Kant's metaphysical position as "agnosticisme spéculatif, tempéré par la croyance morale". Throughout Cahiers III, IV and V Maréchal repeatedly characterizes Kant's position as an agnosticism of the speculative reason in relation to noumenal (metaphysical) reality. The radical source of this agnosticism, according to Maréchal, was Kant's failure to recognize the essential and constitutive role of the intellect's internal finality in speculative knowledge. See, e. g., III, 305-309; V, 37-39; MM, I, 273-287.

A crucial point in Maréchal's interpretation of speculative reason is that the internal finality of the intellect is intimately involved in the very constitution in thought of a speculative object as object.²³ This is to say that it is of the essence of an object of speculative thought to be a goal -- an end -- of intellectual finality. In other words, we are not to suppose that an object of speculative thought is, somehow, completely constituted as a speculative object, independently of intellectual finality and is then, subsequently, adopted by the intellect as an end. On the contrary, the function of intellectual finality "presides", so to speak, and intrinsically participates as a dynamic function in the very genesis of the object as object. No speculative object can arise for us without the intrinsic participation of this dynamic function.

This does not mean that, according to Maréchal, the mind, or the mind's finality, "makes" the object, in the sense that the latter's existence as a reality in its own right derives from the mind. Maréchal does not mean anything so sweeping when he points out the intrinsic role

²³Maréchal develops this point in several places in Cahier V. See pp. 357-361; 439-447; 458-459; 547-558.

of intellectual finality in the constitution of speculative objects. The object's existence as a reality in itself is not challenged. That existence has a grounding outside the cognitive activity and the finality of the subject. Ultimately, indeed, the ground for both the existence in itself of the object and the natural finality of the subject is in God, the creative source of both objective existence and natural tendency. It nevertheless remains true that the mind's internal finality, by its spontaneous pursuit of its end -- being -- in the speculative object, is the dynamic function which constitutes the latter precisely as an object and a valid end of the intelligence. This is the limited meaning of Maréchal's assertion that the mind's finality is intrinsically constitutive of the speculative object. The interpretation does not deny -- indeed it presupposes -- that the object, which becomes an object for speculative thought through the role of our intellectual finality, has its ultimate grounding as a thing in itself outside that intellectual finality. But when the object is considered precisely as an object of speculative thought, it appears as essentially an end of our intellectual tendency, a partial satisfaction of our intellect's basic appetite for being -- or the complete satisfaction of that appetite, if the object itself is infinite being.

In this finalistic interpretation of speculative knowledge all finite objects, viewed precisely as ends, reveal, upon reflective analysis, their insufficiency completely to satisfy the intellectual finality of the subject. Their insufficiency as ends forces the mind to rise beyond them to the fully sufficient object of the finality. In relation to that fully sufficient object, infinitely actual being, the finite objects serve as means and stages. The mind passes from the knowledge of the finite objects through the reflective discovery that, although they are valid ends, they are not the ultimate end, to the necessity of affirming the reality of the ultimate end -- in order that the mind's natural finality not be ultimately frustrated. The line of reasoning, which starts with a recognition of the necessary intrinsic element of finality in speculative objects and then develops the ultimate implication of that finality, depends in the last analysis on the necessary truth of the principle that a natural finality -- in this case the natural finality of our speculative intellect -- cannot be ultimately in vain. If the natural finality of our speculative intellect is not to be ultimately in vain, the principal precondition for its non-vanity is that its fully adequate object, infinite being, actually exist. From this line of reasoning results in the last analysis the evident necessity

of affirming that fully adequate object (God) as really existent, as necessarily implied by the natural finality of the speculative intellect.

Taking into consideration the special stress which Maréchal places upon the internal finality of the speculative intellect, we could restate as follows the general outline of the proof from intellectual finality:

- (1) Reflective analysis of the object of speculative knowledge reveals the finality of the speculative intellect as necessary to and constitutive of the object as object.
- (2) Reflective analysis of the finality involved in the constitution of the speculative object reveals the infinite amplitude of the finality, as a natural desire for the intellectual possession of infinite being.
- (3) Reflection on the infinite amplitude of the finality leads, through the realization of the truth of the principle that a natural desire cannot be in vain, to the necessary affirmation of the real existence of infinite being (God), as the sole adequate end of the intellectual finality.

The Proof from the Implications of the
Speculative First Principle²⁴

Also in PD, Maréchal develops a proof of the existence of God from an inquiry into the ultimate source of the necessity of the speculative "first principle". The speculative "first principle" is expressed by the proposition, quod est, est. That is, according to Maréchal, its "authentic" formulation.²⁵ It has other formulations as well, the chief ones of which, as used by Maréchal, are the following:

- (1) Ens est ens.
- (2) Ce qui est, est ce qui est.
- (3) Ce qui est, ne peut pas, en même temps et sous le même rapport, ne pas être.

Of these alternative formulations of the first principle, the first and the second are called by Maréchal "the apparently tautological expressions" of the principle.²⁶ The third formulation is the principle of non-

²⁴The locus of this proof is principally V, 561-565.

²⁵See Maréchal's words on V, 562: "la formule authentique du principe d'identité: 'quod est, est'".

²⁶V, 562.

contradiction, the negative expression of the first principle.²⁷ All these formulations are logically equivalent. If Maréchal prefers, as he does, to use the formulation of the principle which he calls "la formule authentique", rather than the other formulations, as the primary basis of his remarks, the reason is that the non-tautological character of the principle is most clearly seen from that formulation. Indeed, one of Maréchal's main points is that the first principle is not tautological, its predicate is not a simple duplicatum of the subject.²⁸ But some of the expressions of the principle, for example ens est ens, appear at first glance to be tautological. They are not really so, however, as becomes clear when their meaning is analyzed. Maréchal judges, however, that of all the expressions of the first principle the formula, quod est, est is the one which is most likely to avert the (wrong) impression of a tautology from the start.

In Maréchal's view all critique of knowledge ultimately encounters the absolute necessity of objective thought which the first principle expresses. A critique of knowledge is, fundamentally, an inquiry into the

²⁷See V, 561 and 563.

²⁸V, 562. This point is developed below, pp. 71-72.

ultimate evidence for our affirmations. It seeks to discover and to identify an ultimate necessity of objective thought underlying our affirmations, if there is such a necessity.²⁹ In Cahier V of PD Maréchal distinguishes and relates two ways of the critique of knowledge which have been exemplified in the history of philosophy.³⁰ Maréchal calls these two ways, respectively, the "metaphysical" critique and the "transcendental" critique. By the "metaphysical" critique³¹ Maréchal means principally the critique of our spontaneous objective affirmations which was carried out in ancient and medieval philosophy, within the framework of an acceptance of the general presupposition of metaphysical realism: the ontological, noumenal value of our knowledge. This "metaphysical" critique sought, by demonstrating the absolute necessity of metaphysical realism for thought and by defining and distinguishing the formal object of affirmation at each stage of objective knowledge, to provide

²⁹Maréchal took pains to point out, to Scholastic philosophers sometimes suspicious of the very project of a critique of knowledge, that a critique does not imply a negative verdict on the claims of metaphysical realism. See, e. g., V, 17-27.

³⁰See V, 47-71.

³¹Treated in V, 49-51.

reflective justification for and institute a reflective control over the spontaneous realism of pre-"critical" affirmations. Maréchal considers this "metaphysical" critique, as practiced, for example, by Aristotle and St. Thomas, as having provided a truly critical "preamble" to a metaphysical theory of knowledge.³²

By a "transcendental" critique,³³ the principal kind of critique of knowledge which has been practiced in modern philosophy since Kant, Maréchal means a critique which is carried out, neither within the "realist" presumption of the ontological, noumenal value of knowledge, nor within the opposite presumption (namely, that knowledge has no ontological value), but only within the presumption that there is a content of consciousness having the appearance of objectivity, whatever may be the ultimate value of that appearance. In other words, it is a critique of knowledge which examines only the content of consciousness regarded as phenomenal. The "transcendental" critique seeks especially to discover the conditions of possibility of this phenomenal object in a priori functional dispositions of the knowing subject.³⁴ Maréchal

³²See V, 81-99.

³³Treated in V, 51-66 and 507-514.

³⁴Cf. V, 51-52 and 98, n. 1.◊

argues in Cahier V of PD that there is a correspondance and even a relation of transponibility between these two critiques.³⁵ In particular, both critiques start from the "immanent object", that is the object precisely as content of consciousness, having therefore both an objective and a subjective pole.³⁶ The two critiques approach this object from different perspectives: the "metaphysical" critique primarily from the perspective of the claim which this content of consciousness makes upon our affirmation, the "transcendental" critique primarily from the perspective of the a priori functions of the subject contributing to the edification of this object. In other words, the former critique approaches the immanent object primarily from the viewpoint of the objective pole and the latter approaches it primarily from the viewpoint of the subjective pole. The relation between these two perspectives on the immanent object is not one of contradiction. Only the "metaphysical" critique directly addresses the question of the ultimate ontological value of the content of consciousness. But the "transcendental" critique does not veto that value; it merely stops short of it and confines itself to a deliberately more restricted consideration of the object.

³⁵See V, 70-71 and 515 ff.

³⁶See V, 17-18 (first two "apories").

Maréchal calls the "transcendental" manner of considering the object a "precisive" consideration by comparison with the more integral consideration which the "metaphysical" critique embodies.³⁷ However, in Maréchal's view this "precisive" consideration itself leads to the discovery of its own incompleteness, in other words it leads to the discovery that the object requires, ultimately, to be considered in the metaphysical perspective. So, the "transcendental" critique ultimately reveals the need for a "metaphysical" critique; and in the last analysis all critique leads to the same conclusion: that there is an absolute objective necessity at the base of all our affirmations, guaranteeing an ontological, noumenal value of our knowledge. That absolute objective necessity to which all critique leads is the necessity expressed by the first principle. In Maréchal's words:

Le premier principe, le principe d'identité -- et subsidiairement le principe de contradiction, sa formule négative -- doivent apparaître maintenant comme l'axe stable autour duquel évolue toute Critique, tant métaphysique que transcendantale: en effet, c'est par l'application même du premier principe qu'un reflet d'absolu se glisse dans nos contenus bruts de conscience et les élève à la dignité de connaissances objectives. (V, 561)³⁸

³⁷ See V, 71.

³⁸ Cf. V, 84-98.

This statement notes especially the role of the first principle in "objectivating" the content of consciousness and in giving it a metaphysical, noumenal (absolute) value. In other words, the role of the first principle is to relate the content of consciousness to the order of being, which is also the order of absolute intelligibility. The principle does this by applying to the content the most fundamental requirement for intelligibility, the requirement of internal coherence. The first principle expresses the most absolute necessity of objective thought. It is the inner "law" of the mind's operation and the fundamental manifestation of its nature as a faculty of being. As such, Maréchal says, it is the first foundation and the type of all objective judgments, both analytic and synthetic. As Maréchal writes:

Si le principe d'identité occupe la situation privilégiée que nous lui avons reconnue, n'en cherchons pas d'autre raison que celle-ci: fondement premier des jugements analytiques, il est en même temps la synthèse a priori par excellence, la synthèse qui commande toutes les autres parce qu'elle se confond avec la vie même de l'intelligence, faculté de l'être. (V, 561) ³⁹

³⁹Cf. V, 88 (text and n.1, b). As is evident from these statements, Maréchal maintains that there is at least one necessarily true synthetic a priori proposition: the first principle. In fact, he maintains that there are other true synthetic a priori propositions as well, expressing principles which derive from the first principle or are applications of it. See V, 566; 584-585. Cf. MM, I, 155.

In further analysis Maréchal shows that the first principle is not tautological. The point he makes is as follows. The principle takes a subject (quod est), without any connotation of the mode of necessity, but simply as something given to consciousness, in any way whatsoever. The quod est of the subject, in the expression of the first principle, means no more than "something which has entered upon the field of consciousness". But in its predicate (est), the first principle affirms a rational necessity in this subject. Upon analysis, quod est, est is shown to mean: that which is, necessarily is what it is.⁴⁰ Or, more exactly, the principle means that as soon as something has entered in any way whatever upon the field of consciousness, a necessary relation to the absolute order of being, with its requirement of ultimate perfect intelligibility, can be attributed to that something. The analysis of its meaning shows that the principle has a synthetic, expansive character, because by affirming in the predicate (est) the mode of necessity it has expanded the signification of the subject-content.⁴¹ In fact, what the principle expresses is that which the mind naturally,

⁴⁰ See V, 562.

⁴¹ Est, in the predicate of the principle, means necesse est. See ibid.

necessarily and universally does: to affirm a unity, by effecting a synthesis between the given content and being.

The principle is thus expansive in that it affirms a necessity starting from a subject which lacks -- as first given -- the mode of necessity. And it is synthetic in the very specific sense that it expresses, for every content of consciousness, every quod est, its necessary synthesis with being. Maréchal states the nature of this synthesis in several ways. For example, the first principle expresses the necessary synthesis of any esse given as brute fact with an intelligible essence. Or, again, the first principle affirms that every being is necessarily intelligible. In the most general way possible, the principle expresses the necessary union, in an object of knowledge, of reality and ideality, or of existence and essence.

In Maréchal's words:-

Lorsque l'on dit: "ens est ens", ou: "ce qui est, est ce qui est", le sens explicite de ces propositions ne peut être que le suivant: "ens est id quod habet rationem (formam) entis", ou: "ce qui est, est ce qui a la qualité (ou la forme) exprimée dans les mots: ce qui est": tous jugements qui traduisent. . . l'unité nécessaire d'un suppositum hypothétique -- l'être comme donnée brute -- et d'une forme -- l'être comme "raison intelligible" Le principe d'identité exprime donc, dans les termes les plus généraux possibles, la synthèse nécessaire du quod et du quod, de l'existence et de l'essence; il signifie, au fond, que tout être, en tant qu'être est un "intelligible". (V, 562)

The commentary on the first principle now sharpens on the point upon which Maréchal thinks it most necessary

to focus. If the principle expresses the most primordial and universal synthesis, necessarily exercised in our discursive thought, it still remains the unification of a duality: existence and essence, or given reality ("l'être comme donnée brute") and intelligible form ("l'être comme raison intelligible"). Maréchal writes:

Or, avec le principe d'identité, nous possédons déjà le type d'unité synthétique le plus général possible: position comme "esse" et détermination comme "essence", ou encore: être comme Réalité et être comme Idée. (V, 563-564)

The point is further sharpened as Maréchal continues:

Cette unité reste dualité et ne se justifie donc point par elle-même. Quelle unité supérieure -- imposant implicitement sa nécessité toute primitive -- pourrait logiquement fonder une synthèse si universelle? Il n'en demeure qu'une seule: l'unité parfaite, où Esse et Essence se confondraient, où Réel et Pensée s'identifieraient totalement: bref, l'unité de l'Acte pur d'être. (V, 564)

The crucial point in this reasoning is expressed by the words: "Cette unité reste dualité et ne se justifie donc point par elle-même." Let us elaborate. The unity which the first principle expresses is the purest and strictest unity which our discursive thought can formulate. Our thought can confer no higher degree of unification upon the objects of our knowledge. But the degree of unity represented by the first principle is not perfect; it is synthetic, as the very form of the principle shows upon analysis. A synthetic unity is not a perfect unity

but remains at the level of a unification (synthesis) of a diversity; therefore it "reste dualité", as Maréchal puts it. The duality that persists in the case of the first principle is not an entitative duality, a duality of res to res, of quod to quod; nor is the synthesis which the principle effects a unification of two "entities". No, the duality is a subtler one and the synthesis a stricter, more perfect one than would be the case if the terms were separable entities. The duality which persists in the expression of the first principle is a duality of the real in itself and the real as intentional:⁴² a duality of actual existence and intelligible essence, or, more simply, of act and form. This irreducible duality which persists even into the expression of the highest unification of which our thought is capable raises, for our inquiry, a fundamental question. What is the ultimate ground for the necessity of the absolute unification of the content of thought, which the first principle (imperfectly) expresses? The ultimate reason for the unification of a diversity is not from the diversity itself. No unity which is imperfect as unity fully justifies

⁴²Maréchal several times makes the point that the intentional is not something opposed to the real or the ontological, but is a mental mode of the real. See, e. g., V, 138, n. 1; V, 358; MM, I, 79.

itself. The first principle contains duality and so cannot itself provide the ultimate reason for the absolute necessity of unification which it expresses.

Maréchal puts the problem as follows:

Mais laissons cette dualité concrétive que le principe d'identité emprunte à l'imperfection matérielle de nos concepts; même selon sa signification purement rationnelle, il présente . . . une structure logique nettement synthétique, puisqu'il affirme l'unité nécessaire de tout être avec son essence intelligible.⁴³ Mais comment alors revêt-il une nécessité absolue? Car aucune synthèse n'est nécessaire par soi: la diversité, comme diversité, ne pouvant être principe de sa propre unification, la nécessité d'une synthèse doit avoir sa source dans la nécessité même d'une unité où s'efface la diversité des termes synthétiques. (V, 563)

In the final analysis the only sufficient reason for the absolute necessity of unification of any diversity -- a necessity which the first principle expresses -- is an existent perfect unity, a unity in which actual existence and intelligible essence are perfectly one, a unity above or before that of any synthesis. But since our human conceptualization, or the possibility thereof, is

⁴³Maréchal regards the first principle of our thought as weighed down, in its aspiration to perfect unity, by two species of diversity or duality. The first of these is a "material" diversity or duality, clinging to our notion of being because of the natural dependency of our intelligence upon the input of a sensibility; the second is a "formal" duality which attaches to the logical structure of the principle, even independently of any concrete content.

inseparably tied to the synthesis of a diversity, above which level the first principle of our thought cannot rise, it follows that this perfect unity will be supra-conceptual to us. Therefore, as Maréchal writes:

Or, cette unité souveraine n'est plus exprimable en concepts ni par jugements, puisque concepts et jugements présentent toujours, au moins, la dualité synthétique du principe d'identité lui-même. Et ainsi, l'unité qui fonde la nécessité logique de ce dernier se trouve forcément rejetée en dehors de notre pensée, dans un Absolu subsistant. (V, 564)

It is easy to see, in this whole line of reasoning, a proof of the existence of God: "l'unité parfaite, où Esse et Essence se confondraient, où Réel et Pensée s'identifieraient totalement; bref, l'unité de l'Acte pur d'être",⁴⁴ resulting from the analysis of the first principle. God, in the metaphysical and epistemological terms which Maréchal uses equivalently to "God" in PD, is proved to exist as the sole reality which could found the absolute necessity of rational unification, which the first principle expresses, but which requires an ultimate justification beyond the first principle itself. The existence of God -- the reality in which existence and essence are perfectly one -- is therefore required in order for the first principle to have a ground for the absolute necessity which it expresses. If God did not

⁴⁴V, 564. Cf. V, 345-346.

exist, the necessity of the first principle would lack sufficient grounding, our speculative thought would have no absolute guarantee of objectivity, and consequently the function of the human intellect as a faculty naturally orientated to and actually engaging the real, in other words a faculty of being, would be placed radically in question.⁴⁵

⁴⁵We have already discussed the absurdity involved in doubting or denying the intellect's capacity to engage actual being. See above, pp. 54-56.

CHAPTER III

MARÉCHAL ON THE THOMISTIC WAYS, PART ONE

Introduction

One might expect from Maréchal, a Thomist ex professo, a presentation of the proof of the existence of God which would strongly resemble the "five ways" of St. Thomas Aquinas,¹ or at least some of these ways. Thus far, however, we have seen him approach the proof of God's existence through intellectual finality and through the implications of the first principle, neither of which ways has a particularly obvious resemblance to the ways of St. Thomas. It is clear that Maréchal does not limit himself to ways of the proof of God's existence which were taught formally, explicitly and as such by St. Thomas. What may be less clear, but what Maréchal would contend, is that the ways he utilizes (intellectual finality; implications of the first principle) are taught implicitly by St. Thomas; that these ways are enveloppées, sous-entendues in St. Thomas' five ways; and that an explication of the meaning of St. Thomas' express proofs will show them clearly. It

¹S. Th., I, 2, 3.

is therefore a matter of great interest to examine Maréchal's treatment of the ways of proof of God's existence which are expressly and traditionally Thomistic.

In the pages which follow we shall direct our attention primarily to Maréchal's treatment of the first two of the five Thomistic ways, the proof from motion (prima via) and the proof from efficient causality (secunda via). Furthermore, of these two ways we shall treat only the first in detail, limiting our discussion of the second to a comparatively few needful remarks. After this, we shall devote only a few pages to Maréchal's treatment of the other Thomistic ways. The justification of this restriction is as follows:

(1) It reflects Maréchal's practice when dealing with this topic. Maréchal wrote almost nothing directly about the last three Thomistic ways; and what little he did write was always in a context wherein it applied globally to all the five ways, the application to the specific way (as distinguished from the others) being left undeveloped and, as it were, noted only "in passing".

(2) As will become clear through our presentation, Maréchal considers the Thomistic ways as five materially-different embodiments of one essential argument. Therefore they are distinguished from each other by something accidental, not something essential. It follows that an

analysis of the logical procedure of any one of the ways discloses the essence of all the five, so that it is unnecessary to analyze each way individually. This explains why Maréchal presented and analyzed in detail only the first way, the argument from motion, occasionally in the course of the analysis making a passing application to the other ways. Aside from that, with the exception of some brief but important remarks about the second way, made in Cahier V of PD, he gave no express and developed treatment of any of the other Thomistic ways.

(3) The argument from contingency, to which we shall give considerable attention, is a special case, not sufficiently covered by the above remarks. Although there is, in our judgment, no ambiguity in Maréchal's use of this way of proof, there is an ambiguity about the precise connection between this way of proof and St. Thomas' tertia via, which is sometimes called the "proof from contingency", but which we shall call, in order not to compound the ambiguity, the way of proof "from possible beings".

The difficulty of interpretation arises from the fact that Maréchal nowhere expressly made the identification between the proof from contingency, which he so much utilized, and the third Thomistic way in distinction from the others. On the other hand, he made a clear identification between this proof and the essence of all the

Thomistic ways together. What is unclear is whether Maréchal intended the proof from contingency to be precisely identified with the Thomistic proof "from possible beings", in which case it would follow that he regarded the "third way" of St. Thomas as a privileged one, in the sense that it alone expressed the essence of all the others. In this case, it would be untrue to say, as we have, that Maréchal treated in detail only St. Thomas' first way and in lesser detail the second. We would have to say that he gave much attention to the third way as well. But it is not clear that Maréchal intended his treatment of the argument from contingency precisely as a treatment of Thomas' third way.

Maréchal does not solve this problem for us. But let us stress that it is not a problem about the substance of his thought, not even the substance of his thought about the essence of the Thomistic ways. His view of the essence of those ways is made quite clear in his writings, and does not depend upon which answer is given to the question of whether, or to what extent, his way of proof from contingency should be identified with a specific one of the Thomistic ways. So we shall neither try to answer this question nor let its unanswered condition detain us.

We have gone to some length in justification of the limitation we intend to observe (namely, to treat,

almost exclusively, the first two of the Thomistic ways, and only the first of these in detail), because that limitation must appear arbitrary, and therefore unjustified, unless it is made clear that it is put upon us for reasons intrinsic to Maréchal's text, to interpret which is precisely our task. Moreover, we think that the development of our interpretation will gradually demonstrate, not only that the limitation we observe is justified, but that -- which is a more important matter -- the procedure Maréchal followed in regard to St. Thomas' ways of proof is itself not arbitrary but is well founded in an analysis disclosing the logical unity at the heart of the ways. While anticipating this result one could observe of Maréchal, in partial justification of his apparent passing over of the "letter" of most of the Thomistic ways, that his attention was always, in this and in other matters philosophical, directed primarily to the aspects of arguments (be they those of St. Thomas, of Kant, or of whomever) which were implicit, tacitly presupposed, sous-entendus, rather than to those aspects which appeared expressly in the "letter" of the argument.² To enter further into a discussion of the

²Some attention is given to this aspect of Maréchal's thought in A. Hayen, "Un interprète thomiste du kantisme: le P. Joseph Maréchal . . ." (See above, p. 1, n.1) and in A. Poncelet, "La méthode historico-théorique de J. Maréchal", Bijdragen, XX (1959), 242-266. ♦

reason for this angle of approach, preferred by Maréchal, would require a fuller explanation of his constant philosophical purpose than should appear in these pages, given the proper limits of our topic; so we shall pursue it no further. We wish only to say that in our judgment the pursuit of this inquiry into Maréchal's philosophical intention would produce ample justification for his approach to St. Thomas' ways and would obviate the demand (if someone had wished to voice it) that he stick to the "letter" of the Thomistic ways, or even simply reproduce them.

In the course of examining Maréchal's interpretation of the Thomistic ways (within the limits we have just stated), we shall be able to define, in stages, the relation of the already-treated Maréchalian ways of proof, from intellectual finality and from the implications of the first principle, to the expressly Thomistic ways, and thereby to verify Maréchal's contention that the former are implicit in the latter. Deepening still further our examination of the relationships among the ways of proof, we shall attempt to substantiate and verify the most fundamental contention of Maréchal on this subject: namely, the contention that, in the last analysis, all the possible ways of proof of God's existence come down to one, common, always identical logical process; or, to say it in other

words, the contention that there is but one proof in many material embodiments or "ways".

Many Ways of One Proof

In a long book review which he published in 1931 Maréchal indicated, more clearly than anywhere else in his writings, some principal features of his position on the question of proofs of the existence of God.³ Early in this review Maréchal wrote:

Beaucoup de "voies" conduisent à Dieu; néanmoins, dans l'intention même des grands scolastiques, peut-être n'y a-t-il qu'une preuve de Dieu. La diversité des voies . . . marque la diversité des points d'appui que l'esprit se donne, dans le réel prochainement accessible, pour s'élever de là, par un procédé toujours foncièrement identique, jusqu'à l'absolu transcendant. (MM, I, 212)

The main points of this statement should be noted

³Maréchal's review is entitled, "Le Problème de Dieu" d'après M. Edouard Le Roy", Nouvelle Revue Théologique, LVIII (1931), 193-216 and 280-316. The review is reprinted in MM, I, 207-259.

The book Maréchal reviewed was Le Roy, É. Le Problème de Dieu (Paris: Éditions de l'Artisan du Livre, 1930). Although Maréchal did indeed review Le Roy's book in this writing, so that it is a "book review", the designation could be misleading. The review became an important personal essay of over fifty pages, the occasion for which was Le Roy's book, but the content of which transcended the immediate occasion. For this reason -- that it is an important essay in its own right, and moreover the lengthiest sustained statement which Maréchal made on our topic, longer than any in PD, on whose shorter statements it sheds a clarifying light -- we give so much attention to it in these pages.

immediately. There is a diversity of ways to enter upon a proof of the existence of God, because the mind can start from any number of points in the proximately accessible real and rise therefrom to the transcendent absolute. But the ways thus distinguished by different starting points ought perhaps to be interpreted as but material variations on one proof, not as so many separate proofs, because the logical process — that is, the course which the mind takes in rising, from the proximately accessible real, to the transcendent absolute — is always fundamentally the same. So Maréchal interprets the intention of "the great scholastics", whom he does not name here.⁴ And it is clear that Maréchal himself holds the opinion on this matter which he attributes to the great scholastics. That position we may state as follows: there is only one proof of the existence of God, ~~one essential~~ process of argument which makes manifest the necessity for God's actual existence to be affirmed; but there are different "ways" of this one proof, distinguishable by different material starting points.

In the same review, Maréchal went on to apply his

⁴It is clear that Maréchal means, at least, St. Thomas and his principal commentators: Cajetan, Francis de Sylvestris (Ferrariensis), John of St. Thomas. See references to these in V, 123, n. 1 and in other places as noted in the Index of Cahier V (pp. 610, 615, 619).

central thesis, that there is but one proof, expressly to St. Thomas' "five ways".⁵ Maréchal wrote:

Ces diverses voies semblent avant tout, à ses yeux, des entrées en matière communément accessibles, larges avenues qui tôt ou tard se rejoignent. Par exemple, il est permis, sans renier le thomisme, de ne voir, dans les arguments du mouvement, de la causalité, de la contingence et même des degrés de perfection, que des manières variées d'aborder un seul argument foncier. (MM, I, 213)

This statement shows that, in Maréchal's interpretation, the "five ways" of St. Thomas are not basically separate arguments, but different manners of entering upon a single argument. They are "wide avenues which sooner or later come together". The five ways start differently — they have different starting points in the "proximately accessible real"; but they eventually become the same basic argument.

Maréchal observed that modern readers often have great difficulty in distinguishing the rational argumentation (wherein the unity lies) from the "local color" (wherein the diversity lies) of scholastic demonstrations, with

⁵Besides these five ways, Maréchal indicates that St. Thomas, elsewhere (place not stated), "opened up some other ways, which are not all officially catalogued". (MM, I, 213) This brief statement, which Maréchal does not elaborate, is in fact quite important, because Maréchal's approaches to the proof of God's existence, as we have already seen in part, do not simply repeat the "catalogued" Thomistic ways, but develop some ways which Thomas opened up without fully exploiting.

the result that they fail to perceive the solidarity of the basic argument within the various ways.⁶ In order clearly to exhibit that basic argument, Maréchal proposed to examine carefully the rational argumentation of what is perhaps the most famous way, St. Thomas' prima via, the proof of God's existence from motion (S. Th., I, 2, 3, c). We shall comment on the main points in Maréchal's examination of this proof.

St. Thomas' Proof from Motion

The Metaphysical Analysis of Motion

In order to understand the argument from motion, it is first necessary to see that St. Thomas regarded motion not only or primarily at its empirical level (for example, as sensibly observable locomotion), but in its metaphysical essence as becoming.⁷ Becoming, metaphysically analyzed into its principles, is "the invasion of a potency by an act".⁸ That is to say that all becoming involves two principles, act and potency, the former moving, the latter being moved: necessarily two principles, because one and

⁶MM, I, 213.

⁷For the distinction between metaphysical and empirical see above, pp. 5-7.

⁸MM, I, 214.

the same principle cannot simultaneously, in the same respect, be both mover and moved.⁹ Becoming, or motion, is thus the synthesis of a moving and a moved, an actual and a potential principle. Maréchal points out the central importance, for St. Thomas' argument from motion, of this analysis of becoming in terms of the metaphysical principles of act and potency; and he elaborates on the role of those principles in St. Thomas' interpretation of finite beings in general.

Act and potency, in Thomistic theory, are complementary principles of all finite being. All finite being is, therefore, composed and mobile, in the metaphysical sense in which becoming is the essence of mobility. All finite being is not pure being but being mixed with becoming. We ourselves, and all the objects of our proper and direct knowledge, are things which fit this metaphysical description. That is to say, we and our proper objects are composed, mobile, involved in becoming — all of which translates a synthesis of act and potency.

If we wish to contemplate these principles of finite being in their pure state we find that both of them, in opposite ways, escape our direct apprehension — the one by excess, the other by defect. On one end of the

⁹Ibid.

scale of act and potency is simple and pure act, uncomposed and infinite: in a word, God. Since pure act is not the being of our proper and direct knowledge, it may be called supra-being. Or it may be called simply being, provided it is understood that the word being does not necessarily imply any limitation in the line of act, although the being which is properly and directly accessible to us does have such limitation; and in that case one proceeds to distinguish beings according to the analogy of original being and participated being, the former conceived as infinite act, moving but not moved, and the latter as a synthesis of act and potency, both moving and being moved, or, in other words, becoming. This analogy extends the scale, at its upper end, beyond the objects of which we have direct acquaintance or of which we can form a proper concept.

At the other end of the scale of act and potency is the pure potency of prime matter, which, as a principle radically incomplete in itself, is beneath the level of the plenary attribution of being and is unintelligible except indirectly, as one necessary principle of finite material (extended) beings. Thus both ends of the scale of act and potency escape our direct knowledge and are knowable by us only indirectly. Pure act is known indirectly as the maximum of intelligibility, exceeding the limits of our faculty of direct conceptual representation. Pure potency (prime matter) is known indirectly as the

minimum of intelligibility, the purely passive, "moved" principle whose necessity is concluded from the metaphysical analysis of the primary objects of our knowledge -- material, extended beings.

In between the two extremes represented by the metaphysical principles of pure act and pure potency are the objects which are properly proportioned to our intelligence. The rank of these objects on the metaphysical scale is that of things in which the actual and the potential principles are both present. These objects are actual without being pure act and potential without being pure potency. They are actualities, but imperfect actualities. They are beings, but in them being is tinged with becoming. Since becoming is the metaphysical essence of motion, they are also mobile beings. These beings are intrinsically intelligible according to the degree of their actuality.¹⁰ But since they are imperfectly actual they are imperfectly intelligible. In general, every object which is a synthesis of the metaphysical principles of act and potency, every being in which there is becoming, every mobile being, or in other words every finite being, has a certain intrinsic deficiency of intelligibility, corresponding to

¹⁰ For the connection between actuality, the degree of intelligibility (or affirmability) of objects, and the degree of intelligence of cognitive subjects, see V, 326-346.

the degree of potency in its metaphysical synthesis. This does not mean that the finite, mobile being is unintelligible as being, but that it is imperfectly intelligible in itself; the possibility of its perfect intelligibility depends upon a condition extrinsic to it.¹¹ This deficiency of intrinsic intelligibility in the mobile being plays an important role in the argument from motion, as we shall next see.

The Intelligibility of Motion as the Heart of the Argument

Maréchal interprets the argument from motion as an argument about the requirements of the ultimate metaphysical intelligibility of the motion which is observed, the motion about which St. Thomas wrote: "certum est, et sensu constat aliqua moveri in hoc mundo." (S. Th., I, 2, 3, c) By conducting the discussion in this fashion,

¹¹See MM, I, 214-215. Maréchal's thought on these pages can be summarized as follows:

There is a principle of potency in all finite beings. No finite being possesses, of itself and as finite being, the totality of the ontological conditions for its actual existence. While finite beings are actual — else they would not be beings at all — they are not intrinsically perfectly actual, because the ultimate ground of their actual existence is outside them. Hence although they are intelligible they are not intrinsically perfectly intelligible, because the ultimate ground of their intelligibility, their ultimate reason, lies outside them. Intelligibility always corresponds to actuality.

Maréchal stays deliberately away from an argument which would be solely about the phenomenal aspects of motion, that is, he refuses to stay at the level of an interpretation which would turn the argument from motion into one about the proximate reason for the motion observed in a billiard ball, or about the temporal priority of the chicken or the egg.¹² By insisting from the start on the metaphysical essence of motion as becoming, the invasion of a potential by an actual principle, and by interpreting the issue as nothing other than the ultimate intelligibility of any motion whatsoever, he defines St. Thomas' argument as one about the metaphysical implications of becoming. The question on which Maréchal focuses is: what is required if any becoming whatsoever (of which there is plenty) is to be fully intelligible?¹³ The

¹²Cf. this statement: "Il ne s'agit pas du tout du premier œuf ou de la première poule: nous explorons les implications nécessaires, les invariants de notre pensée." (MM, I, 215) — Let us elaborate. Maréchal explores the necessity of affirming a first mover, not as the first member in a contingent series of motions or in any number of such series, but at a deeper level and in a logical moment prior to all such series: the first mover as an invariant of our thought, as necessarily implicated and implicitly affirmed in all our thought of mobile beings; therefore as an affirmation logically prior to our thought of any such contingent beings (because it will necessarily be applied to our first and all subsequent thoughts of them).

¹³Maréchal does not ignore the possible objection (one which the pure skeptic might make): becoming need not be intelligible. To this radical objection, which would

answer which Maréchal, interpreting St. Thomas, gives to this question is the following: all becoming requires, in order to be completely intelligible, a reality which is beyond becoming. For nothing that is becoming has, because of the abiding element of potency in its metaphysical synthesis, its fully sufficient reason within itself. Everything that is in any way in potency calls for a complement of intelligibility outside itself. This complement of intelligibility must, by definition, come from something in act. According to this interpretation, the reason, in St. Thomas' argument, for the necessity of positing a first mover, itself unmoved, is the deficiency of complete intelligibility in the common metaphysical structure of all becoming. Maréchal writes as follows:

Le complément extrinsèque d'intelligibilité dont nous parlions, serait-il quelque chose qui n'est plus sujet à devenir? Alors nous sommes au but. Ne serait-ce pas plutôt un autre devenir? . . . Or, ce nouveau devenir, condition de possibilité du premier devenir, ne serait lui-même possible qu'en dépendance d'une condition extrinsèque; et il en serait ainsi pour quelque devenir que nous voulions mettre en série, puisque l'insuffisance

place in doubt the ultimate intelligibility of all becoming, Maréchal makes only the following response — than which, in our view, there can be and need be no other: "Mais la question [de la raison intelligible du devenir] se pose-t-elle? Doit-il vraiment exister . . . une raison intelligible du devenir? . . . Assurément, nous devons l'affirmer; car comment concevoir qu'il n'y en ait point, et que l'inintelligible pur soit possible, sans déclarer notre intelligence viciée à la racine?" (MM, I, 215) Words in brackets supplied by us for clarity.

d'intelligibilité propre, que nous invoquons, se fonde, non sur une particularité de chaque devenir, mais sur la structure métaphysique commune de tout devenir. (MM, I, 215-216)

This "common metaphysical structure of all becoming" is such that all becoming, all motion whatsoever, requires for its complete intelligibility, in Maréchal's words, "une condition réelle, actuelle de possibilité qui n'ait plus rien, elle-même, d'un devenir". (MM, I, 216) For this reason, Maréchal concludes, St. Thomas wrote: "necesse est devenire ad aliquod primum movens, quod a nullo movetur".¹⁴

The Conclusion of the Argument

At this point in his argument St. Thomas immediately identifies the prime mover as God, with a statement which, Maréchal observes, strikes many a modern reader as surprisingly abrupt: "This [first mover, unmoved by any other] everyone understands to be God."¹⁵ Maréchal, after noting that St. Thomas closes each of his five ways with a similar statement,¹⁶ defends St. Thomas against the possible

¹⁴S. Th., I, 2, 3, c. Cited by Maréchal in loc. cit.

¹⁵Ibid. Words in brackets supplied by us.

¹⁶The second through the fifth ways conclude as follows:
Second way: "it is necessary to admit a first efficient

allegation of an improper identification, made in a too hasty conclusion. Maréchal writes:

Il [St. Thomas] clôture par une affirmation semblable chacune des cinq "voies" de sa démonstration classique de Dieu. A tort? Non; car un "premier moteur immuable" (première voie), "cause première incausée" (deuxième voie), "nécessité première, sans mélange de contingence" (troisième voie), "maximum absolu de toute perfection" (quatrième voie), "source et sommet de toute intelligibilité" (cinquième voie), que serait-ce, dans la conscience commune de l'humanité, sinon Dieu déjà? (MM, I, 216-217)

It is interesting to see Maréchal's appeal, in the words just quoted, to "the common consciousness of humanity" in support of the correctness of St. Thomas' identification of the end point of each of his five ways with God. It may seem that Maréchal, in support of Thomas, has done no more than to restate the intent of the words, "everyone", "all men", and "we" in Thomas' own conclusions; for certainly what St. Thomas meant was that the common consciousness of humanity would attribute the perfections indicated by the five ways to God and to God alone.

cause, to which everyone gives the name of God."
 Third way: ". . . some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another . . . This all men speak of as God."
 Fourth way: ". . . something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every perfection; and this we call God."
 Fifth way: "some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God." (S. Th., I, 2, 3, c) Translation of Anton C. Pegis in Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas (New York: Random House, 1945), I, 22-23.

To some extent this is what Maréchal has done — merely restate St. Thomas, adding only some greater explicitness about the intent of Thomas' words. But Maréchal has also done more in support of Thomas. He has combined the five ways in his summary statement in such a manner that both the solidarity of the ways within a single argument and their necessary convergence upon a single object becomes more evident. This, too, is only, in Maréchal's view, a matter of making more explicit Thomas' own intention: ways which might seem, on a casual reading, to be separate and independent arguments are not really so, but are only material variations on one argument. The plurality of ways serves mainly the purpose of making the common argument accessible and comprehensible to the greatest possible number of human minds. A mind which might not understand the proof in one way would have several other chances to "come aboard" the train of the argument. In one variation or another, it is likely that most human beings would find it comprehensible. The advantage gained by explicitly combining the ways, as Maréchal has done in this summary statement, is the following: while it is possible that one or another human mind may fail to see the necessity of identifying God with the particular perfection indicated by any one of the five ways, considered separately, it is almost inconceivable

that anyone could fail to make the identification when it is made clear that the perfections indicated by all the ways must converge in a single object. To insist explicitly on the combination of the qualities of first unmoved mover, necessary being, maximum of directive intelligence, and so forth in one entity is considerably to augment the case for the necessary identification of this entity as God, in a conception of God which would be acceptable to something approaching a common consciousness of humanity.

This is what Maréchal has done in support of St. Thomas' theistic conclusion of his "ways". Maréchal considers Thomas' conclusion of each of the ways completely correct and necessary, but perhaps susceptible to an interpretation which would make more explicit the fundamental unity of the ways and the necessary commonness of their object. To interpret St. Thomas in this fashion would not be to impose something new upon his thought, but rather to draw express attention to an aspect of his thought which Thomas, in his brief statement of his five ways, left unstated, as a tacit presupposition. To provide this explicitation is of special didactic importance for the modern reader, who is often both unfamiliar with the presuppositions operative in scholastic arguments and (because of the intense and extensive criticism of proofs of God's existence in modern philosophy) especially

hesitant to accept a theistic conclusion whose necessity seems in any way questionable.¹⁷

To conclude his interpretation of the argument from motion, which has become, as we have seen, an interpretation of all the five ways together, Maréchal observes that St. Thomas did not end his proof of the true God with this brief statement of the five ways. Instead St. Thomas used the Questions of the Summa Theologica dealing with the nature of God¹⁸ to complete the proof and to augment the identification of the true God. In particular, Maréchal says, it was in these Questions that Thomas demonstrated the "strict transcendence" of the unmoved mover, first cause, and so forth, and thereby raised the conception of the divine absolute "above pantheistic immanence".¹⁹ So, in Maréchal's interpretation St. Thomas' five ways, taken just in themselves, were only a demonstration of the necessity of theism (the affirmation of a God) in general. In

¹⁷Our primary purpose in these pages is to present and interpret Maréchal's thought, not to judge it favorably or unfavorably on this or that point. We wish nevertheless to say that on the topic we have just discussed we regard Maréchal's interpretation of St. Thomas' thought (viz., the essential unity of the argument in the five ways) and his defense of the necessity of the theistic conclusion of those ways (viz., that the "first mover", etc. must be that which mankind in general would call "God") as simply correct.

¹⁸S. Th., I, Questions 3-26.

¹⁹MM, I, 217.

order to have a demonstration of a strictly transcendent God, a "proof of the true God", as Maréchal says, those ways needed to be developed somewhat further, which St. Thomas did in subsequent Questions of the Summa. The sense in which Maréchal understands this further development is not that of substantive additions to what was contained in the five ways, but rather that of pursuing and elaborating some conclusions which were tacitly or implicitly contained there. The idea is that the five ways, just in themselves, do not state all that they imply; but by dialectical development of their meaning through further questions their full implications can be seen.

Defense of the Proof against a Critical Challenge

Maréchal's explicitation of the argument from motion ends with this mention of Thomas' completion of the proof of God in later Questions of the Summa. However, in the next portion of the review we have been following, Maréchal defends the argument he has just interpreted against various critical challenges. To follow the detail of these challenges and of Maréchal's response to them would go beyond our present purpose. We shall restrict ourselves to making some comments on only one of the critical challenges (the first, in fact, which Maréchal takes up) and on Maréchal's answer to it, because

this answer helps to refine his interpretation of the argument of St. Thomas and to define his own approach to the proof of God.

The charge is that the proof from motion is nothing but a "jeu déductif d'entités conceptuelles". (MM, I, 217) Maréchal interprets this charge to mean that St. Thomas' proof is nothing but "conceptual analysis", a mere "proof by concepts", in the pejorative sense which those terms carry, especially since Kant's famous refutation of the "ontological argument", the "proof by concepts" par excellence.²⁰

In answer to this charge, Maréchal writes the following:

l'analyse conceptuelle, pratiquée dans l'École, n'est pas, et ne doit pas être, à proprement parler, un procédé d'invention, une saisie de tranches nouvelles du réel: en contenu brut, elle ne dépasse jamais la richesse de son point de départ; elle élucide, elle explicite un contenu déjà possédé; faisant cela conformément aux normes absolues de la pensée, elle "démontre" aussi, c'est-à-dire exerce un contrôle rationnel réfléchi; mais elle ne crée pas. Discursive et analytique, la démonstration de Dieu par le mouvement ne pouvait donc rien offrir dans sa conclusion, qui ne se trouvât confusément enveloppé dans son point de départ, la réalité conceptuellement définie du

²⁰ Kant's refutation of the "ontological argument" is in the Critique of Pure Reason, Transcendental Dialectic, Bk. II, Ch. III, Sec. 4. (A 592-602, B 620-630) In N. K. Smith's translation of the Critique (see Bibliography) this refutation is on pp. 500-507. Maréchal treats this topic in III, 254-256.

"motus". Conclure Dieu à partir du devenir, ce n'est point se hausser, par le moyen du devenir, à quelque connaissance directe de Dieu, c'est pénétrer mieux la structure intelligible du devenir même; ou si l'on veut, c'est ne connaître Dieu que dans la mesure où il est signifié par la relativité "transcendantale" essentielle au devenir métaphysique. Aussi, au point de vue réel de la possibilité ou de l'existence, tant vaut, pour nous, le point de départ, le devenir, tant vaut la conclusion, Dieu. (MM, I, 218)

The understanding of Maréchal's interpretation of the proof of God's existence depends upon elucidating the words just quoted. The main elements in this important statement are elaborated in the four points below.

(1) Maréchal admits that the proof of God's existence is indeed a matter of conceptual analysis; but at the same time he denies the pejorative connotations which sometimes attach to those terms (namely, the allegation that "conceptual analysis" cannot deal with matters of actual existence). It is evident that Maréchal means that the proof of God's existence is a conceptual analysis which does deal with actual existence. But for this to be the case the analysis (the reasoning, the argument) would have to start from a point wherein it is already engaged with actual existence. Having so started, there is no reason why a conceptual analysis should not continue to engage actual existence; in fact, the only reason why it might cease to do so would be that it got off the track and became inconsequential at some point. In Maréchal's view the only kind of conceptual analysis which cannot

effectively deal with matters of actual existence is one which starts in a condition of detachment from real existence, that is, with a concept which is a mere mental fabrication. Such was the starting point of some proofs of the existence of God, those of which the type is the "ontological argument", which started with some kind of alleged intuition of the divine essence and found, so to speak, necessary existence contained therein. Maréchal denies that man has such an intuitive starting point, either for the knowledge of finite essences or — all the more — for that of a transcendent essence. Therefore the concept from which the ontological argument starts is an arbitrary one, bearing no guarantee of connection with actual existence. But the starting point of St. Thomas' proof is of a different character, as we shall show in our next point.

(2) Maréchal defines in a very precise fashion the starting point for the proof of God's existence. Stated in one word, the starting point is becoming (le devenir). Stated more amply, it is "the conceptually defined reality of 'movement'" ("la réalité conceptuelle définie du 'motus'").²¹ This, unlike the starting

²¹See passage cited above, pp. 100-101.

point of the ontological argument, is a starting point clearly within actual existence. It is the reality of motion. But it is important to note carefully Maréchal's words, which do not stop at this point but go a step farther. "The reality of motion", as a starting point, could be taken to mean that the starting point is a purely phenomenal one, and that Maréchal is going to start and proceed as a pure empiricist. But the starting point Maréchal assigns to the proof of the existence of God is not the mere phenomenon of motion -- Maréchal does not start the proof of God as a pure empiricist -- but "the conceptually defined reality of 'movement'", or the reality of motion, grasped conceptually. A reality, grasped conceptually, has a higher logical status than a mere experienced phenomenon; indeed it is a nascent metaphysical object, on the way to full intelligibility as being. To start from such a reality, at such a stage of assimilation by the intelligence, makes possible, through the unfolding of its implications, a range and a level of conclusions which could never be achieved on the basis of a purely phenomenal starting point.²²

In fact, Maréchal regards the claim of, or the

²²Cf. above, pp. 6-7, and p. 39, n. 36.

insistence upon, a purely phenomenal starting point as somewhat self-defeating. Such a starting point is possible as an artifice of method -- indeed it is not only possible, but it has been and is practiced. It can even be advantageous for purposes of criticism of knowledge, where the primary objective is to put the certitude of our ordinary affirmations of reality to the test. But in the last analysis the positive value of adopting such a starting point is only provisional, for the starting point itself is radically unstable, and gives way, when it is subjected to the slightest intellectual reflection, to a more ample starting point, no longer merely phenomenal, but implicitly metaphysical. So, in the last analysis, a starting point such as "the conceptually defined reality of motion" is not only a natural, spontaneous one for our intelligence (and that it is, much more natural and spontaneous than the "pure phenomenon", which is a kind of fiction), but also an inevitable, logically necessary one.

(3) Maréchal asserts that the conclusion (the real existence of God) is already possessed in some fashion in the starting point of the conceptual analysis, before the "demonstration" is developed. The starting point has a richness of content and implication which the conceptual analysis penetrates, elucidates, raises to a state of explicitness. The "demonstration" of the existence of God

is not a surpassing of the "brute content" of the starting point but a greater rational control exercised over it, by a reflection which raises to clearer consciousness all that which is "tacit", so to speak, in it. It does not add a new content but brings to light deeper aspects of the starting point, a richness that is not adverted to before the moment of reflection. So important is this point that we wish to repeat here those of Maréchal's words which express it:

l'analyse conceptuelle . . . n'est pas . . . une saisie de tranches nouvelles du réel: en contenu brut, elle ne dépasse jamais la richesse de son point de départ; elle élucide, elle explicite un contenu déjà possédé . . . Discursive et analytique, la démonstration de Dieu par le mouvement ne pouvait donc rien offrir, dans sa conclusion, qui ne se trouvât confusément enveloppé dans son point de départ, la réalité conceptuellement définie du "motus".²³

Does this mean that the proof of the existence of God from motion is the proof of something "per se notum quoad nos", as the scholastics would say; that "God exists" is a purely analytic proposition, such that the predicate is immediately entailed by the subject; is it perhaps a mere tautology, as Kant judged the ontological argument to be?²⁴ Is St. Thomas' prima via, as interpreted by

²³Passage cited above, pp. 100-101.

²⁴Loc. cit. supra (p.100, n. 20).

Maréchal, really the ontological argument in disguise? One might be tempted to draw this conclusion on the grounds that Maréchal states that the conclusion of the argument is non-extensive or non-incremental of the starting point and the process is analytical.

These grounds are, however, insufficient for characterizing an argument as the ontological one. While it is true that the ontological argument has these two characteristics: namely, a non-incremental conclusion and an analytical procedure, these characteristics are not what primarily define that argument or distinguish it from others. What primarily defines and distinguishes the ontological argument is the (claimed) intuitive nature of the starting point, and not the analytical procedure or the logical relation of the conclusion to that starting point. Maréchal denies that human intelligence has any intuitive grasp of essences. In his view the starting point of human knowledge is in realities like motion, grasped through a collaboration of sensibility and conceptual intelligence. In the nature of this starting point is the great difference between the ontological argument and the argument from motion as Maréchal interprets it. The difference can be stated succinctly as follows:

In the case of the proof which Maréchal inter-

pretends and makes his own the conceptual analysis, which produces the conclusion, is not practiced on the concept of "God" (which, if it were the case, would make it the ontological argument), but on the concept of "motion". The conclusion "God exists" does not follow from an analytical unfolding of the implications of the subject, "God" (essence intuitively grasped), but from an analytical unfolding of the implications of motion (reality grasped by a human, sensitive-rational intelligence). For its premise, the ontological argument claims an intuited metaphysical content, of which Maréchal denies the possibility for human intelligence. The argument from motion has as premise a fact of concrete experience. Therefore, the analysis in the case of the argument Maréchal interprets starts in a point of real existence and will continue to deal with real existence as long as it is consequential with itself. The analysis in the case of the ontological argument starts with what is, in Maréchal's judgment, a pure mental construct, which is arbitrary. There is no guarantee of its relation to actual existence, nor can there be any guarantee that the analysis of it deals with real existence.

(4) Maréchal conceives of the demonstration of God as a deepening, through reflection, of the understanding of what is ultimately implied by any becoming.

There are two elements in this conception which need to be clarified: the reflective character of the demonstration and the deeper penetration of the intelligible structure of becoming.

Reflective Character of the Demonstration. The proof of God's existence is not a part of our direct, primary and spontaneous knowledge. It belongs to a different intellectual act, that of reflection, which occurs at a second moment of our intellectual life, after our possession of our direct cognitive objects. In this moment we reflect upon our direct, primary objects and upon our act of knowing them. By this act of reflection we deepen and elaborate our primary objects, we take possession of them more completely and "see" more of what is tacitly contained or implied in them than we do at the first moment of knowledge. The demonstration of God's existence belongs to this less primitive moment of intellectual life. It occurs in the process of deepening our conscious possession of our primary objects through reflection upon them.

The Intelligible Structure of Becoming and Contingency.

The demonstration of God's existence from motion consists, Maréchal says, in a discovery of what is signified by the essential intelligible characteristic of all becoming, that characteristic which Maréchal calls its "transcendental relativity". The pertinent passage from Maréchal

is the following:

Conclure Dieu à partir du devenir, ce n'est point se hausser, par le moyen du devenir, à quelque connaissance directe de Dieu, c'est pénétrer mieux la structure intelligible du devenir même; ou si l'on veut, c'est ne connaître Dieu que dans la mesure où il est signifié par la relativité "transcendantale" essentielle au devenir métaphysique. (MM, I, 218)

Now, what Maréchal in this passage calls "relativité 'transcendantale'" -- the essential metaphysical characteristic of all becoming -- is the same as that characteristic of finite beings which is more often called their "contingency". In a passage of Cahier V of PD, in the course of an analysis of becoming, Maréchal draws this connection and interprets the "contingency" in question as "an incompleteness of the internal conditions of possibility."²⁵ Because of this incompleteness, Maréchal continues, the contingent object does not present to the intelligence the sufficient conditions for its own affirmation, it is not in itself fully intelligible, and therefore in order properly to be known it must receive a complement of intelligibility from outside itself. Once the intelligence has placed the contingent object in relation to such a con-

²⁵We quote: "Tout 'devenir transcendantal' -- ou, pour employer la terminologie proprement scolastique, toute 'contingence' métaphysique -- implique, de soi, une indétermination foncière vis-à-vis de l'être, un in-achèvement des conditions internes de possibilité." (V, 337)

dition of intelligibility, it can affirm the contingent object.²⁶

In the point we have just treated it is apparent that Maréchal's interpretation of the proof from motion has come back to a form of the proof from contingency. At the heart of motion (becoming), considered metaphysically, is a radical contingency, the condition of something which is not fully intelligible in its own terms, just as it is given, but which implies, because of the absolute requirement that the given be ultimately intelligible, a source of intelligibility beyond itself, and ultimately beyond all becoming. It is then the radical contingency of the mobile being, the sign of which to our intelligence is its incomplete intelligibility in its own terms, which signifies what contingency always signifies, a non-contingent being which can provide the needed complement of intelligibility. We remind the reader of a remark we made earlier, that in Maréchal's understanding

²⁶See V, 337-338. To summarize the gist of what Maréchal says there:

All becoming "postulates", by its internal deficiency of intelligibility, an "ultimate synthesis", relating it to an absolute condition of being; therefore, becoming, when analyzed deeply, provides a springboard for a proof of God's existence.

Maréchal develops the same idea still further in V, 450, n. 1, and in his discussion of the proof from efficient causality in V, 584-586.

of the relation among the ways of proof of God's existence, the argument from contingency is not simply one argument standing alongside other arguments of the same type (a posteriori, "from effects"), but rather it is the expression of the logical essence of all the ways of a proof from effects.²⁷ In every one of these ways the fulcrum of the proof is in the last analysis the contingency (in the sense explained above) of the aspect of ordinary experience which is selected as the starting point. The proof from contingency, as we suggested then, is a common proof, in the sense that it is implicitly contained in all the ways and it expresses their essential structure. It is the one proof, capable of being presented in many ways, to which Maréchal referred in the statement which we quoted near the beginning of this chapter.²⁸


To summarize the main points which we have developed from the important statement of Maréchal with which we began this section,²⁹ we may say that, according to Maréchal, the proof of the existence of God from motion:

- (1) is analytical, a process of conceptual analysis, but not tautological;

²⁷ See above, pp. 41-42.

²⁸ Passage cited above, p. 84.

²⁹ Above, pp. 100-101.



- (2) starts from the reality of motion, not as a non-conceptualized phenomenon but as a conceptually grasped reality whose essence is becoming;
- (3) contains its conclusion, the existence of God, in a tacit, undeveloped fashion in its starting point, but is not a form of the "ontological argument" because its starting point is utterly different;
- (4) consists in a deepening, through reflection, of the understanding of what all becoming implies; consists, in other words, in a drawing out of the implications of becoming.

A Clarification: The Proof from Motion
and the Proof from the First Principle

Let us avert a false difficulty which might arise from a failure to follow the detail of Maréchal's interpretation of the ways of proof of God's existence such as we have thus far presented it. We noted earlier that Maréchal regarded the speculative first principle (quod est, est) both as the type of analytic judgments and as a dynamic, expansive, synthetic proposition with rich metaphysical import.³⁰

We have just now noted that Maréchal considered

³⁰See above, pp. 70-72.

the proof of the existence of God as an analytical demonstration, not expanding the content of its starting point but merely discovering and stating a presupposition already implicitly contained in the starting point. In other words, the demonstration of God's existence is not itself a synthetic, expansive process as is the affirmation of the speculative first principle, but is instead a purely analytical process, a process of deducing an implication already present in the starting point.

But, from Maréchal's derivation of a proof of the existence of God from the synthetic, expansive first principle, should one not conclude that the proof of God's existence is itself a synthetic process? Does Maréchal contradict himself? The following remarks should serve to show the self-consistency and the interconnectedness of Maréchal's thought on this matter:

(1) Maréchal considers the demonstration of God's existence, in all its various ways, to be analytical. But let us be clear about what an "analytical" demonstration involves. It must be kept in mind that "analytical", "analysis" are not, in Maréchal's usage, synonymous to "tautological", "tautology". We think Maréchal plainly right in this. Much conceptual analysis is a process of discovery although not of invention (in the sense of creation of something new). While it does not conquer

new realms of the real, it discovers what was latent in our first intellectual encounter with the given real. Thus it "adds" something to our knowledge: not new content, but greater consciousness of some subtler aspects of the "old" content.

(2) For Maréchal, moreover, conceptual analysis is not the whole of our knowledge. Prior to it, in the provenance of our knowledge, there is a synthetic, expansive, conquering moment.³¹ This is the moment of the first intellectual apprehension of the object as an object (that is, as "real"). It is the moment of "objectivation" by an affirmative judgment. It is also the moment when sense apprehension is raised, by the active intervention of the intellect, to intellectual knowledge proper. Again, it is the moment when the intellect -- spontaneously and even preconsciously -- applies, as it must, the first principle, the law of its own operation, to the content of consciousness. All these ways of identifying this original moment are equivalent.

(3) It follows that behind and before all analysis (therefore, prior to and necessary to all proof of God's existence) is a moment of intellectual synthesis. This is true whether the analysis in question be that of motion,

³¹Cf. MM, I, 218.

causality, or whatever. That such is the case is apparent if one considers closely the precision of Maréchal's definition of the starting point for the demonstration of God's existence from motion: the conceptually defined reality of "motus". A reality conceptually defined implies an intellectual synthesis already enacted upon some content of consciousness. So, the moment of the intellectual synthesis comes before the moment of conceptual analysis in which the demonstration of God's existence consists.

(4) Now, what is this prior moment of intellectual synthesis? What is, essentially, the intellectual act which occurs in it? According to Maréchal it is, always, in its profound base, the same act. And that act is the subsumption of the content of consciousness (whatever it may be and in whatever sensible form it may first come upon the field of consciousness) under the absolute requirements of the first principle. The first intellectual act in every case is to apply the first principle to what is "in" the mind, to affirm objectively what is given, by synthesizing it, beyond its mere phenomenal givenness, with the rational necessities which the first principle expresses.

The affirmation of the first principle is, itself, the synthetic intellectual act par excellence. In most of our intellectual acts -- acts of objective knowledge --

we perform this synthesis preconsciously, "vitally", without adverting to it. When, rarely, we state or apply the first principle with full consciousness of its import -- as we might do in the course of such a direct reflection upon it as we are now engaged in -- we then perform the fundamental synthesis consciously. But the synthetic moment in our thought, the tacit or express application of the first principle to our content of consciousness, is not itself the moment of the demonstration of God's existence. What "happens" in that first moment is only the affirmation of the first principle. That affirmation -- the primitive act of intellectual synthesis -- is that which makes the (subsequent) proof of the existence of God possible. But it itself is not yet that proof. The proof is derived from it by an analytical demonstration -- that is, the conclusion is deduced by a process of reflection on the implication of the original synthetic moment. Thus all proof of God's existence is analytic, whether the content analyzed be the synthetic first principle, or the conceptually defined reality of motion, or whatever.

(5) Thus, behind motion or anything else, as the proximate starting point for the analytical demonstration of the existence of God, is a common, ultimate, radical starting point, the mind's affirmation of the first principle. And it follows that the proof from motion or from

any other feature of the proximately accessible real is not really a different proof from the one which Maréchal developed directly from analysis of the first principle. The proof from motion or from other effects merely takes for its (proximate) starting point a less ultimate position in the intelligible real. For the reality which it starts from (motion or whatever) is the product of a further act of intellectual synthesis, logically posterior to and less fundamental than the affirmation of the first principle, which precedes all other syntheses. The proof from the first principle is therefore implicitly operative in all the disparate ways of proof from effects,³² and it is in the last analysis the justification of the rational necessity possessed by all of them.

(6) The task still remaining to us is to articulate the relation between the proof from the first principle and the proof from contingency, which we have called a "common" proof because it expresses the logical essence of all the ways without exception. The relation is as follows:

Just as the proof from particular effects, such as motion, implicitly involves and utilizes the proof from the analysis of the first principle, so the proof from the

³²Only kind of proof considered possible by Maréchal, who on this is in accord with St. Thomas.

first principle, such as we have presented it following Maréchal, implicitly involves and utilizes the proof which we have called the proof from contingency. Let us recall that what we mean by "contingency", following Maréchal, is basically that ontological condition whose sign is the unintelligibility or imperfect intelligibility of something on its own terms alone. Contingency is not, therefore, just another proximate feature of the empirical real, like sensible motion,³³ but it is the most fundamental metaphysical quality of the finite real. Thus, the motion of that which is moved is a sign of contingency; the effectedness of that which is caused is a sign of contingency. The contingency which is signified in each case discloses itself to the intellect in the form of an imperfect intelligibility which the intellect experiences in the finite object, or more precisely in the necessity in which the intellect finds itself to move beyond the given reality in order to have sufficient reason for it.

The proof from motion or from causality or from other finite realities ("effects") thus comes down to a proof from various species of contingency. Again, let us repeat, the proof from contingency is nothing other than

³³This latter would be, of course, a sign of contingency.

the proof from insufficient intrinsic intelligibility. Its procedure always involves applying to the finite given the absolute, fundamental requirement that the real be fully intelligible. It consists of discovering and positing (affirming as necessarily existent) the sufficient conditions of intelligibility of the given real. When this is kept clearly in mind, it is obvious that the proof from the first principle, which as we have said is logically more fundamental than, and foundational to, the proof from specific effects, is itself at base another rendition of the proof from contingency. For what is the precise characteristic of the first principle, the analysis of which leads to the proof of the existence of God? It is nothing other than its intrinsic insufficiency to justify the absolute necessity which it expresses. In other words, the specific characteristic of the first principle which ultimately demands the affirmation of the actual existence of the unity of real and ideal (God) is the principle's insufficient intelligibility on its own terms. The proof from the first principle consists of a deduction of the ultimate condition of intelligibility of that principle.

We can now make the connection. The first principle is the expression of the "life" of human thought. It expresses the highest necessity which can be found in human thought, that without which thought would be liter-

ally impossible. But even it does not fully justify its own necessity. Its lack of the ability to give sufficient reason for itself in its own terms is a sign of the contingency which is the radical limiting condition of all human thought as well as of every other finite existing thing. The proof of the existence of God from this principle is thus the process of discovering through analytical reflection the condition which would make fully intelligible the absolute necessity which — in spite of the contingency of our thought — the law of that thought (the first principle) expresses. The proof thus provides the justification for that necessity which the principle expresses, without being able in itself to justify.

CHAPTER IV

MARÉCHAL ON THE THOMISTIC WAYS, PART TWO

The Thomistic Proof from Efficient Causality

The second of the expressly Thomistic ways of proving the existence of God, namely the proof from efficient causality, also receives some direct attention from Maréchal. Since the essentials of Maréchal's interpretation of this way are already clear from his interpretation of the argument from motion -- so much so that all the general conclusions we have drawn (following Maréchal) about the latter argument can be applied unchanged to the proof from causality -- we shall not treat this way of proof at great length, but shall restrict ourselves to the following two topics: (1) a general comparison, in which we shall show the application of the main points of Maréchal's interpretation of the prima via to the secunda via; and (2) some comments on a passage in Cahier V¹ in which Maréchal deals specifically with the fine points of the proof from causality, adding a somewhat greater precision to the interpretation of that way of proof than one could

¹v, 582-587.

get from simply transferring to it the interpretation of the proof from motion.²

General Comparison of the Ways of Proof from
Motion and from Efficient Causality

We shall develop this comparison in five points.

(1) Maréchal sees no essential logical difference between these two ways of proof, only a difference in the points in proximately accessible reality where they begin.³ Even in their starting points, however, the second way (the proof from efficient causality) is not separable from the first (the proof from motion), but is logically an aspect of it — the concept of motion being the more universal and comprehensive of aspects of the finite real, the concept of efficient causality being the more specific and limited.⁴

²This order of topics necessitates some overlapping, which we shall hold to the unavoidable minimum. We think the benefit of a clear order of presentation will outweigh the inconvenience of this overlap.

³See above, p. 86 (quotation and comment).

⁴Thus, e. g., under the general concept of motion (dynamic relations of a "moving" and a "moved") are included not only the relation between an efficient cause and its effect, but also that between a final cause and that which it motivates ("moves"). Both efficient and final causes are "movers". This point will become clearer when motion and causality are related to the metaphysical notions of act and potency in point (3) of our comparison.

(2) Just as the proof from motion depended upon the consideration of the metaphysical essence of motion (the conceptually grasped reality of becoming), not just the sensible appearance of motion, so the proof from efficient causality depends upon a properly metaphysical conception of causality, that is, the conceptually grasped reality of a principle dynamically precontaining its effect. An exclusively phenomenal conception of causality, for example, one in which "causality" were nothing but a name given to an experimentally stable concomitance between a preceding x and a subsequent y , would not suffice to base the proof.⁵

(3) Just as motion (becoming) was analyzed into the terms of a potential and an actual principle in dynamic relation, so causality (dynamic precontainment) and effectedness (dynamic precontainedness) are analyzed in terms of potency and act. Actuality corresponds to and is the ontological basis of causal power. Potentiality corresponds to the ontological quality of being acted upon, being subject to a causal power, or simply being caused. Finite beings include both actuality and unactualized potentiality. They are a synthesis of potency and act.

⁵Maréchal would say, however, that the exclusively phenomenal conception of causality could be deepened by a reflection upon the conditions of its intelligibility, and this reflection would ultimately disclose the necessity of the metaphysical conception of causality, which is a sufficient basis for the proof.

As such, they are "caused causes": they possess causal power to the extent of their actuality, they are passively subject to causal power to the extent of their potentiality. In all cases the correlation between actuality and the power of causality is rigorous. Therefore to say that an entity is primus actus is also to say that that entity is by right both prima causa, causa incausata and primus movens, movens quod a nullo movetur.⁶ And since the supreme actuality (primus actus) is necessarily infinite in actuality, it is also necessarily infinite in causal and motive power, because actuality is the ontological ground and source of this power.

(4) Just as, in the argument from motion, it was the presence of unactualized potency in the "moved" (rendering the moved incompletely intelligible on its own intrinsic terms) which provided the springboard for the proof of an "unmoved mover" (God), so in the argument from causality it is the presence of unactualized potency in the "effect" which makes the effect imperfectly intelligible on its own intrinsic terms and thus provides the springboard for the proof of an "uncaused cause" (God). About this Maréchal writes the following:

⁶The correlation between actuality and the power of causality does not imply that the primus actus, perfect actuality must necessarily create, but only that it has the unlimited power to do so. See Chapter I, n. 34.

Pour démontrer une cause transcendante, à partir d'un effet fini, il faut que notre esprit éprouve, dans cet effet même, une limitation objective: et non pas une limitation quelconque, mais une limitation d'acte ou d'esse. Alors seulement il lui apparaît que l'objet fini n'est intelligible que par l'appel d'un complément infini d'intelligibilité. (V, 585)

These words of Maréchal lead naturally to the fifth point of our comparison.

(5) Just as the argument from motion leads to its transcendent conclusion by focusing precisely on the question of the ultimate intelligibility of any motion whatsoever, instead of dealing only with the proximate reason for this or that empirical motion, so the argument from causality has its full metaphysical potential when the question raised is precisely that of the ultimate intelligibility of any effect, instead of just the proximate reasons of this or that effect. In both cases the proof comes from pursuing the necessary presuppositions for the intelligibility of that aspect of the proximately accessible real (motion; the production of effects) from which the reasoning started.

In both cases the structure of the argument is as follows: the mind apprehends an aspect of the proximately accessible real (a finite object); reflective consciousness experiences in that object an imperfect intrinsic intelligibility, sign of a limitation in the degree of actuality (or, conversely, of the presence of

unrealized potentiality) in the object; following its absolute demand for complete intelligibility, the mind pursues the ultimate condition of intelligibility of this limited object; by so doing it enters upon the analogy of being and finally encounters the actual infinite, the reality infinitely in act (God), as the ultimate condition for the object's intelligibility. In Maréchal's words (continuing the passage last cited):

Le principe transcendant de causalité exprime cette révélation, complémentaire et simultanée, de la contingence objective et de l'absolu qui la fonde, du degré d'être et de la Perfection éminente qui le mesure.

Pour que cette révélation, en nous, soit possible, deux conditions opposées doivent entrer en jeu: une condition empirique, l'immanence en nous d'un objet fini, — et une condition transcendantale, l'exigence latente, "naturelle", d'un absolu intelligible, d'un "infini". La rencontre de ces deux éléments fait éclater, sous le regard de la conscience réfléchie, l'inconsistance intelligible de l'objet fini, c'est-à-dire sa contingence selon l'être. (V, 585-586)⁷

Commentary on a Passage of Cahier V

Maréchal's most elaborate comments on the way of proof from efficient causality come in the course of a

⁷Note, in this passage, the synonymity of "contingence" and "inconsistance intelligible". As in the proof from motion, the rational process leading to the transcendent conclusion starts from the recognition of the "contingency" (in the sense defined) of that fact in the experienced real with which the observer began.

"Remark on the Fourth Antinomy"⁸ which appears in the General Conclusions of Cahier V. In order to deal properly with the "Remark" let us first look briefly at Maréchal's manner of dealing with the fourth antinomy.

Kant's fourth (and last) antinomy is the antinomy of the absolutely necessary being. The thesis of the antinomy says that there exists an absolutely necessary being. Maréchal renders it as follows:

Il existe dans le monde, soit comme sa partie, soit comme sa cause, un être absolument nécessaire.⁹

The antithesis says there is not an absolutely necessary being. As Maréchal renders it:

Nulle part n'existe un être absolument nécessaire, ni dans le monde, ni hors du monde comme la cause extérieure de celui-ci.¹⁰

⁸V, 582-587. This "Remark" appears in a section entitled "Solution scolastique des antinomies kantienne" (V, 570-588). In these pages Maréchal tried to show that Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics had already resolved, in principle, the "antinomies" later made famous by Kant. Maréchal defines "antinomies" as follows: "ces oppositions en apparence inconciliables, entre des points de vue qui pouvaient, d'autre part, sembler également légitimes." (V, 571) In Kant's formulation of the antinomies — formulation which Maréchal accepts for the subject of his "scholastic solution" — the two contrary and apparently irreconcilable viewpoints are called, respectively, the thesis and the antithesis of the antinomy.

⁹V, 581. Maréchal adopts the wording of the French edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, ed. Rosenkranz. We present the exact words of Maréchal for the thesis and antithesis of the antinomy, rather than the German of Kant himself, for the reason that we are commenting on Maréchal's treatment of the antinomy, not on Kant.

¹⁰Ibid.

The antinomy which is evidenced by the apparent contradiction between the thesis and the antithesis consists in the fact that our thought has need of the conception of such a being (hence the thesis), but at the same time we cannot properly conceive of it (hence the antithesis).

First, as to the thesis. Maréchal remarks that it is founded upon our rational need for completion, for totalization of the conditions of existence.¹¹ It is strictly unthinkable to us that any existent thing should lack the totality of the conditions for its existence, in other words be in the last analysis ontologically indeterminate. Because of this absolute necessity of our thought we must posit the absolutely necessary being, as the perfectly determinate actual infinity, which supplies the totality of the conditions for all other existents, thereby cancelling the hypothetical possibility (which can never be admitted as a real possibility) of the ultimate irrationality of any existent thing.

Thus far Maréchal agrees with Kant about the rational necessity of the thesis. Both consider it as a proposition which must necessarily be affirmed as true when one is thinking of real existents, en soi realities,

¹¹Ibid.

that is to say when one is dealing with objects on the level of noumenal realities, not only on the level of phenomenal appearances. For dealing with objects on this latter level alone -- that is, exclusively in so far as they are appearances in empirical experience -- the same necessity would not apply. Confined to that level of our apprehension, objects would be thoroughly relative to the sensibility which apprehended them; in fact they would more properly be sense objects than intellectual objects. Therefore they would not yet, at that level, be subject to the absolute necessity of complete intelligibility which applies to objects at the properly metaphysical (noumenal) level. So, it is possible that something apprehended at the purely phenomenal level may, at that level, be indeterminate; and therefore within the terms of that level one cannot demonstrate a need for an absolutely necessary being. We shall return to this limitation shortly, when we deal with Maréchal's viewpoint on the antithesis of the antinomy. But Maréchal clearly affirms, with Kant, that, considering objects at the noumenal level, there can be no reality which is indeterminate, or the full conditions of whose existence are not themselves "given", in an absolute sense even if not in empirical experience. In short, the thesis states an absolute rational necessity of the noumenal realm.

The disagreement between Maréchal and Kant arises over the objective value (as contrasted to a merely subjective value) of this noumenal rational necessity, or, in other words, over what, if any, positive knowledge of the noumenal order of reality can be obtained on the basis of this necessity.

Kant, although he considered the thesis necessarily true in application to the noumenal realm, thought that our inability directly and properly to conceive of that realm entailed that its entities were at best problematical (that is, neither negatable as "unreal", nor affirmable as intelligibly "real") to us. Therefore in Kant's view the necessary truth of the thesis for the noumenal realm did not avail us much. It added no positive content to our knowledge, because an absolutely necessary being could never be represented for our conceptual understanding, no matter how imperiously our mind, from its subjective need, required it; and in Kant's view to be representable for our conceptual understanding, which, for Kant, meant to be within the conditions of actual or possible empirical experience, was a requirement for an object to be judged as "real". So, writes Maréchal, Kant declared the absolutely necessary being to be

. . . un objet purement "idéel", sorte de personnification de cette exigence même [our mind's subjective need for "totalization"],

supposée satisfaite; savoir l'idée "régulatrice" ou "heuristique" d'Être nécessaire; c'est-à-dire un "noumène négatif", un non-phénomène, désignant, tout au plus, une réalité problématique dans la sphère inconnaissable des purs intelligibles. (V, 581)

Maréchal disagrees with Kant's "agnosticism" about the noumenal realm in general and about the absolutely necessary being in particular. In Maréchal's view the absolutely necessary being is not just the hypostatization of a subjective need of our reason, but an objective implication of all judgment. It is not just a non-phenomenon of an objectively problematic nature but a positive noumenon, an objective "thing-in-itself".¹² Maréchal's whole position on the possibility of realist metaphysics, which he defines as "an objective knowledge of noumena",¹³ is operative in this disagreement with Kant. The most crucial point of that position, in this connection, is Maréchal's thesis that the integral objective signification of our concepts exceeds their restricted representative content, because of the constitutive role which the objectively infinite finality of our intellect plays in the formation of all our concepts.¹⁴ Because of the intrinsic role of that finality in our knowledge, it happens that an idea

¹²Cf. V, 582.

¹³III, 306, n. 1. Cf. MM, I, 117.

¹⁴See, e. g., V, 259; 573-574; 583.

(for example, that of the "absolutely necessary being"), which is required by our reason but which exceeds our power of conceptual representation, can be, not merely a product of our mind's subjective need, devoid of objective value, but an indicator of an objective reality transcendent to our concepts. Of Maréchal's thesis of the transcendent signification, surpassing the element of representation in our concepts, we have already written;¹⁵ so we shall forego further treatment of it here.

As to the antithesis of the antinomy, we have already anticipated the essence of Maréchal's treatment of it. The antithesis is based, of course, on the actual limitation of our mind's capacity of direct representation. It must be remembered that in Maréchal's view that capacity, which is indeed limited to the conditions of the phenomenal (a category comprising actual and possible objects of empirical experience), is but one constituting factor in our objective knowledge. Were it the only factor (a hypothesis which would tend to reduce intellection to the level of a refined sense apprehension), the antithesis would have to be considered as stating the whole truth about human knowledge. But it is not, in Maréchal's view, the only

¹⁵See Chapter I, pp. 20-22 and 30-31.

factor. According to him, the other constituting factor in our objective knowledge is our intellectual finality.¹⁶ This finality confers upon all our concepts a "dynamic" objective signification which surpasses the limits within which the element of representation is confined. Of course, this interpretation of knowledge distinguishes Maréchal from Kant. On this matter the position of the latter was that the limits of the representable (that is, the phenomenal, the actually or potentially experienceable on the empirical level) were the limits of the objectively knowable.¹⁷

So, Maréchal's position on the antithesis is one of partial agreement and partial disagreement with Kant. While he disagrees with Kant about the limits of objective knowledge, he agrees with him that the antithesis is necessarily true as long as one conceives objects of knowledge only at the phenomenal level of apprehension. For the phenomenon as such is radically lacking in necessity. Of every object, regarded precisely and only as phenomenon, it is the case that it were possible for it to be or not to be, or to be or not to be such as it is (or rather, appears). In the realm of phenomenal objects there is no

¹⁶Discussed above, Chapter II, pp. 60-61.

¹⁷See, e. g., V, 235, n. 1.

place for an absolutely necessary being.¹⁸ Nor does Maréchal stop with this general observation about the truth of the antithesis for the level of phenomenal knowledge. Refining the point he has made, he adds that it would also be futile to look for an absolutely necessary being outside the phenomenal realm, as the cause of phenomena, if its absolute necessity were presumed to consist in its necessity precisely for the phenomena, as their cause. Such a necessity (namely, necessity for the phenomena, as their cause: necessity in virtue of a relation to phenomena) would not be absolute, but relative. If there be an absolutely necessary being, its absolute necessity must derive from itself, from intrinsic sources, and not from its relations ad extra. It may, of course, have such relations, for example, it may be, in fact, the first cause of phenomena; but its absolute necessity cannot derive from or depend upon that relation -- else it would not be absolute.¹⁹

So, a being possessing absolute necessity cannot be found in the realm of phenomenal objects as phenomenal (an observation verging on the obvious); nor -- which is less obvious before reflection upon it -- can an absolutely necessary being be inferred from a causal relation with

¹⁸V, 582.

¹⁹Ibid.

phenomenal objects considered (precisively) as phenomena. What Maréchal is hereby saying, of course, is that the inference to the transcendent being is possible only when, by reflection on the object, one has deepened the apprehension of it in a way which discloses the necessary inclusion in it of metaphysical properties (necessary relations of the appearances to being), not only the properties of phenomena. In other words, the transcendent inference depends upon the apprehension of the implicitly metaphysical in the phenomenal object. There can never be an inference directly from the purely and solely phenomenal to the transcendent, by the route of causality or any other route.

This from Maréchal amounts to an indirect criticism of overly "empiricistic" interpretations of the traditional Thomistic "ways".²⁰ These overly empiricistic interpretations consist in considering the proper starting points of the ways as pure phenomena -- objective appearances in the external world -- from which are immediately inferred transcendent conclusions. Maréchal views this as an overly

²⁰See above, Chapter I, n. 19. Maréchal criticizes, without naming, some Scholastic philosophers who have been "defenders of a semi-empiricist metaphysics", in Part I of his three-part article, "Au seuil de la métaphysique: abstraction ou intuition?", Revue néo-scholastique de Philosophie, XXXI (1929), 27-52; 121-147; 309-342. This article is reprinted in MM, I, 102-180. The criticism to which we refer is found in MM, I, 107 and 110 ff.

external usage of such principles as causality,²¹ a usage which fails to justify itself against modern critique, or indeed which simply ignores modern critique even when the demands of the latter are reasonable and legitimate. This usage of the Thomistic ways excuses itself from the harder task (precisely that which Maréchal undertakes): that of demonstrating that the phenomenal starting point is itself, intrinsically, by right and necessarily, not only phenomenal but implicitly metaphysical.²² Maréchal contends that St. Thomas and the other great scholastics clearly perceived this implicit inclusion of the metaphysical in the empirical and presupposed it in their arguments proving God's existence from causality, from motion, from possible beings, and so forth.²³ What these great scholastics did not do

²¹See V, 584. Cf. MM, I, 115.

²²For Maréchal the "metaphysical" is never considered as a theoretical superstructure which we build over the sensible (empirical, phenomenal). Rather the "metaphysical" (the relation of the sensible appearance to being) is always tacitly "in" the empirical, and in our knowledge of the latter we always implicitly affirm the former. Cf. the following statement: "La science humaine n'aurait pas à échafauder, sur la base plus ou moins organisée de représentations sensibles, une interprétation ontologique de celles-ci; mais notre connaissance objective débiterait par une expérience mêlée de métaphysique: toute perception sensible amenée au foyer de la conscience, serait déjà une aperception intellectuelle 'sub ratione entis', une aperception ontologique." (Art. cit., MM, I, 123)

²³Cf. V, 584-585.

was to "thematize" explicitly this true presupposition. Maréchal thinks it needs to be thematized in answer to modern critique -- hence the necessity for a work such as PD.

Maréchal's position on the fourth antinomy can be summarized as follows:

The thesis states an absolute truth, which is a law of metaphysical intelligibility. The metaphysical reality to which the thesis refers is not something unknowable, although it is not properly representable. It can be objectively affirmed and to some extent characterized on the basis of its effects.

The antithesis states a relative truth, a law of phenomenal experience. While one stays at the phenomenal level, it applies and is valid. But the phenomenal level is not self-sustaining. It is inherently relative to the integral real, of which it is an aspect artificially abstracted. To regard this law of phenomenal experience as a sufficient statement of the law of intelligible reality would be a very basic mistake.

Maréchal's general treatment of the fourth antinomy leads to his "Remark on the Fourth Antinomy", which sheds some light on all his approaches to the proof of God's existence, but especially on the way of proof from efficient causality. The "Remark" begins as follows:

Notre solution [namely, Maréchal's "scholastic solution" to the fourth antinomy], en écartant la difficulté dialectique de cette antinomie . . . n'éclaire pas encore le fond du problème soulevé. La métaphysique thomiste de la connaissance offre mieux que cette échappatoire sommaire. Elle répond, en effet, aux deux questions suivantes, qui s'imposent à qui veut, en résolvant l'antinomie cosmologique de l'existence, jeter les bases positives d'une théodicée; et c'est bien la prétention des Scolastiques, qui, presque unanimement, démontrent *a posteriori*, par la nécessité d'une cause première des réalités finies, l'existence du Dieu transcendant.

Voici les deux questions:

(1) Comment le transcendant peut-il être connaissable par des concepts qui ne "représentent" directement que des objets sensibles, phénoménaux?

(2) Comment l'exigence causale permet-elle de conclure à l'existence d'un Être transcendant? (V, 582-583)

Note how the two questions to which this passage leads apply, respectively, to all the ways, in general, of proving the existence of God (first question), and to the proof from efficient causality, in particular (second question). Let us briefly analyze both questions. The essence of the problem raised by each question could be stated as follows:

(1) How can any x be knowable by something which does not directly represent it? (This is the general problem of the possibility, for us, of objective knowledge of the transcendent.)

(2) How can one conclude to a strictly transcendent entity via a relation which one observes only in the empirical order? Moreover, what degree of perfection

can one validly attribute to a cause on the basis of finite effects? -- How, in particular, can one infer a first cause which is infinite? (This is the special problem of the possibility of knowledge of an infinite, transcendent being on the basis of finite effects.)

In answer to the first of these two questions Maréchal focuses on the peculiar characteristic of our concepts, namely that they objectively signify more than they directly represent. This position depends completely upon the "dynamic and finalistic notion of the concept" for which Maréchal has argued throughout PD. According to that notion, there is in all our concepts an explicit content, the content of representation, which is confined within the limits determined by the dependency of our intelligence upon sense information; but our concepts contain also an implicit signification, which comes to them from the objectively infinite finality which sustains all our intellectual activity at its base. The implicit signification conferred by the role of this finality prevents our objective knowledge from being confined within the limits of its formal, representative aspect, and opens it onto an object of infinite amplitude, such as the finality demands. According to this account of our knowledge, all our conceptual activity is a part of our pursuit of in-

finite being by means of finite beings. Carried on this teleological movement which partly forms and wholly sustains them, all our concepts implicitly affirm more than they expressly contain. Summing up his answer to this question, Maréchal writes:

nous avons répondu que l'affirmation de l'Être absolu, contenue implicitement dans toute connaissance objective, empruntait la forme même du dynamisme naturel, de l'appétit foncier, qui oriente notre activité intellectuelle, par delà toute limite concevable, vers l'assimilation d'une fin objective illimitée. Et nous avons expliqué en détail les caractères de cette immanence dynamique de l'Être divin à notre entendement. (V, 583)

Before he answers the second question (that of the possibility of a transcendent inference from the causal relation) Maréchal sharpens the focus of the question itself, noting that it has been similarly sharpened by some of the most acute critics of the causal proof in the history of philosophy. Maréchal mentions Ockham and the unknown author of the treatise Theoremata, among the medievals, and Kant, among the moderns, as examples of such critics.²⁴ The question which these thinkers focused was not the general one of whether empirical effects required, for their adequate explanation, a first and ontologically superior cause (at some undefined degree of superiority), but the more precise question of whether any

²⁴v, 583-584. Cf. MM, I, 114-115.

number, however great, or any degree of excellence, however high, of finite effects could logically justify an inference to a strictly infinite cause. As an example of the substance of the objection, Maréchal summarizes the line of reasoning presented by the author of the Theoremata:

Admettons, dit l'auteur du Traité des Theoremata (longtemps attribué à Duns Scot), qu'il y ait des causes, et que dans les causes essentiellement subordonnées, il faille s'arrêter à une cause première. Quelle sera la perfection nécessaire de cette cause première en tant que cause? Au moins la somme intensive des perfections de ses effets, pas davantage. Mais la somme des perfections d'effets finis est finie. L'infinité de perfection de la cause première ne peut donc se démontrer par la voie de la causalité. (V, 583)

The core of this objection is in the words, "la somme des perfections d'effets finis est finie." In dealing with effects, no matter how many and no matter how excellent, one is dealing with finite entities. If the cause of finite entities must be such as to give sufficient reason for the qualities which the finite entities (effects) possess, the most one can say with certainty about the cause is that it must be adequate to account for the finite effects. But a sum of finite effects is not infinite. Therefore it is not necessary to posit an infinite cause to give sufficient reason for any such sum. A very great but still finite cause would do the job. It would seem that one goes farther than is

logically necessary when one infers an infinite cause from a finite effect or even from the whole set of finite effects.

Maréchal observes that those medieval and modern philosophers who made this critique "ont signalé, à propos de la démonstration de Dieu comme Cause première, une difficulté qui n'est pas tout à fait vaine." (V, 583) At the root of this critical objection Maréchal sees, however, an understanding of the principle of causality which is somewhat impoverished by comparison with the Aristotelian-Thomistic usage of that principle; an understanding which is overly external, in which the notion of causality is reduced to the descriptive (empirical) notion of prior conditionment in general.²⁵ What has been lost in this notion of causality is the properly dynamic and metaphysical dimension in which the power to cause is an immediate translation of one of the transcendental properties of being, causality being a prerogative of actuality.²⁶ What has been lost, in other words, is the necessary rootedness of causality in the internal relations of being.²⁷ This metaphysical conception has given way, in these critics,

²⁵V, 584.

²⁶See above, Chapter I, n. 34 and Chapter IV, n. 6 for clarification of this point.

²⁷See V, 585 and MM, I, 115.

to a purely phenomenal one, from which — unless the conception is deepened — it is impossible to rise to a transcendent conclusion.

At this point of his treatment of the causal proof, Maréchal has again arrived at the same necessity which he pointed out in regard to the proof from motion: the necessity of showing the rational insufficiency of a purely phenomenal starting point, and of revealing the implicitly metaphysical aspect in it; so that the reasoning does not involve a passage from the purely phenomenal to the metaphysical, but a development, a bringing to explicitness through reflection, of metaphysical implications which were already there in the starting point, even though they were not at first adverted to. To the question: how does the causal requirement enable us to conclude to the existence of a transcendent being? Maréchal's final answer is: the causal requirement has, ultimately, this transcendent implication if and only if the principle of causality is understood in the deep sense in which it is an application of the fundamental first principle of being: being is. As Maréchal develops this answer it becomes clear what he means by an understanding of the principle of causality in which the latter is seen to be an application of the first principle. He writes:

Est-ce le principe de causalité qui permet à S. Thomas ces identifications? [namely, first, uncaused cause:

necessary being: pure actuality: infinite and transcendent being] Sans doute; mais c'est le principe de causalité entendu au sens profond où il est une application du principe premier de l'être: "l'être est", c'est-à-dire l'être, en tant qu'être, est de plein droit; il se justifie par sa position même; il est totalement intelligible. Affirmer de quoi que ce soit: "cela est", sans en affirmer, au moins implicitement, la parfaite intelligibilité médiate ou immédiate en tant qu'être, ce serait donc formuler un jugement faux et contradictoire. (V, 585)

By this statement Maréchal has interpreted the principle of causality in such a way that its essence is the necessary total intelligibility of being. The requirement that there be a first and sufficient cause of anything is simply a translation into causal terms of the most absolute of all rational requirements: that the real, that which is, be in the last analysis fully intelligible. But this is precisely the absolute rational requirement which the first principle expresses.²⁸ It follows that the rational principle of causality is, as Maréchal puts it, essentially an application of the first principle of being, and therefore it has the same transcendent implication (capacity for founding a transcendent inference) as does the first principle. When the principle of causality is understood in this way, namely as a form of the principle of the intelligibility of being (first principle),

²⁸ See above, p. 72 (text and quotation).

the reflective analysis of causality in the world leads to a fully transcendent, "intensively infinite" cause as the ultimate condition of the intelligibility of any finite causality.

Maréchal on the Other Thomistic Ways

Maréchal mentions the way of proof from contingence (which he consistently defines as intrinsic deficiency as to actuality, incompleteness of the internal conditions for existence, sign of which is an imperfect intrinsic intelligibility) many times in PD and also in the LeRoy review.²⁹ It is somewhat unclear how closely he means to identify it with the Thomistic "third way" in particular; but from the plan of the LeRoy review (which involves a lengthy treatment of the first way, followed by a "touching upon" each of the other four ways in turn) it is clear that he at least means his remarks on the proof from contingence to cover that way -- even if, as is the case, they also indirectly cover the other ways. Because we have already written much about the absolutely central role of contingency in all of Maréchal's approaches to the proof of God's existence, including those in which he adopts and interprets the ways

²⁹See, e. g., V, 258, 337-338, 585-586; MM, I, 222-227, 241-243. For information on the LeRoy review see above, Chapter III, n. 3.

of St. Thomas,³⁰ we shall refrain from further comment upon it here.

As to the "fourth way" (from degrees of finite perfection);³¹ Maréchal mainly tries to distinguish it from a naive process of reification of the necessities of our discourse (namely, our need to suppose an ideal "best" in order to speak of a "better"). Maréchal locates the heart of the logic of this way in the search for the conditions of the full intelligibility of any finite perfection. He interprets the finite perfections of real entities as an indication of the incompleteness of those entities in terms of actuality. The intellect, naturally orientated to perfect actuality, finds in these finite entities an incomplete degree of their proper perfections, which indicates a deficiency of actuality, an incompleteness in terms of being. For this reason the mind has to affirm, upon its encounter with finite beings, (the infinite being, which is of course the instantiation of perfections to the maximum degree, because it is an entity of perfect actuality.³² This way of proof is developed, as are all the others, in Maréchal's interpretation, from our mind's

³⁰See above, pp. 38-42; 108-111; 117-120.

³¹Discussed in the LeRoy review (MM, I, 227-228).

³²Cf. V, 584-585.

radical orientation to and need for a perfect actuality, which, although it is never directly encountered, must be affirmed for the sake of the ultimate intelligibility of finite entities.

As to the "fifth way" (from order in the universe, St. Thomas' version of what is sometimes called the "Argument from Design" or "Teleological argument"),³³ Maréchal interprets it as another causal argument, approaching under the aspect of final causality the same features of the world which were approached under the aspect of efficient causality in the second way. The fifth way is thus strictly complementary to the second way; and Maréchal indeed ties the notions of efficient and final causality so closely together that, at the transcendent level, they are simply two faces of one single ontological relation, on the basis of which it is possible to rise from finite things to the knowledge of God. In Maréchal's words:

Causalité et finalité sont, en effet, des termes analytiquement liés. Dans un mobile, la tendance à la fin dernière, c'est la motion même de la cause première: connaître l'une, c'est connaître l'autre. Connaître Dieu comme Fin universelle, c'est donc/le connaître comme Cause universelle. Quels que soient les rapports détaillés du principe de finalité avec le principe de causalité dans l'ordre "prédicamental", en tout cas, lorsqu'il s'agit de transcendance, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il s'agit de monter vers Dieu

³³ Discussed in the LeRoy review (MM, I, 228-230). Cf. V, 462-463.

à partir des choses finies, l'application de l'un ou de l'autre de ces deux principes devient équivalente: ce sont les deux faces d'une même relation. (V, 462-463)

Maréchal is mainly concerned to distinguish -- even to liberate, if necessary -- the logical force of this argument from the "affective" force (persuasive rather than logically apodictic) which Kant and so many other thinkers (including LeRoy) acknowledged in it, although some of them went on to deny its validity. To this end Maréchal insists that St. Thomas' proof does not depend on there being, in fact, a greater portion of good than of evil, of beauty than of deformity in the world. It depends only on a minimal apprehension of order -- somewhere, anywhere, in a small portion of the whole or in the totality, be it as it may. Given only this minimal starting point, the argument has enough to proceed to its conclusion. Its logical force does not depend upon an "optimistic" view of the world but is quite compatible with a world in which physical defects and moral evils have to be acknowledged.³⁴

The heart of this argument according to Maréchal is the following:

If there is something acting teleologically (consciously, unconsciously -- it does not matter to the

³⁴See MM, I, 228-229.

argument); if, in other words, something in the world exhibits a real movement toward an end (a fact which we observe in many instances, and which to deny would be to cancel the intelligibility to us of many things, including our own actions), that is enough basis for saying that there is an entity (or many, as the case may be) which is not perfectly actualized. The reason for this is that movement toward an end, a condition of being in process or in progress toward completion, indicates a present lack of full actuality. This in turn is enough logical basis to support the eventual inference to a perfectly actual being, which in this case is required to make fully intelligible the ontological condition of the entity in progress toward its end. The entity in progress is a synthesis of actuality and potentiality, a condition refractory to full intelligence.* It remains imperfectly intelligible in proportion to its unactualized potentiality, which corresponds to its teleological tendency. So, the perfectly actual being must be affirmed for the "transience" of the teleological tendency to be fully intelligible. The fifth way conforms to the same pattern as the other ways, becoming when analyzed a proof from the necessity of affirming perfect actuality in order that an aspect of finite reality (in this case, teleological tendency) be intelligible. The perfect actuality in this case is seen

as final cause or last end, because the real condition which furnished the starting point for the inference was a teleological tendency.

Interpreted in this way the argument is immune to the line of objection which goes as follows: "The sum total of the order we can observe (granting for the sake of argument that there is some such) is finite; from a finite order you can, perhaps, infer a finite orderer — a great and wise world-architect — but you need not conclude to an infinite orderer." This objection focuses upon the external relation between a given order and an orderer, whose excellence cannot be proved to be higher than what would be required for the actual (finite) order observed.³⁵

But that is not the "strategy" of Thomas' fifth way, according to Maréchal. That way does not look to the external and perhaps even mechanical relation between an order (a given state of affairs) and an ordering agent. Instead it looks only into the internal requirements for the intelligibility of any entity's teleological tendency. To say this another way, the fifth way seeks to discover, regressively, the ultimate presupposition of a teleological reality. By analyzing the being of the entity in progress

³⁵Cf. MM, I, 229. This objection is in strict parallel to the objection against the proof from efficient causality, discussed above, pp. 140-143.

toward its end, it arrives at the necessity of an entity not subject to this aspect of contingency (teleological tendency; incompleteness as to the achievement of one's end; striving, the condition of tension between a present deficient actuality and a possible full actuation). And that is enough for the argument. It need look only into the intelligible structure of the being which exhibits a teleological tendency. That structure discloses a deficiency which has metaphysical implications. The proof need not start out from an overview of the universal picture, from which it would hope to get some inkling of the source of such a universe.

While one might well make a case for the latter type of argument as one which would possess a certain amount of persuasive power, which might incline a thinker toward a theistic conclusion by appealing to his affective, aesthetic, and moral dispositions, Maréchal simply wishes to say that the case for the necessity of the theistic conclusion of the fifth way lies outside of these considerations, lies -- to be exact -- in nothing else but the intrinsic insufficiency of intelligibility ("contingency") of an entity which has a teleological tendency. Even one such entity would suffice for the proof, but in fact the world we experience is replete with such entities.

CHAPTER V

THE SYNTHESIS OF MARÉCHAL'S APPROACHES TO THE PROOF OF GOD

In the course of our presentation of the various ways in which Maréchal approaches the proof of God's existence we have already had occasion to show, in part, the interconnection of the ways. Thus, for example, we have pointed out that the way of proof from the first principle is implicitly involved in all the ways of proof from effects, such as the five ways of St. Thomas.¹ Likewise we have shown, in the case of each of the ways of proof (save, thus far, the way of intellectual finality), how the "proof from contingency" -- by which, with Maréchal, we mean a way of proof whose starting point is the imperfect intrinsic intelligibility of some aspect of the given real² -- is implicitly involved and operative in

¹See above, pp. 116-117.

²If one wished to have, for this way of proof, a name which is more directly descriptive and freer of association with historical usages which can produce ambiguity, I would propose to call it the way of proof "from deficient intelligibility". I have not so labelled this way of proof in my many references to it in the text because Maréchal consistently uses for it the single word, contingence. -- In interpreting a writer I think it better to retain his key terms rather than substituting for them, even if the former requires clarificatory comment.

all of them. We have even gone so far as to call this "proof from contingency" the "common" way of proof, in that the basic reasoning process which it embodies (namely, the necessary intellectual "move" from an imperfectly intelligible given to the conditions of its full intelligibility) is precisely the essence of the reasoning process which all the other ways involve.³ That is to say that the basic logical "move" which is made in all the other ways, although these ways do not start directly and expressly from the deficient intelligibility of the given real, but from some less immediately metaphysical (more "phenomenal") aspect of the real, such as local movement, empirical change, teleological tendency, or whatever, is shown, upon reflective analysis, to be identical to the process of the way of proof "from contingency". This occurs because the specific starting points of these ways, when subjected to analysis, reveal their metaphysical indigence (deficiency of full intelligibility) as the common feature underlying their phenomenal diversity.

The explication which we have given of the relationships among Maréchal's ways of proof amounts to a synthesis of these ways, a synthesis which tends to show

³See above, pp. 108-111; 117-120.

their essential unity and thus substantiates Maréchal's assertion that there are many ways but only one proof.⁴ The synthesis, however, is not yet complete. An attentive reader will have noticed that the first of the Maréchal's ways which we treated, the way of intellectual finality, has not yet been assigned its place in relation to the other ways. Lacking this final integration of his approaches, Maréchal's thought on the subject would be left unclear at one of its critical points. In order to complete the synthesis, we must still (1) relate the way of proof from intellectual finality to the way of proof from the first principle (thereby indirectly relating it as well to all the ways of proof from effects); and (2) show in what way the (common) "proof from contingency" is the essence of the way of proof from intellectual finality as well as of all the other ways. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to the purpose of carrying out these two tasks, and thus completing the synthesis of Maréchal's ways of God-proof.

The First Principle as the Formal Expression
of Our Intellectual Finality

The natural finality of the intellect is its radical, active orientation to being. The intellect

⁴Passage cited above, p. 84.

naturally pursues being in everything, seeks to affirm it in everything. The intellect is, by its essence, a faculty for the contemplation of being; in the limitations of the human condition, its basic operation consists in tending, dynamically, toward the intentional possession of being.

But the intellect seeks being in a well-defined way. Its natural finality has a constant form. The constant form of this finality is that of the first principle. That is to say that the way in which the intellect acts out, "lives" its basic operation, the pursuit of being, is by the spontaneous and continuous application of the first principle to everything that enters within the purview of consciousness.

Let us take, for an example, an instance of sensibly perceived motion. The intellect, seeking to affirm being in everything, subjects this phenomenon to the absolute necessity of full intelligibility which is expressed by the first principle. It thereby affirms a metaphysical value in this contingent bit of empirical motion, and by doing so it partially satisfies its own natural finality.

The first principle gives a constant form to the intellect's dynamic movement, which stems from its natural finality and radical orientation toward being. The spontaneous application of the first principle to the content of consciousness is the permanent form of our intellectual

finality in act -- the form of the dynamism. Thus the "dynamic" fact of intellectual finality underlies and motivates even the first formal intellectual act, the application of the first principle to a content of consciousness. All the more it underlies and motivates all further objective affirmations, which implicitly involve that principle. It follows that the fact of our intellectual finality is presupposed -- as a "dynamic" presupposition -- by the proof of God's existence which results from the analysis of the first principle.

We may summarize these relationships as follows:

(1) At the basis of all our cognitive activity is the "dynamic" fact of our primitive intellectual finality, the object of which is being.

(2) The actual form which this finality takes is the spontaneous application of the first principle to everything which enters upon the field of consciousness. In other words, the first principle is the form of our intellectual finality.

Corollary: The affirmation of a content of consciousness, synthesized with the rational necessity expressed by the first principle, is the integral expression of our intellectual finality.

(3) A proof (for example, a proof of God's existence) "from the first principle" is, therefore, a proof from the actual form of a dynamic finality; or, to put it

more explicitly, it is a proof from our intellectual finality, viewed at the outset on its formal side (to which the complementary, dynamic side is necessarily presupposed).

(4) It follows that the proof from the first principle and the proof from intellectual finality are the same proof, only entered upon from precisely inverse angles: the formal and the dynamic, respectively. The one ("from the first principle") starts with a formal aspect of our affirmation and uncovers a dynamic presupposition which has metaphysical implications. The other ("from intellectual finality") starts immediately at the more fundamental, dynamic level and moves directly to the metaphysical consequences of the finality. In both cases it is the dynamic element (uncovered as a presupposition in the one; immediately seized upon as the core of the argument in the other), not the formal element, which possesses the metaphysical potential which the argument "taps" in order to develop its transcendent conclusion.

A Clarification. We said above, in point (3) of our summary, that the proof of God's existence from the first principle is a proof from our intellectual finality, viewed at the outset on its formal side. And we added, as a parenthetical remark, that, in this proof, which starts out from the formal side of our cognitive activity, the

complementary, dynamic side is necessarily presupposed. These points are considerably clarified if one remembers that, for Maréchal, cognitive activity comprises two distinguishable but not separable aspects: the aspect of static form and the aspect of dynamic act.⁵ The complete reflective analysis of any objective content of knowledge reveals both of these aspects, and indeed reveals the fact that the aspect of act, which is rooted in our intellect's natural finality, is the more fundamental of the two aspects, if what one is talking about is the concrete, "performative" actuality of our cognition — that is, our concrete act of "knowing". Maréchal continuously stresses that it is the dynamic logical necessities of this most basic, "performative" order of our cognition, not the static logical necessities of the less fundamental "formal" aspect of our cognition, which gives a properly metaphysical value to all our knowledge. Therefore, in order to disclose the ground for our knowledge's metaphysical value (and the basis in our knowledge for a proof of God) it is indispensable to carry the analysis of our cognitive content beyond the level of static form, to the level of dynamic act. That is, it is necessary to consider not only the "static" logical necessity of internal coherence

⁵See above, pp. 20-21.

in the formal content of thought, but also the more fundamental, "dynamic" logical necessities which belong to the order of cognitive performance.⁶

The crucial insight, that the dynamic is necessarily presupposed for the formal in our thought, reflects a very basic tenet of Maréchal's Thomistic-Aristotelian philosophical realism. That tenet is that the realissimum, the most fundamental fact about the real (and therefore, also, the most absolutely affirmable), is not to be located at the level of form, of essence, of possibility (level correlative to the representational aspect of our concepts), but at the level of act, of esse, of actual existence (level correlative to the analogically significative aspect of our concepts). Maréchal's realism is a realism centered upon act, not form, ~~esse~~, not essence, the

⁶This means that, for Maréchal, the expression "logically necessary", can have at least two meanings. It can mean (1) "necessary for the internal coherence of the formal aspect of thought (considered, by abstraction, in itself)", or (2) "necessary for the coherence (ultimate intelligibility, non-absurdity) of the integral act of thought, including both its formal and dynamic aspects". For Maréchal the ultimate "logical necessity" of affirming realist metaphysics in general and the existence of God in particular is of this second type. This point is analogous to a point we made earlier in commenting on Aristotle's refutation of pure skepticism: i. e., Aristotle appealed to the same kind of logical necessity as does Maréchal. See above, p. 55.

concrete actual, not the abstract possible.⁷ This does not mean that Maréchal regards "forms", abstract essences, or possibilities (conceptual, existential, or both at once) as unreal. It means only that the reality (affirmability) which they have (and indeed they have some, they are affirmable) is not grounded in their "formalness", so to speak, but is grounded in the act, the esse, which underlies and sustains the form. The reality of act is primary and original, that of form is secondary and derivative.⁸

⁷This is the thesis of the interpretation of Maréchal's philosophy presented by É. Dirven in De la forme à l'acte. (See above, p. 1, n. 1.)

It is also basic to the separate defenses of Maréchal's proof of God's existence which were offered by J. Defever and G. Isaye. These defenses start from the premises that Maréchal (1) rightly defines and "locates" the real (i. e., most fundamentally in the dynamic) and (2) does not "abandon" the real (i. e., does not pass over into the merely ideal) in his demonstration of God's existence. We concur with Defever and Isaye on both of these premises. Cf. J. Defever, La preuve réelle de Dieu. Étude critique (Bruxelles: L'Édition Universelle and Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1953). Cf. also G. Isaye, "La finalité de l'intelligence et l'objection kantienne", Revue Philosophique de Louvain, LI (1953), 42-100; J. Defever, "La preuve transcendante de Dieu", ibid., 527-540; J. Defever, "Idée de Dieu et existence de Dieu. Réponse à une question", ibid., LV (1957), 5-57.

⁸Maréchal gives Aristotle the credit for being the first thinker in the history of philosophy to have seen clearly the ontological relation between the formal and the dynamic. See V, 394 and I, 79-82.

This basic insight (ultimate ontological priority of dynamic act over static form) rendered authentic Aristotelianism and Thomism resistant to the tendency which Maréchal calls, in PD, "realism of essences" or "excessive realism of the understanding", the constitutional flaw of

The plenary object of intellectual affirmation is act, esse. All this is to say that forms are not absolute and isolable entities, but are, precisely, the form of something in act; or, to put it another way, the level of the formal (level of specification, of intelligible definition) is indeed necessary to and partly constitutive of being (the real), but it is not yet the level from which being (the real) takes its ultimate ontological grounding and sustenance. That ontologically ultimate level of being is the level of the dynamic, of act.⁹ Thus the formal (abstract, essential) always presupposes the dynamic (concrete, existential); and accordingly the "formal" first principle presupposes, and is the form of, the intellectual dynamism.

rationalist systems. In these (rationalist) systems, by contrast, ontological priority is accorded to form over act, essence over existence, the static over the dynamic; and it is only natural to find, in those systems, the existence of God derived from his prior-established (conceptual) possibility. Such a way of proving existence, Maréchal thinks, can never assuredly rejoin actuality (real existence) because it can never rise above the pure conceptualism of its starting point. Cf. V, 344; 590-591.

⁹Cf. this "summary" statement on V, 590: "Notre fil conducteur fut constamment cet axiome très simple et parfaitement évident de la Scolastique traditionnelle: qu'avec une essence abstraite on ne fait pas de l'existence, ni avec du formel de l'actuel, ni avec du logique pur du réel; bref, qu'avec de la puissance on ne fait pas de l'acte."

The fact of intellectual finality is by no means a matter of indifference to the proof from the first principle. The latter proof results, as we have seen, from the intellect's quest for a sufficient reason for the absoluteness of the requirement which the first principle expresses. But this quest for the sufficient reason is purely and simply the expression of the intellect's quest for being, or the manifestation of its natural finality. It is this natural finality which sets the intellect in motion, from the formal first principle, to the pursuit of this principle's ultimate, dynamic presupposition. Were this not the case (that is, deleting from the picture the role of the intellect's finality), the only function which the first principle would serve would be that of a negative guide to the formal self-consistency of thought, that is, a means for detecting and censoring contradictions in terms. From a first principle so reduced in function one could never derive conclusions having objective transcendent value. The objective transcendent (metaphysical) value of the first principle stems precisely from its deeper function as the form of the intellectual dynamism tending toward being. So, the "dynamic" fact of intellectual finality is presupposed when a proof of God's existence is developed from the first principle. And since, as we have argued above, the proof from the first principle is

implicitly operative in all the disparate ways of proof from effects, for example the proof from motion and the proof from efficient causality,¹⁰ it follows that intellectual finality is also presupposed in those ways.

The Implicit Role of the Argument from Contingency
in the Proof from Intellectual Finality

The task still remaining to us is to relate the argument from contingency, which we have called the "common" way of God-proof, to the proof from intellectual finality, which we presented in our second chapter.¹¹ Our thesis is that the argument from contingency is the logical essence, or in Maréchal's words the "dialectical soul",¹² of the way of proof from intellectual finality as well as of the other ways. We shall develop this thesis in six principal steps, as follows:

(1) Intellectual finality is a species of finality, that is to say it is a type of teleological tendency. We know the fact of this particular teleological tendency not from observation of the external world, nor primarily by a deduction from some priorly established fact about our

¹⁰See above, pp. 116-117 and 143-144.

¹¹Above, pp. 45-63.

¹²See MM, I, 222.

knowledge which implies intellectual finality, but primarily from internal experience, by a lucid reflection on our act of "knowing".¹³

(2) Since intellectual finality is a type of teleological tendency, the principles of interpretation which apply to all teleological tendency apply to it.¹⁴ The most important of those principles for the understanding of the proof of God's existence from our intellectual finality are the following:

- (a) All teleological tendency indicates a present deficiency in the order of actuality, which is also the order of absolute metaphysical intelligibility.
- (b) A deficiency of intrinsic perfect intelligibility

¹³In our view the teleological tendency of our intellect can be deduced, as a necessary implication of the discursive character of our intelligence. (See above, pp. 19-20). In this case the discursive — as contrasted to intuitive — character of our intelligence would be the "fact" priorly established through direct reflection on our knowing. For an approach to this "fact" see Bernard Lonergan, "Insight: Preface to a Discussion", in Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 161-163. But although our intellectual finality can be deduced, it is not necessary to deduce it because it can also be known, in the same way as the discursive character is known, by direct reflection, a sensitive introspection into our act of knowing. Maréchal comments on this direct knowledge of our intellectual finality in his article, "Le dynamisme intellectuel dans la connaissance objective", Revue néoscholastique de Philosophie, XXVIII (1927), 137-165. (Reprinted in MM, I, 75-101). See MM, I, 88-99 passim and especially 95.

¹⁴We discussed these principles in commenting on St. Thomas' "fifth way", above, pp. 147-151.

is what is meant by metaphysical contingency.
Therefore all teleological tendency indicates
contingency in the reality which has the tendency.

(c) It follows that an argument (for example, a proof of God's existence) from a teleological tendency, such as our intellect's internal finality, is an argument from a species of contingency.

(3) The argument from contingency, as we have interpreted it, following Maréchal, is essentially an argument from the deficient intrinsic intelligibility of some aspect of the given real. In the case at hand the aspect of the given real which is regarded as intrinsically imperfectly intelligible¹⁵ is our intellect's natural finality.

(4) In Maréchal's proof of God's existence from our intellect's natural finality, the argument for the necessity of the conclusion (the actual existence of an intensively infinite being, God) centered upon the absolute rational necessity that the finality, as an active tendency toward infinite being, be ultimately intelligible -- that is, not be ultimately incoherent or absurd. We argued,

¹⁵By calling something "intrinsically imperfectly intelligible" we mean that this something is perfectly intelligible, if at all, only by being referred to a principle extrinsic to it.

supporting Maréchal, that the non-existence of God (infinite being, the sole adequate final end of the tendency) would entail the radical absurdity of the natural finality, and that this absurdity, or absolute unintelligibility, which would vitiate our intellect's objective activity at its root, was strictly unthinkable.¹⁶

(5) The crux of the reasoning which led from the fact of intellectual finality to the necessary affirmation of the real existence of God was, therefore, the ultimate non-intelligibility of the finality apart from the reality of its adequate objective end. But this ultimate non-intelligibility of our intellectual finality apart from the actual existence of its end is a particular instance of a more general pattern: the ultimate non-intelligibility of any teleological tendency apart from the ontological conditions sufficient to ground the tendency. This general pattern provides a starting point for the proof from contingency wherever there is a teleological tendency, and our intellectual finality is an actual instance of such a tendency.

(6) It follows that the proof from our intellectual finality, like all the other ways of God-proof as Maréchal

¹⁶See above, pp. 52, 57, 62-63.

interprets them, is yet another example of a way of proof whose implicit logical core is the argument from contingency. For what makes possible this proof's transcendent conclusion is precisely the deficient intelligibility ("contingency") -- indeed the absurdity -- of the intellectual finality, apart from the affirmation of an ontological condition extrinsic to the tendency itself, namely the actual existence of its adequate objective end.

CHAPTER VI

CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS OF THE STUDY OF MARÉCHAL ON THE PROOF OF GOD

Introduction

The results of the study of Maréchal which I shall here report are personal, exploratory and tentative. They are directly the consequence of my attempts to apply Maréchal's analysis of God-proofs, an analysis which I judge to be of very high value, to the interpretation of some other theoretically and historically important attempts to prove the existence of God. I shall limit my express attention to two actual arguments, that of Kant in his 1763 essay, The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God,¹ and the proof presented by St. Anselm in the

¹Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes (Gesammelte Schriften, II, 63-163). Hereafter I shall refer to this work as "the Beweisgrund essay" and to the Gesammelte Schriften as GS. For the English rendition of the title of this essay I use the wording of Gordon Treash in Immanuel Kant, Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund: The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God, trans. and introd. by Gordon Treash (New York: Abaris Books, 1979).

Proslogion.² It has seemed to me that Maréchal's analysis of God-proof illuminates the nature of these important proofs. Indeed it is my opinion that Maréchal's analysis illuminates the nature of all possible speculative God-proof, but it is impossible here to make, even in outline, the application to every one. I regard these pages more in the light of a preliminary delineation of promising avenues for further research than in the light of finished conclusions.

Analysis of the Thomistic Ways and the Essence
of all Speculative God-Proof

No one would be surprised, I think, if one were to report that a long and painstaking engagement with the thought of Maréchal had resulted in a better understanding of the ways of proof of God's existence according to St. Thomas. After all, Maréchal was a Thomist and his express purpose was to illuminate and to develop, in a way which would remain faithful to its original intention, the essence of Thomas' thought on the necessity of realist metaphysics in general and the rational foundations of our knowledge of the transcendent in particular. It should not

²Proslogion, in St. Anselm, Opera omnia, ed. Dom F. S. Schmitt (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1945-51), I, 93-122. (Locus classicus of the proof is Prosl., chs. II-IV, presented on pp. 101-104 of the cited volume.)

therefore be astonishing if Maréchal should succeed, in large part, in doing what was his principal intention and lifelong task. With regard to the proof of God's existence, however, I think that Maréchal succeeded in more than he -- at least expressly -- intended. He turned his attention to and concentrated his intellectual labors upon those ways of God-proof which were explicitly or implicitly Thomistic.³ But in the process he illuminated not only the essence of the Thomistic ways but the essence of all ways of the proof of God's existence which are possible on the grounds of speculative reason (as distinguished from proofs which might be possible on other grounds, such as those of practical reason considered alone, or aesthetic grounds, or grounds proper to religious consciousness as such, for example mystical experience or revelation).

In my opinion Maréchal succeeded in making an analysis of God-proof which has universal applicability,

³Cf. the following statement: "Qu'on veuille aussi ne point chercher dans notre texte un essai de présentation nouvelle de la preuve de l'existence de Dieu. Les 'cinq voies' de S. Thomas -- que nous avons enseignées nous-même, en leur sens littéral -- fixent définitivement le type métaphysique (parfaitement efficace) de cette preuve. Mais il reste vrai qu'en approfondissant quelque objet de pensée que ce soit -- essence, relation, ou même privation -- on rencontre Dieu, inévitablement; c'est ce qui nous arrive ici, pour limité que soit le point de vue où nous nous enfermons." (V, 450, n. 1) The last sentence indicates the sense in which Maréchal regarded himself as "developing" the express doctrine of St. Thomas in the "five ways".

because in his analysis of the Thomistic proofs he penetrated to the core of all speculative God-proof, to that which all possible ways of proving God's existence, on the grounds of speculative reason, have in common. This common core, the underlying element of unity in all ways of the speculative proof of God which are not the "ontological argument" and which therefore have the possibility of validity, is the fundamental line of inference which I have called the "common" way of proof, the "proof from contingency", or, to elaborate what Maréchal means by the latter term, the "proof from the insufficient intelligibility of finite beings".⁴

Comparison of Maréchal's Analysis to Kant's Beweisgrund Essay. I believe that an instructive comparison can be made between Maréchal's analysis of the essence of all speculative God-proof -- an analysis which I regard as having succeeded, in the twofold sense that it both correctly identified the common rational core of God-proof and showed the objective necessity which that core possesses -- and the analysis of speculative God-proof which Kant presented in the Beweisgrund essay, an analysis which I regard as having almost, but not quite, succeeded in the same twofold

⁴Cf. above, Chapter V, n. 2.

sense. To make this comparison at length would be to go beyond the limits which I wish to observe in this dissertation. Indeed it could be a dissertation in itself. I wish merely to present, in tentative and exploratory fashion, the broad outlines of this comparison by the following seven remarks, which will be left undeveloped.

(1) There is an extreme similarity between the most basic position on the ground of God-proof maintained by Kant in the Beweisgrund essay and the most central position of Maréchal on the ground of the speculative necessity of affirming God's existence. The most basic position maintained by Kant in this essay is that God, the ground of the possibility of all things, must necessarily be affirmed as real in order that anything at all be thinkable.⁵ The steps of the argument by which Kant supports this position can be summarized as follows:⁶

⁵Cf. this statement in the concluding paragraph of the Beweisgrund essay: "Nur lediglich darin, dass die Verneinung der göttlichen Existenz völlig Nichts ist, liegt der Unterschied seines Daseins von anderer Dinge ihrem. Die innere Möglichkeit, die Wesen der Dinge sind, nun dasjenige, dessen Aufhebung alles Denkliche vertilgt. Hierin wird also das eigene Merkmal von dem Dasein des Wesens aller Wesen bestehen. Hierin sucht den Beweisthum . . ." (GS, II, 162-163)

⁶I do not propose to give a general synopsis of this essay, but to concentrate only on the most crucial position which Kant took in it. This is, in my view, precisely the position which makes possible the comparison with Maréchal. In the essay Kant interpreted and evaluated other purported

- (a) In order to affirm or in order to deny anything at all, we must think. To think is, for us, the most absolute of rational necessities.
- (b) In order to think we must affirm possibility. Therefore by affirming or denying anything we implicitly affirm possibility, the prerequisite for thought -- that is, we implicitly affirm that there is something thinkable.⁷
- (c) But to affirm possibility (an absolutely necessary affirmation) is to affirm an existent ground of possibility;⁸ and this actual ground of all possibil-

ways of speculative God-proof as well, but I shall not treat these. For an overview of the essay I recommend, in addition to Maréchal's summary and interpretation (III, 49-60 and V, 504, n. 1), the concise summary by F. Copleston in A History of Philosophy, Vol. 6 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday [Image Books Edition], 1964), Part I, 217-219.

⁷Maréchal takes pains to point out (III, 51-58) that the "possibility" with which the Beweisgrund essay was primarily concerned was "real possibility" (see above, ch. 2, n. 13), not just "conceptual possibility". The argument moved from the necessity of there being real possibility (the ultimate basis of everything thinkable) to the sole sufficient ground of real possibility, which must necessarily be something actually existent. By virtue of its focus on real possibility the argument ought, by right, to have risen above the static conceptualistic character of the "ontological argument". Yet, in Maréchal's judgment, Kant's conception of speculative cognition was fundamentally too static to permit his argument to distinguish itself completely from the "ontological argument". See below, pp. 177-180 (points 4 through 7).

⁸"Alle Möglichkeit setzt etwas Wirkliches voraus, worin und wodurch alles Denkbliche gegeben ist. Demnach ist eine gewisse Wirklichkeit, deren Aufhebung selbst alle innere Möglichkeit überhaupt aufheben würde." (GS, II, 83)

ity is precisely what God (metaphysically considered) is.

- (d) The non-existence of this being would entail the absence of a ground for possibility, and thus would result either in there being nothing at all (which is contrary to the case) or else in the non-thinkability, radical unintelligibility or absurdity of actual existence (a hypothesis which is, itself, unthinkable and absurd).
- (e) It follows that the existence of God is necessary for thought to be possible; and when we think, which is absolutely necessary, we implicitly affirm the reality of God.

This line of reasoning comes extremely close to the most crucial point in Maréchal's analysis of the logical core of God-proofs. In Maréchal's interpretation all ways of proving God's existence, in speculative reason, go back in the last analysis to the principle that existence, the real, must be fully intelligible. This principle is most clearly operative in the argument from contingency itself; but it is really operative in all the ways of speculative God-proof, which, from diverse starting points, all come back finally to the principle of the necessary intelligibility of the real. Thus the argument from contingency is the logical "nucleus" of all the ways. The absolute necessity that the real be intelligible — the necessity in which

Maréchal ultimately bases the possibility of all speculative God-proof -- is in my view indistinguishable from the ultimate necessity to which Kant appeals in the Beweisgrund essay, namely the absolute necessity that existence be thinkable. Yet between Maréchal and Kant there is a subtle difference over the integral meaning of the "thinkable" or the "intelligible", a difference which centers upon the issue of a "dynamic" versus a "static" view of speculative cognition.⁹

(2) One will note that Kant, by the time of the Critique of Pure Reason (first edition, 1781; second edition, 1787), had apparently abandoned the ground which his 1763 essay had defined, and henceforth Kant spoke as though there were no possible ground in speculative reason proper for an apodictic proof of the existence of God.¹⁰ This is the Kant, "agnostic" as to the possibility of speculative metaphysics in general and of natural theology in particular, of whom almost the whole of subsequent literature in philosophy, in history of philosophy, and in systematic theology

⁹See below, pp. 176-180 (points 3 through 7).

¹⁰"I maintain that all attempts to employ reason in theology in any merely speculative manner are altogether fruitless and by their very nature null and void Consequently, the only theology of reason which is possible is that which is based upon moral laws or seeks guidance from them." Critique of Pure Reason, trans. N. K. Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press and Toronto: Macmillan, 1965), p. 528 (A 636, B 664).

takes account. In my opinion it is one of Maréchal's chief merits to have broken rather sharply with this near-unanimous portrait of the critical Kant so monolithically "agnostic" (according to the portrait) in these matters, and to have shown in Cahiers III and IV of PD an extraordinary sensitivity to both the continuity and the abiding internal tensions of Kant's thought in both the (too easily labelled) "pre-critical" and "critical" periods of his philosophical career.¹¹ In particular Maréchal attends to the painstaking and, as it turned out, incompleting search for a possible speculative ground for metaphysics which is evidenced in the Opus Postumum.¹² This search into which Kant poured so much intellectual effort after the Critiques testifies to the fact that the "critical" Kant had not simply abandoned the possibility of which he wrote in 1763, although the problem had become considerably more tangled and its solution more elusive to his thought than it had seemed to him in 1763.

(3) In Maréchal's view it is to Kant's abiding

¹¹Of particular interest is Maréchal's discernment of "waverings" (flottements) in Kant's mature thought (IV, 77-112), "waverings" which Maréchal attributes to a "latent conflict between two orientations of thought" (IV, 78), one motivated by "critical" concerns, the other by an abiding concern for a comprehensive "system of reason".

¹²Maréchal analyzes the Opus Postumum in IV, 227-326. See, especially, his summary of the conclusions of Q. P. about the reality of "Things-in-themselves" and the existence of God. (IV, 291-301)

credit that he remained to the end preoccupied with this search, even at the expense of his intellectual equanimity and the equilibrium of his matured "critical" thought. But that Kant did not succeed in finding the possible ground for speculative metaphysics is no surprise to Maréchal. In order to have found it, according to Maréchal, Kant would have had to discover a perspective which, in fact, was lacking not only to the Kant of the Critique of Pure Reason but also to the Kant of 1763, who thought that a proof of God's existence was possible in speculative reason. In this perspective, lacking to Kant's thought in all stages except for some indistinct and inconclusive expressions of what Maréchal reads as a groping for it in his last years, lies the difference between Maréchal's basis for a proof and that of the Kant of the Beweisgrund (and therefore, a fortiori, of the Critiques).

(4) The perspective of which I speak is the dynamic and finalistic nature of cognition, the pervasion of speculative activity, of the theoretical intellectual act as such — and not just of the acts of practical reason — with a dynamic and finalistic quality, which affects intrinsically the constitution of all objects in thought.¹³ For the

¹³See above, pp. 59-61.

Kant of both the Beweisgrund essay and the Critique of Pure Reason the condition of the "thinkable" was static and formal, not dynamic and actual. But from such a static "thinkable" the Kant of 1763 thought it possible to derive, on the grounds of a necessity of intelligibility, a proof of the existence of God. The Kant of 1781 and 1787 no longer thought this possible, as is clear from the refutation of all speculative proofs of God's existence in the Critique of Pure Reason.¹⁴

(5) Maréchal, given precisely this definition of the possible basis for a proof, would say that the Kant of the Critique of Pure Reason was more right than the Kant of 1763. That is, given a static account of speculative knowledge, the right conclusion was drawn by the later Kant. Yet the earlier Kant was essentially right in seeking the ground for the necessary affirmation of God where he sought it, namely in the absolute requirement of intelligibility (the ultimate necessity of "thinkability") of any object. All that was lacking to that early proof -- but it was a disastrous lack -- was an account of the "thinkable" which would be essentially dynamic and which would include intellectual finality among the factors of speculative knowledge. From a purely static and formal thinkable one could

¹⁴See III, 251-264.

derive real existence, which is above all dynamic and actual, only by the illegitimate process of the ontological argument.¹⁵ But from a "thinkable" defined dynamically, and therefore already defined in terms immersed in actuality, in real being, one can derive -- one must derive, as long as the logical process is consequential -- real existence.

(6) According to Maréchal the thought of Kant, both at the time of the Beweisgrund essay and at the time of the Critiques, was too committed to a one-sidedly static and formal account of the nature of speculative knowledge to permit the possibility of a speculative metaphysics, unless he were to do so via the "intellectual intuition" claim implicit in the ontological argument.¹⁶ But the Kant of the Critique of Pure Reason absolutely ruled out that procedure, even while voicing the (telling) opinion, in the course of his analysis of the proofs, that if there were possible a speculative proof of God's existence it would have to be that one.¹⁷

(7) If Kant had had, as Maréchal (from his Thomistic heritage) did, a dynamic and finalistic conception of

¹⁵On this point and on the point of my next paragraph (6), the "Conclusion Générale" of Cahier III (III, 305-309) sheds light.

¹⁶See III, 306-307.

¹⁷Critique of Pure Reason, A 630, B 658 (N. K. Smith trans., p. 524).

speculative intellection, according to which the "thinkable" or the "affirmable", corresponding to the entire analogical range of the actual, would infinitely surpass the conceptually representable, his 1763 proof would have stood on firm ground wholly outside the ground of the ontological argument.¹⁸ In that case, in my opinion his argument would have been indistinguishable from the essence of Maréchal's argument, and like the latter's would be, in my opinion, entirely correct and true. Unfortunately, however, Kant never fully shed, in his interpretation of speculative knowledge, the static conceptualism which was a principal characteristic of the rationalism which he criticized.¹⁹ And so his proof of 1763, in spite of its perspicacity in looking for the basis of a proof of God in the ultimate conditions of the thinkable, fell too much into the static conceptualistic track of the ontological argument, and perished in Kant's mind at or before the time of his famous refutation of that argument.

¹⁸See V, 504, n. 1.

¹⁹Cf. this judgment, expressed on III, 308: "Certes, il faut le reconnaître: malgré les expressions dynamistes (fonction, activité synthétique, etc.) qu'emploie Kant . . . , ses démonstrations reposent exclusivement sur des emboîtements immobiles de conditions à priori, sur une hiérarchie logiquement nécessaire de 'formes' et de 'règles'. . . . Kant n'a pu éliminer complètement de son esprit le levain du wolfianisme: il en demeure à l'analyse statique; chez lui, la considération 'transcendantale', d'où pouvait jaillir -- croira Fichte -- l'affirmation conquérante de l'acte, se renferme dans le minutieux et définitif repérage de la forme." (Cf. the interpretation of Fichte in IV, 335-439.)

Maréchal's Proof and St. Anselm's Proof:A Rapprochement Perceived

In the remaining pages of this chapter I shall suggest a substantial degree of unity between the essence of Maréchal's God-proof, that is the underlying unity of his "ways", and the essence of St. Anselm's proof in the Proslogion.²⁰ I wish to remind the reader that I believe the essence of Maréchal's proof to be also that of the "ways" of St. Thomas, but with some of their virtualities developed and their unity underlined by Maréchal more than St. Thomas himself developed and underlined them. Therefore the unity I shall suggest is not only one between Maréchal and Anselm on the proof of God, but one between Anselm's proof and the Thomistic ways.

²⁰The reader should not anticipate in these pages a detailed exegesis of the Proslogion. The interpretation which I shall present, in broad strokes, depends upon a whole reading of the Proslogion and the controversy with Gaunilo. In addition it is influenced by a few sources which are mentioned in an Appendix. (See below, pp. 212-219.) But I do not judge this dissertation, whose topic is the proof of God's existence according to Maréchal, to be a proper place for a fully developed exposition of St. Anselm's proof. The latter, like Kant's Beweisgrund proof already mentioned, is touched upon not for its own sake, but only in order to show some virtualities of Maréchal's analysis for aiding in the interpretation of other proofs. I shall keep my treatment of Anselm's proof to the minimum necessary to show the light which, in my opinion, Maréchal's analysis casts upon it.

In making the case for an underlying unity between Mařéchal's ways of God-proof and St. Anselm's proof, I must start by rejecting an interpretation of St. Anselm's proof which has been so nearly unanimously agreed upon in the subsequent history of philosophy that it can be called the "classical" interpretation. According to this interpretation (with which I disagree), St. Anselm's proof is regarded as one of the earliest versions, and the classic formulation, of the "ontological argument", an argument which was subsequently refined and improved upon by subtle and sympathetic thinkers from Duns Scotus to Charles Hartshorne and Norman Malcolm; which was given its almost definitive criticism by Kant; but which has continued nevertheless to reappear in new formulations, defended by thinkers who believe either that their reformulations satisfy Kant's valid objections to the earlier formulations or that Kant's refutation of the argument is itself faulty. According to this interpretation there is a substantial identity of argument connecting St. Anselm's proof to the proofs of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, which Kant called the "ontological argument".²¹ I do not consider St. Anselm's proof as being identical to

²¹A good summary of this interpretation, with readings, exemplifying the principal contributions to it in the history of philosophy since St. Anselm, is in Alvin Plantinga, ed., The Ontological Argument (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday [Anchor Books], 1965). See, especially, the Introduction by Richard Taylor, pp. vii-xviii.

the "ontological argument" which is the subject of this later dispute. On the contrary, I consider it to be quite different from the "ontological argument", and quite similar, if not identical, to the essence of Maréchal's argument. With regard to the latter argument (Maréchal's), I explained in an earlier chapter the difference, as I see it, between it and the "ontological argument".²² The most crucial point in this difference is the nature of the starting points of the respective arguments. I have argued that the "ontological argument" starts from a mere concept and involves, tacitly or expressly, a claim of an intellectual intuition of the divine possibility; but Maréchal's argument, on the contrary, starts from a conceptualized fact of experience (that is, from an intellectually grasped aspect of real existence) and involves no claim of an intellectual intuition. In short, what I shall argue is that there is an underlying unity between Maréchal's and Anselm's approaches to the proof of God's existence, and that neither of them involves the "ontological argument".

The case I shall make for the essential unity of these two apparently diverse proofs depends upon three conclusions which I have drawn from my study of Maréchal and my efforts to understand the proof in St. Anselm's Pros-

²²See above, pp. 105-107.

logion.²³ The three conclusions are listed below under the headings: First Conclusion, Second Conclusion, Third Conclusion. I shall briefly develop each one immediately after stating it. After this I shall develop in broad strokes my interpretation, which depends upon the synthesis of the three conclusions rather than upon any one or two of them taken alone.

First Conclusion

The essence of Maréchal's ways of the proof of God's existence is the absolute necessity of the mind to affirm, ultimately, a perfect actuality, (an intensive infinity of being. This necessity is constitutional, natural to the mind and is set in motion every time the mind relates to an object which is imperfect, or finite as to actuality. On every such encounter the mind is necessarily drawn, through and beyond the finite object, to the condition of its perfect intelligibility. To sum up the essence of Maréchal's ways in a single phrase, one could say that it comes down to this: esse affirmandum est, being (intensively infinite) must be affirmed, at least implicitly, in every intellectual act.²⁴

²³The "history" of my efforts to understand St. Anselm's proof is recounted in the Appendix, below, pp.212-219.

²⁴Cf. this statement which expresses the necessary affirmation of being in any act of the speculative or practical reason: "tant par la pensée que par le vouloir, nous posons donc perpétuellement et catégoriquement l'être." (V, 87)



Second Conclusion

If the "ontological argument" is, most basically, an argument that begins with a clear and distinct concept of divine essence (equivalent to an intuitive knowledge of the divine possibility) and deduces from that God's actual existence,²⁵ then St. Anselm's argument is not at all the "ontological argument", because his argument neither begins nor proceeds in this way. To clarify my position on this I wish to make the following two points:

(1) I think that, historically and doctrinally, one ought to mean, by the expression "ontological argument", that kind of logical passage — from abstract possibility to concrete actuality — which I have identified as the essence of this argument. I think that such a definition is the most satisfactory way to focus the essence of an important argument which is exemplified in the thought of Descartes, Leibniz and some other philosophers,²⁶ and which

²⁵This is the way Maréchal interprets the essence of the "ontological argument". See his article, "Au seuil de la métaphysique: abstraction ou intuition?", Part II; "Quelques enseignements de l'histoire", Revue néoscholastique de Philosophie, XXXI (1929), 121-147. (Reprinted in MM, I, 126-149)

²⁶Maréchal discerns the essentials of this argument, namely, (1) the presumption of a direct, "intuitive" knowledge of the internal possibility of the divine essence and (2) the inference from conceptual possibility (apparent lack of internal contradiction in the concept) to real existence, in Duns Scotus. (See I, 191-193. Cf. MM, I, 141-142.)

was criticized by Kant who first applied the term "ontological argument" to it.²⁷ Furthermore, I think that the starting point of this type of argument for God's existence always contains, implicitly or explicitly, a claim of a direct knowledge of the internal possibility of God, which would be tantamount to an "intellectual intuition" of the divine essence.

I do not think that St. Anselm's proof utilizes a passage from conceptual possibility to existential actuality, indeed I do not think its logical process includes any "stage" prior to actuality or any "passage" to actuality. And I think that there is in it no claim, explicit or implicit, of an intellectual intuition of the divine essence, either in its internal possibility or in its actuality. The absence of these elements is my reason for distinguishing Anselm's proof from the "ontological argument".

(2) I think the "ontological argument" to be invalid because its starting point (essential intuition of the divine possibility) is fictive -- man has no such starting point for any of his knowledge of the real. In this judgment I concur with Maréchal, who also focuses his

²⁷Critique of Pure Reason, A 602, B 630 (N. K. Smith trans., p. 507). The Beweisgrund essay referred to this type of proof as the "Cartesian" proof. (GS, II, 156-157, 162)

objection upon the starting point;²⁸ and I think that the same was the most essential point of St. Thomas' rejection of the opinion that God's existence is per se nota quoad nos²⁹ and of Kant's rejection of the a priori proof constructed by his rationalist predecessors.³⁰

Third Conclusion

Although St. Anselm does not use, indeed does not have, the same (Aristotelian-Thomistic, and developed by Maréchal) terminological and conceptual means, as has Maréchal, to express the essence of the mind's "itinerary" in its ascent from created things to God, the essence of that "itinerary" in Anselm's proof is indeed very close to the essence of the Maréchalian approach. It does no violence to Anselm's argument, on the contrary it helps to illumine some of its principal features, if one says that

²⁸Cf. V, 350: "N'avons-nous aucune 'intuition intellectuelle'? Aucune, répond le thomisme, en barrant devant nous toutes les issues possibles vers un mode quelconque d'intuition essentielle." (In the following paragraphs, V, 350-351, Maréchal excludes specific kinds of "intellectual intuition".)

²⁹S. Th., I, 2, 1, c and ad 3.

³⁰Cf. Kant's remark about Leibniz' argument: "Thus the celebrated Leibniz is far from having succeeded in what he plumed himself on achieving — the comprehension a priori of the possibility of this sublime ideal being." (Loc. cit. supra, n. 27)

its essence is, like Maréchal's, the mind's coming to reflective consciousness of its absolute need to affirm the maximally affirmable, to come to know -- discursively, indirectly, imperfectly, not in itself but through recognizing the necessity of its affirmation -- the infinitely actual.

This third conclusion states the substance of the unity I perceive between the ways of Maréchal and Anselm. It is a unity consisting in the common recognition of the necessity for discursive thought to affirm the supremely actual. It is a common acknowledgement, albeit expressed in different terms by the two thinkers, of the ultimate orientation and necessary submission of thought to perfect actuality.

This third conclusion requires the following clarificatory comment. Anselm in his argument uses the one word, cogitare (to think), to cover what for Maréchal would require, within the central intellectual act of judgment, a distinction of functions between properly conceiving or representing (représenter) and affirming (affirmer). In Maréchal's thought, objective knowledge involves both these functions, but of the two the latter (affirmation) is the ultimately "objectivating" function³¹ and through it the mind can relate objectively to objects which it cannot properly conceive or formally represent. The limits of the

³¹See V, 299-304 and 524-526.

properly conceivable (representable) are narrower than the limits of the knowable or the objectively affirmable.

Strictly speaking, the latter has no limits but includes the infinite analogical range of being.³²

I see in Anselm's Proslogion a clear awareness that "that than which nothing greater can be thought" is not properly conceivable (representable) but is beyond our mind's capacity for proper representation. Yet it is somehow thinkable (in intellectu est, in Anselm's usual phrase). That is, the mind can objectively, cognitively relate to it in some fashion, although it cannot properly conceive of it.³³ The limits of the objectively thinkable are therefore implicitly posited by Anselm to be larger than those of the properly conceivable. Therefore, although Anselm does not thematize, as does Maréchal, any such distinction within the thinkable as that between représenter and affirmer, I think that he means, by that which is thinkable although beyond our proper

³²The thought expressed here is developed and repeated many times in Cahier V. See, e. g., pp. 296-299; 342-345; 519-526 (second and third propositions).

³³I take this to be St. Anselm's meaning when he writes, in Prosl. XV: "Ergo, domine, non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit, sed es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit." (Opera omnia, I, 112.14-15) From this and from other statements in Prosl. it is clear that, in Anselm's thought, God is thinkable and knowable in one sense but not thinkable and knowable in another sense: e. g., Prosl. XIV: "An . . . nondum te vidit [anima mea], quia vidit te aliquatenus, sed non vidit te sicuti es?" (Ibid., 111.20-21)

concepts, something very like what Maréchal means by something which is objectively affirmable although not able to be represented.

My third conclusion may accordingly be summarized as follows: Anselm's argument, like Maréchal's, has for its dynamic essence the internal necessity, reflectively discovered by the mind, to affirm the perfectly actual, even if, as is the case, the perfectly actual is beyond our capacity for proper conceptualization. In this interpretation Anselm's proof differs from Maréchal's only in that the former was motivated by a somewhat indistinct, implicit recognition of the mind's necessity to rise to the affirmation of pure act, whereas the latter was motivated by a distinct, explicit recognition of that same necessity.

To the best of my knowledge these three conclusions have never before been juxtaposed in any study of Maréchal or of Anselm, with the result that the underlying unity for which I argue has never, to the best of my knowledge, been clearly perceived and stated. Again, my three conclusions do not imply that Maréchal's and Anselm's arguments are alike in that they share the character of the "ontological argument". What I assert is that they share a "dynamic" character which is quite other than that of the "ontological argument", and that that which they share is the most essential element in each of them.

The interpretation of St. Anselm's proof, and the case for its underlying unity with Maréchal's proof, which have been summarized by the statement of my three conclusions, can best be developed by going back to the essential point in the second of those conclusions. In that second conclusion I stated that St. Anselm's argument is not the "ontological argument" because it neither begins with a distinct concept of divine essence nor deduces God's existence from such a concept. In elaborating this I said that St. Anselm's proof is not based explicitly or implicitly on an "intellectual intuition", and it does not utilize a passage from conceptual possibility to existential actuality. These points, which together distinguish St. Anselm's proof from the "ontological argument", can be made clearer by an analysis of the import of St. Anselm's key formula, "that than which nothing greater can be thought". The analysis of this formula sheds light not only on the difference between Anselm's proof and the "ontological argument", but also on the principal point which I made in my third conclusion, namely that the proof is motivated by an implicit recognition of the necessity to rise to the affirmation of pure act.

The Function of Anselm's Key Formula

The starting point and mainspring of St. Anselm's proof is the formula, "something than which nothing greater can be thought".³⁴ In my opinion an examination of the function of this formula in the proof shows that the formula does not reflect the starting point of the ontological argument, which is an intuitive starting point. It reflects, instead, a discursive, indirect reasoning in which there is absolutely no intellectual intuition of the object, either in its possibility or in its actuality. As to actual content, the formula is wholly negative, serving a purpose analogous perhaps to the neti, neti of the Upanishads,³⁵ but certainly not serving the purpose of a positive, descriptive, clear and distinct concept of the divine essence. Nothing could be farther from the sense of St. Anselm's proof than to regard it as a process of deduction from a preformed concept of God's essence to God's real existence

³⁴This formula appears, with many minor variations of wording, many times in Prosl. II-IV and several times thereafter (Prosl. V, XIV, XV, XVIII). For example, there are six variant wordings of the formula in Prosl. II alone, the first of which is "aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit". (Opera omnia, I, 101.5)

³⁵Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, IV. V. 15. See S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, A Source Book in Indian Philosophy (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 77, 88; cf. pp. 529, 537-538, 541.

as one of the notes of that concept. To interpret the proof in this way would be to posit as its starting point an essential intuition, an a priori intuitive knowledge at least of the internal possibility, if not directly of the actuality, of the divine essence. But this is contrary to Anselm's actual procedure, because the formula which states the starting point of his proof lacks any trace of such an essential intuition.

I would contend that Anselm's key formula is "prescriptive" rather than descriptive; that it is so in the sense that it states an invitation, even an urging, for the mind to move (upward; inward; outward: all these ways), exhausting its natural resources, utilizing all its ingenuity in the pursuit of God's reality. "That than which a greater cannot be thought" functions as a "sursum corda!" -- an exhortation, not exactly to the "heart", but in this case especially to the finite intellect, to surpass itself in rising toward the summum cogitabile. Anselm well knew that the summum cogitabile was above the level of proper conceptual representation. The mind which responded to the invitation and actually strove to move, through concepts, to the thought of "that than which a greater cannot be thought", would come to know this, by experiencing from within the process the insufficiency of the concepts which it utilized. The finite mind would "feel", so to speak, from a certain moment of its intellectual ascension toward

God, the failure of all concepts which it was capable of forming.

St. Anselm's proof neither begins with a supposed intuition of the divine essence (the formula does not mean this), nor does it even end (once the demonstration has been achieved) with such an intuition. The cognizance of God's reality is distant, indirect, not perfectly clear, and, indeed, discursive, from the start to the conclusion. In fact, even at the end, when there is a kind of intellectual accomplishment to be rejoiced in, a new level of insight achieved -- even at that point the thinker is acutely conscious of the gap between what he has just achieved and a more perfect knowledge, which would be a direct, intuitive, non-discursive knowledge of God, not contingent upon a demonstration, even this most elegant one, but face to face, with God himself as his own evidence. This kind of knowledge, the thinker realizes, is in the gift of another life, in the state of beatitude.³⁶

To repeat my principal point: In my view the formula, "that than which nothing greater can be thought", does not function as a descriptive statement, tantamount to a positive

³⁶ Many passages in Proslogion show the thinker's awareness of the imperfection of the knowledge of God achieved through this demonstration. For example, chs. XIV and XVI-XVIII express an acute sense of the distance between this discursive knowledge and direct "vision". Ch. XXVI expresses the anticipation of perfect knowledge and love in the state of beatitude.

and adequate formulation of the divine essence, but as an exhortatory statement, urging the mind not to stop at any comfortable level of conceptualization but to exceed itself, exceed even its limits of distinct conceptualization and rise to the maximum thinkable. Anselm knows from the start of the proof to its conclusion that the latter will be at a level beyond our mind's capacity for direct knowledge, that is to say that it is beyond our proper conceptual capacity. But it is nevertheless in some way thinkable, which means that we can relate objectively to it by means of our intellect.

The Dynamic and Finalistic Character of the Proof

On any reading of the Proslogion one is struck by the dynamic character of the mental process which Anselm is, first, experiencing and, then, sketching as a way of leaving an itinerary which others may follow. By speaking of the proof's dynamic character I mean that it expresses a definite movement of the intellect, marked by an internal tension as of a natural finality, as it strives to rise to the upper limit of its capacity of objective affirmation, surpassing in its ascent the lesser levels for which its proper conceptual powers are adequate.³⁷ It thus appears

³⁷The "dynamic" nature of this proof consists especially in its character as an active intellectual search for an objective and transcendent goal. This character is

that the argument is directly on the track of that gradual but inevitable affirmation of the highest actuality, which, Maréchal says, is the ultimate rational necessity implicit underlying and motivating all the ways of proof of God, and which is, simply, the most absolute necessity of thought.

It seems to me, then, that the following words, which Maréchal used to describe the trajectory of the one proof, in its many "ways", which he made his own, can be applied, mutatis mutandis, to St. Anselm's proof, as identifying, more clearly than Anselm himself did, the nature of the necessity which impels the mind, once it has set out toward the maximum thinkable, to stop nowhere short of the infinitely actual:

l'affirmation objective . . . obéit . . . en tant qu'elle exprime le degré d'actualité des objets, à une loi de progression rigoureuse. En effet, affirmer la matière . . . c'est en même temps affirmer la forme, acte de la matière; affirmer l'essence, c'est indirectement affirmer l'esse, acte de l'essence; affirmer l'esse fini, acte limité, c'est affirmer implicitement l'Être pur, perfection nécessaire de l'acte; affirmer l'Acte pur comme condition rationnelle suprême, comme Idéal par excellence, c'est logiquement affirmer l'Acte pur comme Réalité absolue, car un Acte pur idéal, qui ne serait pas posé comme un Acte pur réel, ce serait une puissance d'actuation déclarée sommet de l'acte. (V, 345-346)

established in the Prooemium with Anselm's account of his strenuous quest for a single argument which would require no other. It is heightened in ch. I ("Excitatio mentis ad contemplandum Deum"), which sets a pattern of seeking and partially finding -- a pattern to which later chapters (XIV, XVI-XVIII) return.

This statement identifies the ultimate necessity to which thought is subject, the "law of progression" which it must obey in its affirmations. That necessity is nothing other than the radical orientation and submission of thought to being, to actuality. It is that orientation and that submission which require that the affirmation stop nowhere short of pure act.

The reader may note the nuance brought into Maréchal's thought by the expressions, "en même temps"; "indirectement"; "implicitelement", in the passage just cited. These three expressions all say very much the same thing: that there is, in the affirmation, an expressed, overt, direct aspect and a tacit, implicit, indirect aspect. Something is directly affirmed and simultaneously something else is implicitly affirmed. The pattern of this two-leveled affirmation can be seen as follows:

When that which is less actual (that is, more in the state of unrealized potency) is affirmed, that which is more actual is implicitly affirmed along with it. This pattern, a necessary one for thought, continues upward through all gradations of imperfect actuality, approaching indefinitely perfect actuality, short of which there is always the necessity to affirm, implicitly, a higher. So there is no stopping this process short of that perfect actuality, which is uniquely, supremely affirmable without implying a "more".

Thus, to affirm matter directly is to affirm form implicitly, because form is to its matter as act to potency. And so on. To affirm anything less than the perfectly actual is to affirm implicitly, in the last analysis, the perfectly actual, that which has no deficiency in actuality. Through this whole progression the intellect is affirming actuality (that which it is the nature of intellect to affirm), not stopping, and not logically able to stop, until the fullest thinkable actuality has been affirmed. In Maréchal's words:

Toute affirmation qui s'immobiliserait à l'un des échelons inférieurs d'actualité, entrerait donc en conflit avec le contenu affirmé, et se ruinerait elle-même. Sur la ligne montante de l'acte, une loi dialectique transcendantale, loi de nature, sanctionnée par la menace toujours imminente de l'incohérence logique, marque d'avance, jusqu'à la dernière (qui n'est plus représentable en concepts), les grandes étapes de l'affirmation objective. (V, 346)

In my opinion there is an equivalency of intended meaning between what St. Anselm regards as the maximum thinkable, "id quo maius cogitari non potest", and what Maréchal regards as the maximum affirmable: "l'Être pur, . . . l'acte pur comme Réalité absolue, . . . sommet de l'acte". (V, 346) Moreover, for both Maréchal and Anselm this summit of reality is, to us, superconceptual, although we can still somehow relate objectively to it by our intellect.

Now, I would argue that, in spite of the difference of terminologies (therefore mutatis mutandis), the reason

why Anselm, at a crucial point of his proof, declares the impossibility of according only esse in intellectu to "that than which a greater cannot be thought",³⁸ is the same as the reason why Maréchal, in the passage just quoted, declares the impossibility of stopping the intellectual progression with the affirmation of "l'Acte pur comme condition rationnelle suprême, comme Idéal par excellence". What both have discovered at these points in their respective arguments is precisely the insufficiency of anything less than the infinitely, actually existent to satisfy the ultimate demand of the intellect as a faculty of being, which is what the intellect fundamentally is for both of these philosophical realists. That Maréchal speaks in terms of the necessary attraction of the intellect to the supremely affirmable and Anselm speaks in terms of what is imposed upon thought by its effort to rise to the maximum thinkable underlies the dynamic, finalistic character of both proofs. In both of them the infinite end of the intellectual ascension exerts a decisive influence upon the discursive process. In Maréchal's argument the end of that intellectual ascension is

³⁸"Et certe id quo maius cogitari nequit non potest esse in solo intellectu. Si enim vel in solo intellectu est, potest cogitari esse et in re, quod maius est. Si ergo id quo maius cogitari non potest, est in solo intellectu: id ipsum quo maius cogitari non potest, est quo maius cogitari potest. Sed certe hoc esse non potest. Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet, et in intellectu et in re." Prosl. II (Opera omnia, I, 101.15 - 102.3)

"l'Être pur, . . . l'Acte pur comme Réalité absolue". In Anselm's proof the end is "id quo maius cogitari non potest", existing with aseity -- therefore from its own internal wealth of actuality³⁹ -- in re, and not only in intellectu, that is not only as an ideal in the mind of the human thinker. In both proofs that identical, real end is simply inevitable, once the mind, naturally and radically orientated and submitted to the real, has set out to reach the summit of its act.

The process cannot be terminated at the level of "l'Acte pur, comme Idéal par excellence", because the radical orientation is to the infinitely actual; so, to terminate the intellectual movement at the affirmation of an ideal, however elevated, would be to posit an intellectual content (namely, the ideal thus affirmed) in conflict with the requirement of the tendency -- a contradiction between the content and the "life", or between the formal and the dynamic aspects, of thought. The process cannot be terminated at the level of an "id quo maius cogitari non potest" having only esse in intellectu without having also esse in re, because, again, the intellectual effort is bent toward the maximum thinkable,

³⁹See Prosl. V: "Quid igitur es, domine deus, quo nil maius valet cogitari? Sed quid es nisi id quod summum omnium solum existens per seipsum, omnia alia fecit de nihilo?" (Opera omnia, I, 104. 11-13)

and no object which lacks actual existence, esse in re, no merely ideal object (when "ideal" is taken in a sense exclusive of "real") can satisfy the intellectual quest for the maximum thinkable. The contradiction which would arise if an object merely ideal were posited as the satisfaction of this intellectual quest would again be a contradiction between the "life" and the content of thought, a contradiction between the radical orientation and active disposition of the intellect and its actual content. The active disposition is toward an actual infinite; but the content, which by hypothesis is to be taken as the satisfaction of the disposition, is deficient in precisely that toward which the intellect is radically orientated: actuality.

From this comparison of Maréchal's and Anselm's proofs one can now see an important aspect of the essential similarity for which I have argued. It is that, in both proofs, essentially the same contradiction results if the reasoning process stops short of the actual, real infinite, that is, if it should terminate in an object purely ideal. In both cases it is a contradiction between a "lived" aspect of thought, namely its dynamic tendency toward the objective affirmation of infinite being, and an actual content of thought which is inadequate to satisfy the demand of the tendency.⁴⁰ In both cases the dynamic aspect of the

⁴⁰ Cf. the "lived" or "performative" self-contradiction which Aristotle discerned in skepticism. (Above, p. 56)

thought requires, for its coherence with the content of thought, the positing of an object which is not deficient in actuality; and it is for that reason that the end point of the proof must be the infinite real, even if -- as is the case -- that end point, precisely in its reality, transcends proper conceptual representation and can be known only indirectly.

I judge the dynamic essence and fundamental intent of St. Anselm's argument to be very like that of Maréchal. Both approach the proof of God's existence (by which they both mean the discursive demonstration of the necessity of affirming God's reality, not the direct intellectual intuition of the divine essence) dynamically, via an intellectual finality, the natural intellectual necessity of rising to the affirmation of the "perfect actual". Anselm lacks some of the terminology -- legacy of Thomistic Aristotelianism -- which lends greater explicitness and perhaps greater precision to Maréchal's procedure, when one reflects upon it and analyzes it. It is somehow clearer to say, "The imperfectly actual is imperfectly intelligible, and therefore it requires a perfectly actual condition beyond itself", than it is to say, "That which exists only in intellectu, without existing also in re, is not "something than which no greater can be thought". But what underlies both statements, whose essential intent is very similar, is the recognition of the rational necessity for affirming that which is

strictly unlimited and unqualified in respect to being, that which is plenary being; or perfect, infinite act.

I see in St. Anselm's argument a reasoning which goes straight on an unbroken course to its single target, attracting goal and final end: infinite, perfect being.

The "motor" of the argument is the absolute necessity which the mind discovers when, according to its natural finality, it seeks to know its maximally adequate, satiating object. This necessity, which the mind recognizes as an absolute law of its operation, is the necessity of affirming a pure and perfect actuality, an existent infinity of being, because as the object of this natural and necessary quest no object which is merely possible will do, no matter how great may be its "ideal" properties. For this quest nothing less than plenary actuality can serve as final end. Otherwise the act -- the finalistic movement -- of thought itself would be radically in vain, because its merely "ideal" content would even to the end be a frustration of its quest for the maximum thinkable. If that maximum is not in the real order, the thought is radically frustrated in its attempt to do what is its purpose, to engage being -- to be a faculty of the real.

When the argument of Anselm is understood in this way, it is clear that the "penalty" for not accepting its conclusion is the denial of the mind's capacity to measure

and affirm reality. If the mind, by striving to possess for its object the highest reality ("id quo maius cogitari non potest"), loses its engagement with actual existence and ends up engaging only an ideal existence bearing a deceptive appearance of real existence, then the mind's basic orientation to the real is seriously shaken; because in that case its most concerted effort to know the most real ends with a failure and, even worse, a deception. So the ontological value of the intellect as a faculty of knowing the real is what is ultimately at issue in St. Anselm's argument.

This is also what is finally at issue in Maréchal's "ways" of the proof of God. Because in those "ways" the affirmation of God's existence (the existence of pure actuality, intensive infinity of being) is necessary always for one and the same reason: in order that a finite reality, or an aspect of finite reality, in which the mind experiences a deficiency of actuality, be fully intelligible. It follows that the "penalty" for refusing this affirmation (affirmation necessary to the full intelligibility of finite existence) is that one thereby declares finite existence ultimately unintelligible to our minds. But finite existence is the proper and proportioned object of our minds. For it to be less than fully intelligible is a state of affairs which puts in question the very capacity of our minds to apprehend

reality. So, by reason of the non-affirmation of God's existence one would be left with a reality which would be in the last analysis irrational, recalcitrant to intelligence, and with an intellect which would not be in the last analysis a faculty of the real. These are simply untenable positions, by which I mean exactly that no subject can hold them without incurring contradiction between the "life" and the content, the dynamic and the formal aspects of his thought.

Conclusion

Some proponents of realist metaphysics have stressed most of all, about being, its externalness to our minds, its priorness to and independence of our knowing it. This stress upon the externalness of being corresponds to what I have called, borrowing Joseph Donceel's term, a one-sidedly "empiricistic" view of the provenance of metaphysical knowledge.⁴¹ This "empiricistic" view involves a conception of our minds as principally passive in their reception of being, in a manner analogous to the passivity of the senses; and it involves a basically "ocular" model of all our knowledge, including our metaphysical knowledge. I would agree with

⁴¹See above, pp. 24-25, n. 19 and pp. 135-136, text and n. 22.

Maréchal that this view of metaphysical realism depends in the last analysis upon a claim, express or tacit, of an "intellectual intuition", that is to say a direct intellectual contemplation of the act of being. With Maréchal I deny that man, with his discursive intelligence, has such a direct contemplation of being, and therefore I regard the foundation of the "empiricistic" realist metaphysics as flawed. But a realist metaphysics is possible on another foundation than that of an intellectual intuition of being, as Maréchal's work shows. Such a realist metaphysics is founded upon the internal finality of a discursive intellect which necessarily seeks being in all its objects, but which never directly sees being, face to face, in its infinite actuality.

Without compromising the aseity and ultimate transcendence of being, Maréchal stresses most of all, about being, its appetibility to our minds. This view involves a dynamic conception of both the nature of being and the manner of our knowledge of being. According to this dynamic conception, the most basic thing that can be said about being is that it is that toward which an intelligence and a rational will naturally tend; and the most basic thing that can be said about our act of knowing is that it is our intellect's intentional possession of being as its end -- a possession which in fact is never complete in this life, because our intellect is discursive, and a discursive knowledge of being

is an imperfect possession of being.

In Maréchal's view the aspect of our cognition which guarantees the transcendent implication -- the signification, by finite objects, of an existent infinity of being -- is the dynamic aspect rather than the formal, representative, "ocular" aspect. The discursive proof of God's existence depends entirely upon the reflective discovery that, from the beginning to the end of all our acts of knowledge, our intellect is constantly and powerfully "attracted" by being, and that the objective source of this attraction is infinite. On the first page of the first redaction of PD⁴² Maréchal expressed this point in the following words:

La métaphysique est, à mes yeux, la science humaine de l'absolu. Elle traduit immédiatement la saisie de notre intelligence par l'absolu, saisie qui n'est point un joug subi, mais un principe interne de vie.⁴³

In my view the pivotal insights, which facilitate and give structure to Maréchal's presentation of God-proof, are the following: (1) our intellect's natural need and corresponding capacity for affirming being, without limit; (2) the "contingency" (inconsistance intelligible) of all finite being: its lack of unqualified affirmability and therefore its insufficiency to exhaust our mind's potential for affirmation; (3) our intellect's need to move, objec-

⁴²Louvain, 1917. Extracts published in MM, I, 288-298.

⁴³MM, I, 289.

tively, beyond the affirmation of the finite being in order to satisfy its natural finality, or in order fully to deploy its active capacity for affirmation; and (4) the basic conception of being as the attracting goal and motivator of this dynamic intellectual process. These four "pivotal insights" stand in complete solidarity; but of the four I judge the last-mentioned to be the most fundamental, and I think that in it resides the ultimate reason why, as Maréchal argues, the actual existence of intensively infinite being (God) is dynamically implied in all the objective acts of the speculative intellect. I shall conclude with a comment on this most crucial insight.

As Maréchal stated in the passage from the first redaction of PD which has just been quoted, being rules and masters the intellect; but it rules and masters by attracting. It moves the intellect from within, with a motion which is fully natural to the intellect. What being is, most fundamentally, is the final, adequate, total and saturating end of intellect: intellect's perfect natural good. The human intellect, which according to St. Thomas is the lowest rung on the ladder of intellectual natures, has its share in and its rightful claim on this good — the natural right to possess being to the maximum of its capacity.

In this view the dynamic aspect of our intellectual activity, where the intellect's finality is rooted, is a

surer guide to being than the formal aspect, which consists of our actual mental representations of objects. For although the representations we utilize may sometimes be deficient and a poor guide to being, our intellectual finality, the dynamic aspect of our intellectual life, is always necessarily directed toward being. It follows that if the dynamic in our intellectual activity can be analyzed -- which it can, by a complete reflection on our act of cognition -- it provides us with a ~~super~~ key to the nature of being (its necessary and infallible end) than that which we have through the representative, formal aspect of our knowledge. Maréchal dedicated himself to just such a reflective analysis of the dynamic in our knowledge. He made his case for the speculative necessity of realist metaphysics primarily on the basis of the insight that, in our knowledge, the dynamic is radically prior to the formal and is, together with the formal, internally "constitutive" of all speculative objects. One of the results of Maréchal's analysis of the dynamic in our knowledge is the discovery that the actual existence of God must be affirmed as the ultimate condition for the affirmability -- that is, the judgment of objective reality and intelligibility -- of any speculative object. What this means is that, in the act of knowing a speculative object, the intellect necessarily projects the object against a screen of infinite and perfectly intelligible being. Our

mind cannot judge a finite object as "real" without implying in the judgment the existence of this "more", this infinite background which makes a judgment of finite reality possible. We cannot affirm the proximate reality as objectively real and intelligible without implicitly affirming the ultimate ground of all objective reality and intelligibility. All our direct acts of knowledge necessarily include an indirect reference to and affirmation of infinite being (God).

I find Maréchal's presentation of the proof of God's existence satisfactory on both philosophical and religious grounds. On philosophical grounds, what he has shown is, I believe, the most that can be shown: that the objective affirmation of infinite, actual being is a basic necessity of objective thought as such, so that its existence has the same necessity as the truth of the proposition: "objective thought, that is the actual speculative cognition of reality, is possible". In my view this proposition has absolute necessity, and it follows that the existence of infinite, actual being has absolute necessity. On religious grounds, I do not find the "God of the philosophers", whose existence is demonstrable as Maréchal has shown, repugnant to the religious sensitivity which longs for a "God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Jesus Christ" -- a living, infinitely providential and saving God. In my view there is complete mutual coherence and compatibility between the

philosophical conception of the Pure Act -- dynamic source and ground of all finite actuality -- which masters and attracts the intellect by a motion fully "natural" to the intellect, and the religious conception of the divine Lover, who saves by a "grace" which, working in hidden ways within natures, perfects those natures in their own line.

APPENDIX

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MY INTERPRETATION
OF ST. ANSELM'S PROOF

I present the following summary "history" of my understanding of St. Anselm's proof not in order to suggest, for the interpretation of it just presented, a greater importance than the reader may judge it to have, but simply in order to indicate its provenance and especially its indebtedness to some thinkers without whose interpretations this one would never have been formed. I do not thereby imply that the interpretation here presented is identical to any of those which I shall mention. Indeed in my opinion it differs in one way or another from each of those interpretations which helped to shape it. None of these, in particular, argued for the "bridge" which I have suggested between St. Anselm's proof and the Thomistic ways. There are other differences as well, which I shall not develop here. But in spite of differences it remains true that the interpretation I have presented depends in important ways on the work of those thinkers whom I shall name.

My attempt to understand St. Anselm's proof has extended over eighteen years, in intermittent efforts, from the time of my first reading of the Proslogion. I was at

that time strongly struck with something both attractive, intellectually appealing and elusive about this proof, a first impression which subsequent study of its developments, interpretations and criticisms did not dissipate. When I read the developments or refinements of the proof by later thinkers, intended to supply for what they saw as logical deficiencies in the earlier version, I thought them less intellectually convincing than St. Anselm, and in an indistinct way I thought his proof had been deformed by its defenders and "improvers". When I read the attacks upon the proof, in an inarticulate way I thought they had missed somewhat of its essence. But I could not have defined that essence, nor therefore could I have said clearly what, if anything, the critics had missed.

In my first readings of St. Anselm's argument I did not escape, occasionally, the impression of a verbal or logical "trick" being put over on me: a thought which, as at least a possibility, must at some point cross the mind of anyone who grapples with this proof. But in my mind the proof survived this occasional suspicion of being, in Kant's forceful words, "a miserable tautology".¹ It

¹Critique of Pure Reason, A 597, B 625 (N.K. Smith trans., p. 504). It should be noted that Kant had in mind particularly the Cartesian-Leibnizian proof, as is indicated in A 602, B 630. (Smith, p. 507).

retained, for reasons then unclear to me, both an appealingness and a certain convincingness, which were enough to keep my mind open to the possibility of its validity, if I could see my way clear to an interpretation of it which would recapture its original intention and restore to it that quality which -- as I thought -- its improvers had deformed and its critics (agreeing with the improvers about the essential character of the proof) had missed.

My revisitations of Anselm's proof throughout this time were motivated by a sense of personal intellectual urgency. To say it simply, to understand that proof, whose interpretations and criticisms, as far as I knew them, did not seem adequate to what I found in it, seemed to me a matter of intellectual importance.

Three influences combined to break the impasse in my understanding of Anselm's proof. I shall mention these very briefly, as contributing to the interpretation which I have offered. Such a brief mention cannot do them justice, but I judge it to be beyond the appropriate limits of my topic to enter into the positive "substance" of their interpretations. I shall therefore mention only those aspects of them which had formative influence on my understanding of Anselm's proof, which I consider as distinct from all of them.

The first of these influences was Karl Barth's

Anselm,² which completed for my thought a break from a standard interpretation of whose rightness I was already less than convinced, but to which I could state no clear alternative. That interpretation consisted in the identification of Anselm's proof with the later "ontological argument", an identification which Barth emphatically denied.³ I did not consider Barth's own positive interpretation of the proof as an entirely satisfactory one, for reasons which I must here leave unstated in order to stay within the limits of what is necessary to my topic. But Barth's separation of the proof from the standard "ontological argument" line of interpretation served as a stimulus to look for a better interpretation.

The second influence upon my understanding of St. Anselm's proof was the interpretation of that proof begun by Maurice Blondel and developed by a few thinkers who were influenced in this by him.⁴ This "Blondelian" interpretation

²Karl Barth, Anselm: Fides quaerens intellectum, trans. Ian W. Robertson (London: S.C.M. and Richmond: John Knox, 1960). This is a translation of Barth's Fides quaerens intellectum (1931, 1958), for which see Bibliography.

³See ibid., pp. 135-140 and 171.

⁴See M. Blondel, L'Action (Paris: Alcan, 1893 and 1950), pp. 343-350; Jacques Pallard, "Prière et dialectique", in Dieu vivant, VI (1946), 51-70; J.-C. Dhotel, "Action et dialectique: les preuves de Dieu dans L'Action de 1893", in Archives de Philosophie, XXVI (1963), 5-26; A. Forest, "L'Argument de S. Anselme dans la philosophie réflexive", in Spicilegium Beccense, I (Paris: Vrin, 1959), 273-294. This

gave prominence to some aspects of Anselm's proof which were usually ignored in interpretations of it: its quality of a dynamic movement; its inner tension, the internal stress as of a finality; its strongly affective and yet very intellectualistic character; above all, the dynamic, striving and finalistic quality of the proof, which was most importantly, for Anselm, an almost autobiographical account of the "itinerary" of a painfully discursive, somewhat recalcitrant thought called by its object to surpass itself.

This interpretation seized my attention and appealed to me very much, as doing justice, for the first time in my acquaintance with interpretations of St. Anselm's proof, to exactly those of its characteristics which I thought were responsible for its peculiar appeal to me, in terms both affective and theoretical. I thought that this interpretation had finally explained why it was that I found the later reformulations of the proof (by those who made of it the "ontological argument" and then sought to patch up its logical defects) so "pale" and inferior to Anselm's proof. The reformulations had omitted exactly the dynamic, finalistic aspect which was central to the proof, had deformed it from what had been, for Anselm, most essentially a mental

article is translated by A.C. McGill and included as "St. Anselm's Argument in Reflexive Philosophy", in J. Hick and A.C. McGill, eds., The Many-Faced Argument (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 275-300.

itinerary, motivated by a final and attracting goal, to what now was a mere inspection of the constitutive notes of a concept.

In addition, it seemed to me that the Blondelian interpretation showed a superior awareness of and attentiveness to the integrity of the whole Proslogion as a single, continuous statement. In short, this interpretation was based upon a whole reading of Anselm's statement, upon which it became clear that the intellectual movement which was its essence continued unbroken to the end of the Proslogion instead of stopping at the end of Chapter Four. An interpretation which took clearly into account this continuity, this singleness of statement, had, I thought, a better chance of being attuned to the nuances and the authentic intention of Anselm's thought than one which, as almost all the others (save Barth's) did, treated the "proof" chapters (Prosl. II-IV) in disconnection from the rest of the Proslogion and, from neglect of the proof's immediate context, treated it in an alien context such as that of the disputes between modern rationalism and its critics. In short, I thought that one of the merits of the Blondelian interpretation by contrast with others I had read (Barth's excepted) was that it attended better to the relation of the "proving" passages to the rest of Proslogion, and preferred to interpret those passages in the light of what Anselm said in the other twenty-three chapters of that work, rather than in the light

of what later philosophers had said about the classic "proof" chapters. The Blondelian interpretation seemed to me a more conscientious effort to interpret Anselm's thought, and no one else's.

The third and the strongest influence upon my thought about the nature of St. Anselm's proof was Maréchal, who wrote relatively little about that proof, and most of that little in a negative tone.⁵ Yet Maréchal's analysis of God-proof, the central ideas developed in his interpretation of the Thomistic ways, corresponded very closely to the Blondelian interpretation of Anselm's proof, and even independently of that correspondence struck me as having applicability to that proof. My acquaintance with the Blondelian interpretation helped me to see the possible applicability of the Maréchalian analysis to St. Anselm's proof, but indeed in my opinion the Maréchalian interpretation of God-proof illuminated Anselm's proof even more than did the

⁵Principal places where Maréchal treats St. Anselm's proof are the following:

- (1) in PD: I, 192; II, 64; III, 250, 254; V, 339, 380, 473-474 and 473, n. 1. By far the most significant of these references are those in Cahier V.
- (2) in the article, "Au seuil de la métaphysique: abstraction ou intuition?" (See above, p. 135, n. 20): MM, I, 141-142; cf. MM, I, 106, 135-136, 168 (all in same article).
- (3) in Précis d'histoire de la philosophie moderne, I: De la Renaissance à Kant (Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 1933), p. 69.

Blondelian interpretation, because it took a more distinctively, even austerely, "intellectualistic" approach, which I thought actually nearer to the approach of Anselm than was the (as I saw it) "mixed" approach of Blondel, whose intellectualism is tinged with a certain voluntarism, a combination more characteristic of modern thinkers than, I think, of Anselm. At the same time Maréchal's approach stressed the dynamic and finalistic aspects of God-proof (and of all intellectual activity) as much as did Blondel's, and therefore also did justice to that essential quality of the proof which Blondel had finely noted. So it happened that the study of Maréchal, who interpreted directly only the Thomistic ways and who was mostly negative in the few things he wrote about St. Anselm's proof, reawakened my interest in that proof and suggested to me, even more forcefully than the Blondelians had done, an interpretation of Anselm's proof toward which I had been groping.⁶

⁶Maréchal had high regard for Blondel's writings and admitted the impact of Blondel on his own thought. For comment on this see A. Milet, "Les 'Cahiers' du P. Maréchal: Sources doctrinales et influences subies", Revue néoscholastique de Philosophie, XLIII (1940-45), 225-251, esp. 241-247; further comment in É. Dirven, De la forme à l'acte, pp. 23 and 280, and in Soeur Marie de la Croix, O.C.D., "La pensée du P. Joseph Maréchal", Nouvelle Revue Théologique, XCIII (1971), 985-987.

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