

AUGUSTINIAN CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

How does Christianity bear on philosophy? Is there such a thing as Christian philosophy, or are there only Christians who are also philosophers? How should Christianity and philosophy be related? *Should* they be related? In "Advice to Christian Philosophers" I said that Christian philosophers should display more autonomy: they have their own fish to fry, their own projects to pursue, (or their own axes to grind, as some might prefer to put it). Here I want to say more about what these projects (or fish, or axes) are like. And the right way to think about these matters, so it seems to me, is broadly Augustinian. Accordingly, I want to propose a programmatic sketch (a *very* programmatic sketch) of a conception of Christian philosophy that grows out of some central Augustinian emphases. I don't claim, however, that Augustine in fact thought of Christian philosophy the way I shall suggest. The primary focus of my paper is not historical (that would in any event be beyond my competence); what I want to do is make a suggestion as to how we should think about Christian philosophy *now*; but this way of thinking of the matter grows out of Augustinian roots.¹ It's worth noting, furthermore, that what is at issue is not just a way of thinking about Christianity and philosophy, but about Christianity and scholarship more generally.

There are at least four elements in Augustinian Christian philosophy. The first two of these are widely recognized and relatively uncontroversial: I shall therefore be brief about them. The remaining two, however, require more by way of explanation, illustration and defense.

I. Philosophical Theology

Clearly one thing that goes into Christian philosophy, thought of in Augustinian fashion, is *philosophical theology*. Philosophical theology is a matter of thinking about the central doctrines of the Christian faith from a philosophical perspective and employing the resources of philosophy. Philosophical theology, of course, has been part of the stock-in-trade of Christian philosophers and theologians from the very beginning. It was also practiced with distinction by Augustine; one thinks, for example, of his remarkable work on the Trinity. At present, this enterprise is faring rather well, perhaps even flourishing; the last few years have seen a remarkable

flurry of activity in philosophical theology as pursued by Christian philosophers. There is important work on the divine attributes: as well as the classic Stump-Kretzmann work on God's eternity² for example, there is also excellent work on omnipotence, omniscience, essential goodness, and alleged divine simplicity. There is also good work on how God acts in the world and on such central doctrines of Christianity as the Atonement, Original Sin, and the Incarnation; and there is much else as well. Not everyone is unreservedly enthusiastic about this work; there is the impression abroad (at least among some theologians) that philosophical theology as pursued by contemporary philosophers is often unduly ahistorical and uncontextual, and could profit by closer contact with what theologians know. No doubt this is correct; nevertheless, however, much of this work is both powerful and profound and of great interest.

II. *Apologetics*

Apologetics, from an Augustinian perspective, comes in two varieties. First, there is *negative* apologetics, where the aim is to defend Christianity against attacks from its detractors. This enterprise, of course, has gone on from the very beginnings of Christianity. The attacks in question may take various forms. It was argued early on that Christianity is socially or politically subversive; there were apologetic replies by Tertullian and others.³ It has also been argued that indulgence in Christianity promotes and encourages a weak, sniveling, inferior, hypocritical, and generally disgusting sort of person, as with Nietzsche; these claims, however, seem so bizarre and far from the mark that they have called out little by way of reply. It has been argued often, during recent centuries, that the beliefs Christians typically hold are *false*; these arguments have typically proceeded by way of arguing that *theism* is false. For example, there are arguments for the conclusion that Christian theism or theism *simpliciter* is *incoherent*. There is, for example, the broadly Wittgensteinian claim that there couldn't be a person without a body; if this were so, the theistic idea of God as a person without a body would be incoherent. Responses have come from many quarters.⁴ It has also been argued that the development of modern science, or certain specific teachings of modern science, or perhaps the habits of mind fostered by modern science, at any rate something in the neighborhood, have shown that theism (or other crucial elements of the Christian faith) are mistaken. More important, there is the argument from evil, in both its deductive and probabilistic forms; and there are several classical and contemporary apologetic replies.⁵ Finally it has been argued that whatever the *truth* of Christian belief, such belief is intellectually shod-

dy or third-rate, that it is *irrational* or *unjustified*. A prime contemporary example here would be the late John Mackie's book, *The Miracle of Theism*. A second kind of argument for the irrationality or inferiority of theistic belief has come from those who, like Freud and Marx, propose various unflattering explanations of the widespread phenomenon of religious belief.⁶ Contemporary Christian philosophers have done good work in repelling these attacks.

According to an Augustinian approach, it is important to keep careful track of the audience you propose to address in working at Christian philosophy. Some elements of Christian philosophy (see sections III and IV below) are addressed primarily to the Christian community; here one can use premises and appeal to considerations that are widely shared among Christians, even if they have little currency outside the Christian community. Not so for apologetics. In a paradigm incarnation, anyway, the apologete directs his efforts, not first of all to the Christian community, but to those outside it, to those on the edges of it, to those who are considering joining it, as well as to the skeptic lurking in the breast of every serious Christian.

There is also positive apologetics. Here the intended audience is much the same; in the paradigm cases it is those who are outside the faith, together with those who are looking, together with the unbelieving aspect of every believer. The efforts of the positive apologete are directed first of all towards giving theistic proofs or arguments: proof or arguments for the existence of God. Of course this enterprise goes back to the beginnings of Christianity;⁷ it hit high water marks in the 5th, 11th, 13th and 14th centuries in Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham, and again in the 17th century with Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, and perhaps most important, Leibniz. Positive apologetics has not flourished as luxuriantly in our day, although Richard Swinburne⁸ has done much for the enterprise.

Positive apologetics has tended to be dominated by two unfortunate assumptions. First, much of the discussion has taken it for granted that a good theistic argument would have to meet extremely high standards of cogency and indeed be *demonstrative*. In the tradition of the high middle ages, the idea was that a good theistic argument would provide *scientia*, scientific knowledge; one who has *scientia* of a given proposition, furthermore, *sees* that it is true by seeing that it follows from what he sees to be true. Such an argument would start from what is self-evident and proceed majestically by way of self-evidently valid argument forms to its conclusion. The 17th-century tradition is (with the exception of Locke) equally stringent. But why suppose a good theistic argument has to be *that* good?

After all, hardly any philosophical arguments meet conditions as stratospheric as all that. Take your favorite philosophical argument: Quine's argument for the indeterminacy of translation, or Davidson's for the claim that we can't understand anyone without assuming that most of what he thinks is true, or Wittgenstein's private-language argument, or Kripke's argument that names are rigid designators: none of these arguments meets standards even remotely like the ones theistic arguments have been required to meet (in fact most of those arguments can be seen to be either unsound or else dependent upon controversial premises). So why should theistic arguments be measured by such unrealistic standards?

A weaker version of the above requirement is that a good theistic argument must have premises accepted by nearly everyone, or nearly everyone who thinks about the topic, or nearly everyone who thinks about it and has a view on the topic.⁹ But this requirement too is much too strong. There are, for example, theistic arguments from the existence and nature of propositions, properties, numbers and sets. These arguments are very much worth study and development, and I myself think they are *good* arguments. But a crucial premise of each is that there are such things as propositions, properties, numbers or sets; and not everyone believes that. Another of its premises is that there are many more propositions (properties, numbers, sets), than human beings have or could have thought of; and not everyone believes that either. But that doesn't mean that the argument in question is not a good theistic argument. It can be a fine argument, and a useful argument, even if not everyone accepts all its premises. If some do not accept its premises, then it won't be a good argument for *them*; it might nonetheless be a good argument for those who *do* accept its premises.

A third problem: discussion of theistic arguments has for the most part been confined to the traditional big three.¹⁰ In Kant's classification, the ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments. But in fact there are many more. There are in addition arguments from propositions, properties, numbers, and sets, but also arguments from the nature of proper function. There are arguments from intentionality, from counterfactuals, from the confluence of epistemic reliability and epistemic warrant with epistemic justification. There are arguments from reference, simplicity, intuition, and love; from colors and flavors, miracles, play and enjoyment, morality, from beauty, and from the meaning of life; and there is even an argument from the existence of evil. The question whether these arguments are *good* arguments is of course controversial (just as in the case of nearly any other important philosophical arguments). Many of these arguments, however, seem to me to be extremely promising, and very much worth detailed attention and serious work.

Philosophical theology and apologetics are relatively uncontroversial and have been prospering. There are two other important elements of Augustinian Christian philosophy, however, that haven't been doing as well, at least in part because their importance hasn't been sufficiently recognized. These two elements are more specifically Augustinian. I call the first of them 'Christian Philosophical Criticism' but only because I can't think of a better name.

III. Christian Philosophical Criticism

According to Augustine, human history is the arena of a great struggle, a battle or contest between two profoundly opposed forces. Augustine spoke of the City of God and the Earthly City or City of the World: the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas Mundi*.¹¹ The former is dedicated, in principle, to God and to the fulfillment of his will and to the accomplishment of his purposes; but the latter is dedicated to something wholly different. Augustine's 19th-century Dutch follower Abraham Kuyper spoke of an *antithesis* between belief—Christian belief—and unbelief, an antithesis that in one way or another cuts across and manifests itself in every important area of human life. (I don't mean to suggest, of course, that nothing of Augustinian importance happened between the 5th century and the 19th.)

Kuyper and Augustine, I believe, are dead right, but I want to develop their insights in my own way. Indeed, we *must* do this in our own way and from our own historical perspective. The precise relationship between the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas Mundi* constantly changes; the form the Earthly City itself takes constantly changes; an account of the fundamental loyalties and commitments of the *Civitas Mundi* that was correct in Augustine's day, now some 15 centuries ago, does not directly apply at present. And even since the time of Kuyper (1837–1920), roughly a century ago, there has been substantial change and substantial clarification and differentiation; in some ways it is now considerably easier, I think, to see the essential contours of the ways of thinking that have emerged since the 17th and 18th centuries.

Augustine and Kuyper are right; and the contemporary Western intellectual world, like the worlds of their times, is a battleground or arena in which rages a battle for men's souls. This battle, I believe, is a three-way contest. There are three main contestants, in the contemporary Western intellectual world, and I want to try to characterize them. Of course an undertaking like this is at best fraught with peril (and at worst arrogantly presumptuous); the intellectual culture of the contemporary western world is vast, amorphous, and far-flung, including a stunning variety of ways of thinking, in an enormous variety of intellectual traditions—traditions that

are never found in pure form but influence and interpenetrate one another in a thousand complex ways. We know how hard it is to get a real sense of the intellectual climate of a *past* era—the Enlightenment, say, or 13th-century Europe, or 19th-century America. It is clearly much *more* difficult to come to a solid understanding of one's own time. Real trepidation is very much in order. There are also special less universally applicable reasons for trepidation: wouldn't it be the historians, not the philosophers, whose job it is to figure out intellectual trends, take the intellectual pulse of the time, ferret out underlying presuppositions of the whole contemporary era? Perhaps so. I offer no defense.

As I see it, therefore, there are at present three main competitors vying for spiritual supremacy in the West: three fundamental perspectives or ways of thinking about what the world is like, what we ourselves are like, what is most important about the world, what our place in it is, and what we must do to live the good life. The first of these perspectives is Christianity or Christian theism; here I need say little about that. I do want to remind you, however, that despite recent modest successes in various parts of the world, the Christian perspective has been very much on the defensive (at least in the West) ever since the Enlightenment.

In addition to the Christian perspective, then, there are fundamentally two others. Both of these pictures have been with us since the ancient world; but each has received much more powerful expression in modern times. According to the first perspective, there is no God, nor anything else beyond nature; and we human beings are insignificant parts of a vast cosmic machine that proceeds in majestic indifference to us, our hopes and aspirations, our needs and desires, our sense of fairness or fittingness. This picture goes back to Epicurus, Democritus, and others in the Ancient world and finds magnificent expression in Lucretius' poem, *De Rerum Natura*. Suppose we call it 'Perennial Naturalism'; an eloquent (if a bit florid) contemporary statement of this perspective is to be found in Bertrand Russell's "A Free Man's Worship".¹² According to the second perspective, on the other hand, it is we ourselves—we human beings—who are responsible for the basic structure of the world. This notion goes back to Protagoras, in the ancient world, with his claim that man is the measure of all things; it finds enormously more powerful expression in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. We could call this perspective 'Enlightenment Humanism', or 'Enlightenment Subjectivism', but perhaps a better name is 'Creative Antirealism'. Perennial Naturalism and Creative Antirealism are very different indeed; I shall say something about each.

A. PERENNIAL NATURALISM

Perennial naturalism ('Naturalism' for short), as I say, goes back to the ancient world; it is also to be found in the medieval world, perhaps among some of the Averroists, for example. It was left to modernity, however, to display the most complete and thorough manifestations of this perspective. Hobbes, the Enlightenment Encyclopedists, and Baron D'Holbach are early modern exponents of this picture; among our contemporaries and near contemporaries there are Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, Willard van Orman Quine, and Wilfrid Sellars, the majority of contemporary Anglo-American philosophers, a surprising number of liberal theologians, and a host of others in and out of academia. From this perspective, there is no God and human beings are properly seen as parts of nature. The way to understand what is most distinctive about us, our ability to love, to act, to think, to use language, our humor and playacting, our art, philosophy, literature, history, our morality, our religion, our tendency to enlist in sometimes unlikely causes and devote our lives to them—the fundamental way to understand all this is in terms of our community with (nonhuman) nature. We are best seen as parts of nature and are to be understood in terms of our place in the natural world.¹³

A couple of examples here: first, a trivial one. Those who endorse this view often seem to think that the way to find out how we human beings should live is to see how the other animals manage things; this is the naturalistic equivalent of the Biblical "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and be wise." I recently heard a TV talk show in which a scientist was belittling traditional sexual ethics and mores—"heterosexual pair bonding," he called it—on the grounds that only three per cent of the other animals do things this way. He didn't say anything about plants, but no doubt even more interesting conclusions could be drawn there.

A second more serious example: a couple of years ago I heard a distinguished American philosopher reflecting on knowledge, belief, and the whole human cognitive enterprise. The way to understand this whole situation, he said—the way to see what is most basic and important about it—is not, of course, to see it as one of the manifestations of the image of God, a way in which we resemble the Lord, who is the prime knower, and who has created us in such a way as to be finite and limited mirrors of his infinite and unlimited perfection. This philosopher took quite a different line. Human beings, he said, hold beliefs (and so far there is little to object to); and these beliefs can cause them to act in certain ways. Put in more

sophisticated if less insightful terms, a person's beliefs can be part of a causal explanation of her actions. Now how can this be? How does it happen, how can it be that human beings are such that they can be caused to do certain things by what they believe? How does my believing there is a beer in the refrigerator cause or partly cause this largish lumpy physical object which is my body to heave itself out of a comfortable armchair, move over to the refrigerator and open its door?

The answer: think of a thermostat: it too has beliefs—simpleminded beliefs, no doubt, but still beliefs. What it believes are such things as *it's too hot in here*, or *it's too cold in here*, or *it's just right in here*; and it is easy to see how its having those beliefs brings it about that the furnace or the air conditioning goes on. And now the basic idea: we should see human thinking and its connection with action as a rather more complicated case of what goes on in the thermostat. The idea is that if we think about how it goes with the thermostat, we will have the key to understanding how it goes with human beings.

This particular project is a part of a much broader contemporary naturalistic project: the project of giving a naturalistic account or explanation of human cognition generally—of human perception and knowledge and belief, of evidence, argument, discovery and insight. And of course this is just one example of a still broader project: the project of seeing *all* that is distinctive about us—literature, art, play, humor, music, morality, religion, science, scholarship, those tendencies to enlist in improbable causes—in terms of our community with nonhuman nature.

The form this perspective takes in our own day is broadly evolutionary: we are to try to understand the above phenomena by way of their origin in random genetic mutation or some other source of variability, and their perpetuation by natural selection. Consider sociobiological explanations of love, for example: love between men and women, between plants and children, love for one's friends, love of church, college, country—love in all its diverse manifestations and infinite variety. Taken thus broadly, love is a most significant human phenomenon and an enormously powerful force in our lives. And how are we to think of love, on the sort of evolutionary account in question? Well, the basic idea is that love arose, ultimately and originally, by way of some source of variability such as random genetic mutation; it persisted *via* natural selection because it has or had survival value. Male and female human beings, like male and female hippopotami, get together to have children (colts) and stay together to raise them; this has survival value. Once we see that point, we understand that sort of love and see its basic significance; and the same goes for these other varieties and

manifestations of love. And that, fundamentally, is what there is to say about love.

From a theistic perspective, of course, this is hopelessly inadequate as an account of the significance and place of love in the world. The fact is that love reflects the basic structure and nature of the universe; for God himself, the first being of the universe, is love, and we love because he has created us in his image. From the naturalistic perspective, furthermore, what goes for love goes for those other distinctively human phenomena: art, literature, music; play and humor; science, philosophy and mathematics; our tendency to see the world from a religious perspective, our inclinations towards morality, the willingness on the part of some to subordinate their welfare to that of others,¹⁴ and so on. All these things are to be understood in terms of our community with nonhuman nature. All of these are to be seen as arising, finally, by way of the mechanisms driving evolution, and are to be understood in terms of their place in evolutionary history.

Perennial naturalism has made enormous inroads into Western universities; indeed, John Lucas and others think that it is the contemporary orthodoxy. In support of Lucas's claim, we might note that, oddly enough, perennial naturalism has a considerable following among allegedly Christian theologians. Thus Gordon Kaufman suggests that in this modern nuclear age, we can no longer think of God as the transcendent personal creator of the heavens and the earth; we must think of Him instead, says Kaufman, as "the historical evolutionary force that has brought us all into being."¹⁵ Perhaps one may be pardoned for wondering what the nuclear age has to do with whether God is the transcendent personal creator, or just an historical evolutionary force. We can imagine an earlier village sceptic making a similar remark about, say, the invention of the catapult, or perhaps the long bow.

Perennial naturalism is particularly popular among those—scientists or others—who take a high view of modern science. Perennial naturalism also constantly influences and (as I see it) corrupts Christian thinking. Christians who think about science, for example, sometimes say that science can't take any account of God in giving its explanations; science is necessarily restricted, both in its subject matter and in its explanations and accounts, to the natural world. But why think a thing like that? Of course the claim might be merely verbal: "the word 'science' " it might be said, "is to be defined as an empirical and experimental account of the natural world that is restricted, both in its subject matter and its conclusions, to the natural world." But then the question would be: should Christians engage in science? Or more exactly, in trying to understand the world of nature

should they engage *only* in science? Shouldn't they instead or in addition work out a parallel explanatory activity that takes account of all that we know, including such facts as that human beings were created by the Lord in his image?

It is hard to overestimate the dominance and influence of perennial naturalism in our universities. Yet I think Lucas errs in promoting it to the status of the contemporary orthodoxy. It is indeed orthodoxy among those who nail their banner to the mast of science; but there is another basic way of looking at the world that is, I think, nearly as influential—and just as antithetical to Christianity. Perennial Naturalism gets fierce competition from Creative Antirealism, to which I now turn.

B. CREATIVE ANTI-REALISM

Here the fundamental idea—in sharp contrast to Naturalism—is that it is we human beings, in some deep and important way, who are responsible for the structure and nature of the world; it is *we*, fundamentally, who are the architects of the universe. This view received magnificent if obscure expression in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant did not deny, of course, that there really are such things as mountains, horses, planets and stars. Instead, his characteristic claim is that their existence and their fundamental structure have been conferred upon them by the conceptual activity of persons—not by the conceptual activity of a personal God, but by *our* conceptual activity, the conceptual activity of human beings. According to this view, the whole phenomenal world—the world of trees and planets and dinosaurs and stars—receives its basic structure from the constituting activity of mind. Such fundamental structures of the world as those of space and time, object and property, number, truth and falsehood, possibility and necessity—these are not to be found in the world as such, but are somehow constituted by our own mental or conceptual activity. They are contributions from our side; they do not constitute a grasp of what is to be found in the things in themselves. *We impose* them on the world; we do not discover them there. Were there no persons like ourselves engaging in conceptual, noetic activities, there would be nothing in space and time, nothing displaying object-property structure, nothing that is true or false, possible or impossible, no kinds of things coming in a certain number—nothing like this at all.

We might think it impossible that the things we know—houses, horses, cabbages and kings—should exist but fail to be in space-time and fail to display object-property structure; indeed, we may think it impossible that there be a thing of *any* sort that doesn't have properties. If so, then Kant's

view implies that there would be nothing at all if it weren't for the creative structuring activity of persons like us. Of course I don't say Kant clearly *drew* this conclusion; indeed, he may have obscurely drawn the opposite conclusion: that is part of his charm. But the fundamental *thrust* of Kant's self-styled Copernican Revolution is that the things in the world owe their basic structure and perhaps their very existence to the noetic activity of our minds. Or perhaps I should say not minds but *mind*; for whether, on Kant's view, there is just one transcendental ego or several is, of course, a vexed question. Indeed, this question is more than vexed; given Kant's view that quantity, number, is a human category imposed on the world, there is presumably no number *n*, finite or infinite, such that the answer to the question "How many of those transcendental egos are there?" is *n*.

Until you feel the grip of this way of looking at things, it can seem a bit presumptuous, not to say preposterous. Did *we* structure or create the heavens and the earth? Some of us think there were animals—dinosaurs, let's say—roaming the earth before human beings had so much as put in an appearance; how could it be that those dinosaurs owed their structure to our noetic activity? What did we do to give *them* the structure they enjoyed? And what about all those stars and planets we have never even heard of: how have we managed to structure them? When did we do all this? Did we structure ourselves in this way too? And if the way things are is thus up to us and our structuring activity, why don't we improve things a bit?

Creative Antirealism can seem faintly or more than faintly ridiculous; nevertheless it is widely accepted and an extremely important force in the contemporary Western intellectual world. Vast stretches of contemporary Continental philosophy, for example, are anti-realist. There is Existentialism, according to which, at least in its Sartrean varieties, each of us structures or creates the world by way of her own decisions. There is also contemporary Heideggerian hermeneutical philosophy of various stripes; there is contemporary French philosophy, much of which begs description, but insofar as anything at all is clear about it, is clearly antirealist. In Anglo-American philosophy, there is the antirealism of Nelson Goodman and (one stage of) Hilary Putnam and their followers; there is the reflection of continental antirealism in such philosophers as Richard Rorty; there is the linguistic antirealism of the many followers of Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is characteristic of all of these to hold that we human beings are somehow responsible for the way the world is—by way of our linguistic or more broadly symbolic activity, or by way of our decisions, or in some other way.

Like Perennial Naturalism, Creative Anti-realism is to be found even in theology. Indeed, it is a bit naïve to say that it is found *even* in theology; in

the sort of theology that, according to its exponents, is the most up-to-date, *au courant*, these notions run absolutely riot. If the publisher's blurb is to be credited, Creative Antirealism is expressed ('developed' would no doubt be too strong a word) in (very broadly speaking) theological fashion in Don Cupitt's book *Creation Out of Nothing*: "The consequence of all this is that divine and human creativity come to be seen as coinciding in the present moment. The creation of the world happens all of the time, in and through us, as language surges up within us and pours out of us to form and reform the world of experience. Reality . . . is effected by language. . . ." This is said to be "a philosophy of religion for the future" (one hopes the very distant future) and "a genuine alternative to pietism and fundamentalism" (as well, we might add, as to any other form of Christianity). The same view has made its way into physics or at least the philosophy of physics. It is said that there is no reality until we make the requisite observations; there is no such thing as reality in itself and unobserved, or if there is, it is nothing at all like the world we actually live in. In ethics, this view takes the form of the idea that no moral law can be binding on me unless I myself (or perhaps my society) issue or set that law.

Perennial Naturalism and Creative Antirealism are related in an interesting manner: the first vastly underestimates the place of human beings in the universe, and the second vastly overestimates it. According to the first, human beings are essentially no more than complicated machines, with no real creativity; in an important sense we can't really act at all, any more than can a spark-plug, or coffee-grinder, or a truck. We are not ourselves the origin of any causal chains. According to the second, by contrast, we human beings, insofar as we confer its basic structure upon the world, really take the place of God. What there is and what it is like is really up to us, and a result of our activity.

C. RELATIVISM

So (in addition to Christian theism) the two basic pictures or perspectives of our time, as I see it, are Naturalism and Creative Antirealism. But here I must call attention to some complications. First, I say that on these antirealist views, it is we, we the speakers of language, or the users of symbols, or the thinkers of categorizing thoughts, or the makers of basic decisions, who are responsible for the fundamental lineaments of reality; in the words of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things." But sometimes a rather different moral is drawn from some of the same considerations. Suppose you think our world is somehow created or structured by human beings. You may then note that human beings apparently do not all construct

the *same* worlds. Your *Lebenswelt* may be quite different from mine: Jerry Falwell and Richard Rorty don't seem to inhabit the same *Lebenswelt* at all; which one, then (if any), represents the world as it really is, i.e., as we have really constructed it?

Here it is an easy step to another characteristically contemporary thought: the thought that there simply *isn't* any such thing as *the* way the world is, no such thing as objective truth, or a way the world is that is the same for all of us. Rather, there is my version of reality, the way I've somehow structured things, and your version, and many other versions: and what is true in one version need not be true in another. As Marlowe's Dr. Faustus says, "Man is the measure of all things; I am a man; therefore I am the measure of all things."¹⁶ But then there isn't any such thing as truth *simpliciter*. There is no such thing as *the* way the world is; there are instead many different versions, perhaps as many different versions as there are persons; and each at bottom is as acceptable as any other. Thus a proposition really *could* be true for me but false for you. (Perhaps you have always thought of this notion as a peculiarly sophomoric confusion; but in fact it fits well with this formidable and important if lamentable way of thinking.) The whole idea of an objective truth, the same for all of us, on this view, is an illusion, or a bourgeois plot, or a sexist imposition, or a silly mistake. Thus does anti-realism breed relativism and nihilism.

In some ways this seems quite a comedown from the view that there is indeed a way the world is, and its being that way is owing to our activity. Still, there is a deep connection: on each view, whatever there is by way of truth is of our own making. The same ambiguity is to be found in Protagoras himself. "Man is the measure of all things": we can take this as the thought that there is a certain way the world is, and it is that way because of what we human beings—all human beings—do; or we can take it as the idea that some more limited group of persons—perhaps even each individual person—is the measure of all things. Then there would be no one way everything is, but only different versions for different individuals. This form of Creative Anti-realism, like the previous ones, suffers, I think, from deep problems with self-referential incoherence. There isn't space here to go into the matter properly: but in brief the problem, for the relativist, is that from her own perspective she can't properly disagree with anyone who holds to the strictest absolutism. For from her own perspective, she must concede that the absolutist's view is true for him even if false for her; and there is no question as to which is *really* true. The two views are *equally* really true; that is, each is true for those who accept it.

A second complication: Alasdair MacIntyre pointed out (personal communication) that my account so far leaves out a very important cadre of contemporary intellectuals. There are many intellectuals who think of themselves as having no firm intellectual roots or commitments at all; they float free of all commitment and intellectual allegiance. They are like people without a country, without a settled or established home or neighborhood; in Kant's figure, they are like roaming nomads, a threat to settled and civilized ways of intellectual life. They may and often do go further; they may disdain commitment as naïve or ill-informed, a failure to understand, a foolish failure to see something obvious and important. So, says MacIntyre, they aren't committed either to the perennial naturalism of which I spoke, or to one or another form of anti-realism—or, of course, to Christianity; but they are nonetheless a most important part of the contemporary picture.

This is both true and important. MacIntyre is quite right; the attitude he describes is indeed common among intellectuals and in academia. As a matter of fact, there is a deep connection between anti-realism and relativism, on the one hand, and this intellectual nomadism on the other. Perhaps it goes as follows. The dialectic begins with some version of Kantian anti-realism: the fundamental lineaments of the world are due to us and our structuring activity and are not part of the *Dinge an sich*. The next step is relativism: it is noted that different people hold very different views as to what the world is like; as a consequence we get the notion that there isn't any *one* way things are (a way which is due somehow to our noetic activity) but a whole host of different versions (as in Goodman), perhaps as many as there are persons. On this view there isn't any such thing as a proposition's being true *simpliciter*: what there is is a proposition's being true in a version or from a perspective. (And so what is "true for me" might not be "true for you.")

To "see" this point, however, is, in a way, to see *through* any sort of *commitment* with respect to intellectual life. Commitment goes with the idea that there really *is* such a thing as truth; to be committed to something is to hold that it is true, not just in some version, but *simpliciter* or absolutely. To be committed to something is to think it is *true*, not just true relative to what you or someone believes, or relative to itself. But once you "see" (as you think) that there isn't any such thing as truth as such, then you may also see, as you think, the futility, the foolishness, the pitiable self-deluded nature of intellectual commitment. You will then think the only path of wisdom is that of the roaming, free-floating intellectual who has seen through the pretensions or naïveté of those who do make serious intellectual and moral commitments. (Indeed, you may go still further. According to

Richard Rorty, those who think there is such a thing, in the words of the Westminster Confession, as a “chief end of man” must be considered not just naïve but *insane*—in which case, presumably, they ought not to be allowed to vote or take full part in the new liberal society, and perhaps should be confined to its Gulags pending “recovery” from the seizure.) As MacIntyre observed, this lack of commitment, this seeing through the pitiful self-delusion of commitment is rampant in academia; it is, I think, close to the beating heart (or perhaps the central mushy core) of contemporary deconstruction and its heirs.

So we have, as I said, three major perspectives, three wholly different and deeply opposed perspectives: Christian theism, perennial naturalism, and creative anti-realism with its progeny of relativism and anti-commitment. But of course what we also have, as William James said in a different connection, is a blooming, buzzing confusion. The above description is only a zeroeth approximation, accurate only within an order (or two) of magnitude; much fine tuning is necessary. Each of these views calls out a sort of opposing reaction to itself; furthermore there can very well be a sort of dialectic or development within a given paradigm or way of thinking; and of course there are channels of influence flowing between them. These three main perspectives or total ways of looking at man and the world can be found in every conceivable and inconceivable sort of combination and mixture. There are many crosscurrents and eddies and halfway houses; people think and act in accordance with these basic ways of looking at the world without being at all clearly aware of them, having at best a sort of dim apprehension of them. Thus, for example, those who adopt this skeptical, ironic, detached anti-commitment with respect to the great human questions, don’t all themselves do so out of the motivation I suggest as to what really underlies it—i.e., that of “seeing through” the committed stances. It can be or start as simple imitation of one’s elders and betters: this is the cool way to think, the way the second-year grad students think, the way my teachers or the people at Harvard think. Our ways of thinking are as much arrived at by imitation of those we admire as by reasoned reflection.

As we saw above, ironically enough, both perennial naturalism and creative anti-realism (with its train of relativism and anti-commitment) find contemporary expression in allegedly Christian theology. These ways of thinking are touted as the truly up-to-date and with-it way to look at these matters. It is indeed a common human characteristic to claim that now, finally, we have achieved the truth (or the correct attitude to take, given that there is no truth) denied our fathers. But here there is another sort of irony: these positions go back, clearly enough, all the way to the an-

cient world; as a matter of fact they antedate classical Christianity. What is new and with-it about them is only the attempt to palm them off as developments or forms—indeed, the intellectually most viable forms—of *Christianity*. This is new and with-it, all right, but it is also preposterous. It is about as sensible as trying to palm off, say, the Nicene creed, or the Heidelberg Catechism as the newest and most with-it way of being an atheist.

It is unnecessary to point out that these ways of thinking are not just *alternatives* to Christianity; they run profoundly *counter* to it. From a Christian perspective the naturalist is, of course, deeply mistaken in rejecting or ignoring God. That is bad enough; but in so doing he also cuts himself off from the possibility of properly understanding ourselves and the world. And as for Creative anti-realism, the idea that it is really we human beings who have made or structured the world is, from a Christian perspective, no more than a piece of silly foolishness, less heroically Promethean than laughably Quixotic; and the idea that there is no truth is no less absurd from a Christian perspective. These ways of thinking, then, are predominant, pervasive, and deeply ingrained in our culture; they are also deeply antagonistic to a Christian way of looking at the world.

The application to our present question—what are the essential elements of Christian philosophy?—is evident. For it is wholly clear that philosophy is not neutral with respect to the struggle between these three *Weltanschauungen*. Indeed, from one point of view, philosophy just is at bottom an effort to understand the world and ourselves from the vantage point or perspective of one or another of these ways of looking at the world. Philosophy—philosophy that is clear and deep at any rate—is fundamentally an effort to work out the implications of a world view—one of these or another—with respect to the sorts of questions philosophers ask and answer. This is what philosophers do, though with varying degrees of self-consciousness and clarity. Vast stretches of contemporary philosophy, therefore, will have spiritual or religious roots—and spiritual and religious fruits. But these fruits may be unacceptable, or even noxious from the perspective of the Christian community. And one important job of the Christian philosophical community, of course, is to discern and understand these fruits, to test the spirits, to evaluate these philosophical constructions and contributions from a Christian point of view. As I argued above, vast stretches of contemporary philosophy, for example, arise out of an attempt to give a naturalistic interpretation or understanding of one or another area of thought. Thus there are efforts to understand language naturalistically, as well as mind, mathematics, modality and morality, and religion, and

truth and a thousand other things. Here what is needed is a clear view of the spiritual and religious roots and allegiances of the enterprise in question. To take an obvious example, consider once more the explanation of Mother Teresa offered by Herbert Simon (above, note 14). This arises from the perspective of a naturalistic understanding of human beings; and it is obviously inconsistent with a Christian understanding of the issues. Behaving like Mother Teresa is not at all a manifestation of “bounded rationality”—as if, if she thought about the matter with greater clarity and penetration, she would instead act so as to try to increase the number of her expected progeny. Behaving as she does is instead a manifestation of a Christ-like spirit; she is reflecting in her limited human way the splendid glory of Christ’s sacrificial action in the Atonement. (No doubt she is also laying up treasure in heaven.) From a Christian perspective, her behavior is maximally rational; there is no way to behave that is *more* rational; from that point of view Simon’s speculations are as silly as they are ingenious.

Or consider contemporary philosophy of mind. Here the explicitly stated aim is to provide a naturalistic understanding or account of the whole range of mental phenomena: intentionality, thought, sensation, knowledge and so on. It is clearly of crucial importance that Christian philosophers and the Christian community be aware of the spiritual roots of these research projects. It doesn’t follow, of course, that Christian philosophers can’t properly join in pursuing them; but when they do so, their position will be delicate. There is much the Christian community can learn from such projects even if they point in a fundamentally antithetical direction; but Christian philosophers must be aware of their orientation, and must inform the rest of the Christian community, academic and otherwise, of the spiritual connections of such projects.

So I say cultural and philosophical criticism is one important aspect of the Complete Christian philosopher’s job. In a way, this is utterly obvious. The efforts of some of the most impressive philosophers of our times—the Quines, the Sellars’s, some of the followers of Wittgenstein—are explicitly directed towards developing a complete, well-rounded and wholly anti-theistic way of thinking about ourselves and the world. Christian philosophers must discern the spiritual connections of the various philosophical and quasi-philosophical currents that swirl around us, and make their perceptions known to the rest of the Christian community. This job, I think, isn’t being done as well as philosophical theology and apologetics.

Of course the task of criticism extends beyond the boundaries of philosophy; there are many other areas of culture that display the same

structure. Consider the role played by evolutionary theory in our intellectual world. Evolution is a modern idol of the tribe; it is a shibboleth distinguishing the ignorant fundamentalist goats from the informed and scientifically acquiescent sheep. Doubts about it may lose you your job.¹⁷ It is loudly declared to be absolutely certain, as certain as that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun—when the fact is, it is no such thing at all. And much of the reason for these exaggerations, and for the *odium theologicum* aimed at those who presume to disagree, comes not from sober consideration of the evidence, but from the religious role evolution plays in contemporary intellectual society.¹⁸ For evolution plays an essential role in naturalistic thought. According to Richard Dawkins, “although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”¹⁹ Evolution is the only answer anyone can think of to a question that would otherwise be embarrassing in the extreme to naturalistic ways of thinking: how did this enormous variety of plant and animal life get here? Naturalism requires an answer to this question; evolution is the only naturalistic answer anyone has been able to think of; and this is one reason for the quasi-religious status of evolution in contemporary society. And of course evolution is just one example, if a prominent one. There is also sociobiology, various varieties of literary theory, various varieties of sociology and psychology and much else. In all of these areas, what the Christian community needs is a way of discerning the spirits, of testing the provenance of the bewildering variety of ideas and claims with which we are confronted. The spiritual and intellectual health of the Christian community depends upon our knowing how to think about these ideas and claims; and to know how to think about them, we need the sort of cultural criticism—both inside and outside of philosophy—of which I speak.

IV. Positive Christian Philosophy

So the first of the two characteristically Augustinian elements of Christian philosophy is the cultural criticism of which I speak: in philosophy proper, of course, but also outside of philosophy. But there is a second like unto the first: a fourth crucial element of Christian philosophy is thinking about the sorts of questions philosophers ask and answer from an explicitly Christian point of view. For most of these questions, what is really crucial is *theism*—the proposition that there is an almighty, all-knowing wholly good and loving person who has created the world and created human beings in his image—rather than specifically *Christian* doctrine; so we could call this fourth element “theistic philosophy.” Whatever we call it, the project in

question is that of thinking about philosophical questions, taking for granted or starting from theism. This isn't just a matter of criticism, of examining contemporary cultural products (in philosophy and elsewhere) from a Christian perspective, although of course it will no doubt proceed hand in glove with that activity. Here there is a sort of negative/positive structure like that in the case of apologetics; cultural criticism is negative, or at any rate reactive; but this other project—call it positive Christian philosophy—is instead a matter of thinking about and working out answers to the whole range of questions philosophers ask and answer.²⁰

For example, how shall we think about so-called abstract objects such as propositions, states of affairs, sets, properties, possible worlds and the like?²¹ A part of the current lore concerning abstract objects is that they are causally inert, incapable by their very natures of standing in causal relations. One traditional theistic view, however (Augustine's, as it happens) is that properties are really divine concepts and propositions divine thoughts. If so, are they really incapable of standing in causal relations? If Augustine is right, they stand to God in the way in which a thought stands to a thinker: this relation involves among other things their *being produced by* the divine thinker. But *being produced by* seems to be a paradigmatic causal relation. Perhaps it is part of God's very nature to think and thereby produce these objects, and perhaps God exists necessarily; in that case abstract objects would be necessary beings that are nevertheless causally dependent upon something else.²²

Speaking of causality, how shall we understand *it*? Is there a kind of necessity involved in causal relations? From a theistic perspective, the paradigm cases of causal relations will involve God's productive and conservative activity. He creates us and the world, and he constantly upholds and conserves us in being. Here, clearly enough, an element of necessity is involved. In every possible world in which God wills that something happen, that thing happens. Every world in which God says "Let there be light" is a world in which there is light. So the paradigmatic cases of causality involve necessity: broadly logical necessity. But of course there are other kinds and cases of causality. Human beings have been created in the image of God. Part of this image, in us human beings, is our resembling God by way of being able to carry on intentional activity: our ability to envisage and work towards the achievement of goals. But then of course there will be some kind of causal connection between our setting out to do a given thing and that thing's happening. This connection will be a connection of a different kind from that between God's willing something and its taking place, although it will be set in the context or arena of divine activity. How, precisely and in detail, does this go?

There are, so we are told, natural laws. From a theistic perspective, what sorts of things are these laws, if indeed there are such things? From one point of view, they constitute a sort of constant backdrop or arena for responsible human activity. God creates us as creatures capable of action, and action that has a moral dimension. (Indeed, it is a vast understatement to say that action has a moral dimension; actual or potential moral significance is what *constitutes* action.) But of course given the kinds of creatures we are, action requires a certain regularity or constancy. So one dimension of natural law is that it is there, in part, to furnish a background or arena for responsible creaturely activity, making it possible for created persons to engage in morally significant action. Further, God *establishes* these laws, or *puts* them; he is responsible for their presence. How does that go? Could he have established other, quite different laws? What sort of necessity do these laws have, if they have any? And where does the regularity or constancy associated with natural law come from; how is it to be understood? Is it a matter of the regularity of the ways in which God ordinarily treats the creatures he has made; should we follow Malebranche and Berkeley and think of natural law in a broadly occasionalistic manner? Or shall we follow Aquinas and others and think of natural law as more like the consequence of the natural activity of the kinds of creatures God has made, so that natural law has little by way of ontological priority, but is instead something like a complex vector resultant of the natural activity of God's creatures?

How shall we think about *knowledge*, from the perspective of Christian theism? Here one thing clearly essential is that human beings have been *created*, and created by God. So in an essential respect human beings, like the rest of God's creatures, resemble *artifacts*; they have been designed, and fashioned according to a design plan. So they (and their organs and parts) can function *properly* or *improperly*. This teleological notion is, I think, deeply embedded in our way of thinking about knowledge;²³ no doubt this is because theism (Christian and Jewish) has been deeply embedded in our culture for several millenia. A theistic way of thinking about warrant—what distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief—will take advantage of this fact of creation and the teleology it brings with it. There will also be a place for *justification*, in a theistic way of thinking about knowledge and belief; justification is a matter of acting responsibly with respect to the whole cognitive endeavor, of fulfilling epistemic duty. What are these duties? From the perspective I suggest, justification may not be crucial for *knowledge* (as far as I can see, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for knowledge); but it may nonetheless be of great importance. (Perhaps, from

this point of view, understanding the precise nature of knowledge is less important than understanding how cognitive faculties are responsibly used by their owners.) And just how are justification and warrant related? How shall we think about scepticism from a theistic perspective? These questions await serious effort.

A theistic understanding of warrant will draw heavily upon the notion of *proper* function. But how shall we think about *that* notion? At present there is a flourishing cottage industry devoted to giving naturalistic analyses or explanations of the notions of function, proper function, purpose, and the like as they apply to human beings and other organisms. These explanations ordinarily proceed in terms of *evolution*; the rough idea is that an organ or system is functioning properly when it is functioning in the or a way that enabled its ancestors to survive and reproduce. Thus, for example, Paul Griffiths: "The proper functions of a biological trait are the functions it is ascribed in a functional analysis of the capacity to survive and reproduce which has been displayed by animals with that feature."²⁴ But this seems to me hopelessly inadequate. For suppose a Hitler gains control of the world. Mad as he is, he very much dislikes the way in which the human visual system works (indeed, he dislikes proper function generally.) He therefore commissions his scientists to induce a mutation in the population: a mutation according to which visual acuity is vastly reduced and the use of the visual system causes great pain. Those creatures unlucky enough to be born with the mutation are able to survive, but just barely; the constant pain prevents them from doing anything more than what is required for bare survival. They can't do science or philosophy, of course, or enjoy the beauty of a fine summer day, or engage in play or sport or art or the other things that make human life worth living: their lives are a burden to them. Hitler further instructs his henchmen (over a period of years) systematically to weed out those who don't suffer from this mutation, thus encouraging it to become fixed in the population. Now consider the population after several generations: according to the above analysis of proper function, the few remaining human beings whose eyes function in the old way, have a malfunctioning visual system; the visual systems functioning in the new way are the ones that are functioning properly. But this seems absurd. So proper function can't be understood in this way: how then is it to be understood?

A related area of crucial importance at the moment is the philosophy of mind. How shall we think about what it is to be or have a mind? What is it to be capable of intentional activity? How shall we understand this power we have to select an object for attention and predicate properties of it? The

object need not be present; indeed, it need not be either concrete or material; how does this work? Contemporary philosophy of mind, interesting and vigorous as much of it is, will be of little help here; for the most interesting and vigorous projects in this area are part of an enterprise devoted to the attempt to understand mind and personhood *naturalistically*. This puts such severe constraints on the project that little of real interest is likely to emerge; indeed, a large cadre of those engaged in the project finally deny that there *is* any such thing as intentionality or even belief, relegating these and other notions of "folk psychology" to the trash heap of outgrown superstitions. A theist may be able to learn a good bit from this; but fundamentally he will ask different questions and look for answers in a quite different direction. And again the first thing to remember, so it seems to me, is that we human beings have been created in the image of God: he thinks, and so do we. One of the principal elements or aspects of this image is precisely this ability to think, to believe, to *intend* (in the broad sense) with all that goes with it.²⁵ The relation of our intentional activity to God's intentional activity and to our status as creatures capable of free and responsible activity is far more important, from a theistic perspective, than its relation to the "intentional activity" of thermostats and frogs.

These are just a few of the topics to think about from a theistic perspective. Of course there are many others: probability,²⁶ subjunctive conditionals,²⁷ the development of science, the nature of freedom, the nature of human action, the nature of language. (From a naturalistic point of view, even if you think there are such things as properties and propositions, it isn't at all easy to see how elements of our language could come to express them.) A question of quite a different sort: how shall we think of duty, on the one hand, and human flourishing on the other, in connection with God? And how are duty and human flourishing related to each other? How shall we think about love, in all its manifestations? About our sense of beauty? Or (to take a vastly underdeveloped topic) our sense of play and humor?

These and a thousand other questions await penetrating and detailed investigation by Christian philosophers. In some instances, it is crucially important to the intellectual and spiritual health of the Christian community to clearly understand the topic in question; the whole area of the relation of science to religion would be an example.

V. An Objection

I say Christian philosophers should address these questions and topics starting from the Christian faith, using *all* that they know, including Christian teachings. But here we encounter an important objection. To get a

good grasp of this objection, however, we must first make a brief detour. According to historical Christianity, there are two broad sources of knowledge or true belief. First, there is reason, construed broadly so that it encompasses not just *a priori* knowledge, but also perceptual knowledge, as well as what one learns by way of memory and induction. There is also Reid's "sympathy," by way of which one learns what others think and feel; and most Christian traditions have also embraced something like Calvin's *Sensus Divinitatis*.²⁸ There are still other sources of knowledge here, but what is central to them is that they are all part of our created cognitive heritage or epistemic endowment. For us to learn what we do learn by way of these sources, God need do nothing special: just the usual conservation of his creation, together, perhaps, with concurrence in creaturely activity. But there is also another source of knowledge or true belief, according to Christians: *faith* together with its object or correlative, divine revelation. It is by way of the first sort of knowledge that we know the size of the earth, the distance to the moon, and that human beings die. By way of the second, however, we know of God's plan for the redemption of humankind through the life and death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. Christians ordinarily take it that the Bible is central here, although of course there are disagreements as to just how revelation works, and how important tradition, for example, is in enabling us to apprehend what the Lord intends to teach in Scripture. These differences won't have much if any effect on what I want to say here.

To return to the objection, then: the objector claims that if, as a scholar, you start from what you know by way of *faith*, if you employ as premises in your arguments propositions that you know by faith (rather than by way of reason), then your results will really be *theology* rather than philosophy or psychology or sociology or whatever. If you start from theological convictions in a given area—in understanding love, or humor, or aggression, or knowledge, or abstract objects, for example—then any conclusions you come to will be dependent upon theological convictions and will themselves, in consequence, be theology. Theology in, theology out, as the computer *literati* say. And while a theological understanding of these phenomena may indeed be desirable or necessary, it is still theology; it isn't philosophy (or psychology, or sociology or whatever). To have the latter, we must keep ourselves pure and unspotted from theology.²⁹

This is a common view; it is or has been something like a semi-official position of Roman Catholic thinkers. But here we must note that there are two quite different Christian traditions on this point: call them the Augustinian and Thomist traditions.³⁰ According to the latter, there is theology,

and there are the other sciences. The nontheological sciences are the province of reason; they contain what we can know by natural reason unaided by faith or special revelation. They concern general revelation as opposed to special revelation; and in pursuing them it is illegitimate to appeal to theology or to what one knows by way of faith. Of course the reason isn't that we don't need to know what we know by faith; theology is both important, and necessary, and perhaps more noble than its sister disciplines. But we also need the nontheological disciplines. According to the Augustinian tradition, by contrast, what we need and want, in studying a given area, is the best *total* understanding we can get, using all the resources at our command; the question whether that best understanding should be called 'theology', on the one hand, or 'philosophy' (or 'sociology', or 'psychology' or whatever), on the other, is of secondary interest.

Well, *why* does the Thomist think it is important to have a philosophy or a psychology, for example, that is unspotted by theology? What is the value of such science, and why should we expend a portion of our intellectual resources on it? (After all, it is not as if the latter are unlimited.) The Thomist will answer that what we know by way of reason has for us an epistemic or epistemological or cognitive *advantage* over what we know by way of faith. What we grasp by faith, we know by way of *testimony*; we take it on the authority of someone else. If that someone else is God, then the belief in question is backed up by high authority indeed; objectively speaking, furthermore, it is also maximally certain. Still, we don't really *know* what we take on trust, what we take someone else's word for, even if that someone else is God himself. Or, if we can say that we *do* know it, we don't have the highest and best form of knowledge of it; we don't have *scientia*. Consider, for example, the Pythagorean Theorem, or the proposition that there is no set of all sets, or Gödel's Theorem on the incompleteness of arithmetic, and consider two ways of believing it. In the first way, you believe it on the authority of your favorite mathematician, who, however confused and unreliable he may be on other topics, is authoritative on ones like these. Then compare believing it by way of grasping, understanding the proof, and seeing for yourself that the theorem is not only true, but couldn't possibly be false. It makes good sense to say, with the Thomist, that in the second case the knowledge you have of that truth is better, more valuable, a higher kind of knowledge than in the first case. It is more like God's knowledge—God, after all, never has to take anybody's word for anything.

This reply has a sort of appeal; but I think the appeal is limited. For in most of the sciences we don't at all have the sort of knowledge we have of

the Pythagorean Theorem or the Fundamental Theorem of the Calculus; we don't have anything like the sort of certainty we have in elementary logic and mathematics. Consider physics, for example. First, most of us who know anything about physics know what we know by way of taking someone else's word for it. How do I know that the velocity of light in a vacuum is about 186,000 miles per second? I read it in a physics text, or heard it in a physics class, or saw it in an article in *Scientific American*. I certainly didn't measure the velocity of light myself, and wouldn't have the faintest idea of how to do so. (I daresay the same is true for you.) How do I know that there are experiments that favor relativity theory over Newtonian mechanics? The same way: I learned it in a physics class. I didn't myself perform those experiments involving muon decay or the rapid transport of cesium clocks, or the measurement of parallax. Indeed, the same goes for most physicists: most of them, so far as I know, haven't performed those experiments either; most of them learned about them in class or from a physics journal. As a matter of fact, even those who *did* perform the experiments had to take a great deal on the authority of others: that the velocity of the plane transporting the cesium clock was in fact thus and so, that the plane flew the relevant distance and the right course, and so on. Anyone who makes an advance in science obviously stands on the shoulders of others, taking an enormous amount on their say-so—for example, how the earlier experiments relevant to his project turned out. According to the Thomist, the difference in noetic value between theology and the nontheological sciences is said to be that in the latter we must rely on the testimony of others (even if on such an other as God himself), while in the former we have the level of knowledge that goes with simply seeing that some proposition is true. This difference, however, is a difference that applies very narrowly—only to elementary mathematics and logic, and perhaps to such obvious perceptual beliefs as that, e.g., the pointer is now between the 4 and the 5 on the dial.

My sympathies, therefore, lie with the Augustinian view; I am at best suspicious of the epistemic benefits claimed on behalf of philosophy or science untainted by theology. But perhaps there is less separation here than meets the eye; or perhaps we can reduce the separation: I wish to make an irenic proposal. Think again about those theoretical or interpretative sciences: philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics and others. The best way to do these sciences, says the Augustinian, is to use all that we know, including what we know by way of faith or revelation; according to the Thomist the way to proceed is to bracket what we know by faith and appeal only to premises we know by reason. But Thomist and Augustinian *agree* that the Christian community badly needs that fuller under-

standing of these phenomena. So suppose we think of the matter as follows. There are the deliverances of faith: call them 'F'; there is also the result of thinking about a given philosophical question or a question in one of the sciences, appealing to the deliverances of faith as well as to the deliverances of reason: call that 'FS'. Thomist and Augustinian concur that we *need* FS; but the Thomist adds that FS is really theology rather than philosophy or sociology or psychology or whatever. But now consider the conditional or hypothetical proposition *if F then FS*: the proposition that says what the implications of the faith *are* for the particular philosophical (or scientific) question at issue. Of course there will be a very large number of such propositions (and of course there will also be one gigantic superproposition here, whose antecedent will be the conjunction of all the elements of the faith relevant to any philosophical or theological question, and whose consequent will be the conjunction of the consequents of the more particular propositions of this form). Now both parties to the discussion—both Thomist and Augustinian—agree that these bridge propositions, as we may call them, are not *themselves* among the deliverances of faith; we discover and learn them by reason, not by faith. It is by reason rather than faith that we see what the bearing of the Christian faith is on psychology; it is by reason rather than faith that we see how theism bears on ontology and how the Christian teaching of the *Imago Dei* bears on epistemology or the philosophy of mind; it is by reason rather than faith that we see how the Scriptural teaching on love, or sin, or morality bears on what we study in social psychology or anthropology or sociology.

So both sides agree, indeed insist, that we, the Christian community, need to know how faith bears on these areas. And both agree that working at these conditionals is a matter, not of faith and theology, but of reason and philosophy or the relevant science. Further, both agree that Christians will *assert* the consequents of these conditionals; that is, we will assert the result of seeing how faith applies to the domain in question. The two sides differ only in this: according to the Thomist, but not the Augustinian, when you assert the consequent of such a conditional you are really doing theology rather than philosophy, or the science in question. Well, why shouldn't the Augustinian peaceably concede the point, at least for present purposes? Perhaps it doesn't greatly matter whether we say that asserting those consequents is theology, on the one hand, or philosophy, psychology or economics or whatever on the other. What *is* of great importance, at present, is that we work at discovering and developing our knowledge of the conditionals. And working at those conditionals is not doing theology: it clearly falls within the domain of the nontheological disciplines involved. It

is not the theologian who is most appropriately trained and qualified for work on these conditionals; it is instead the psychologist, historian, biologist, economist, sociologist, literary critic—and, in the case presently in question, the philosopher. Here Augustinian and Thomist can agree. They can agree on the importance, the great importance of this work for the spiritual and intellectual health of the Christian community, and they can agree that in working at these conditionals we are doing nontheological science rather than theology.

By way of conclusion, Christian philosophy, so I say, has at least these four major parts or aspects or moments; philosophical theology, apologetics (both positive and negative), Christian philosophical criticism, and positive Christian philosophy. Of course all sorts of important questions remain. For just one example, how shall we think of those conditionals I was just mentioning? Presumably they aren't entailments; but then what is the connection between antecedent and consequent? Or if they are entailments, what goes into the antecedent in addition to the relevant elements apprehended by faith? Furthermore Christians disagree with one degree or another as to precisely what the Christian faith *is*, precisely what is to count as the deliverance of the faith: how does that bear on the question what goes into the antecedent of one of these conditionals? These and a thousand other questions remain. Perhaps the most important thing, however, is to work at the conditionals; and we needn't answer those questions before starting the work.³¹

Alvin Plantinga

University of Notre Dame

NOTES

1. To some extent here I follow E. Gilson in his *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* in my way of thinking of Augustine's views on these matters.

2. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 78, (Aug. 1981), 429-57.

3. This sort of charge has repeatedly surfaced; in the 16th century the Catholic authorities in the Netherlands accused the Calvinists of sedition and political subversion; this prompted a bit of apologetics that should be eschewed rather than emulated: the notoriously censorious declaration of the otherwise warm and ecumenical Belgic Confession (1561), "we therefore detest the Anabaptists. . . ."

4. See, for example, Richard Swinburne's *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

5. For contemporary replies, see, for example, John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) and ch. X of my book *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: 1974) along with "The Probabilistic Argument from Evil" in *Philosophical Studies* 1976; see also the pieces by William Alston and Peter van Inwagen in *Philosophical Perspectives*, 5, *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. James Tomberlin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1991).

6. Oddly enough, some theologians seemed to have joined the throng; I think of those theologians who argue that the traditional idea of God as a transcendent person (one who knows, loves, and acts) is outmoded or inappropriate for "man come of age" or unsatisfactory in this nuclear (or global, or pluralistic) age and should itself be transcended.

7. And something like it, of course, is to be found earlier, particularly in Plato and Aristotle.

8. See his *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

9. Thus according to Swinburne, a good theistic argument is one such that it is "known to be true by those who dispute the conclusion" (*The Existence of God*, p. 7).

10. As is the case in my book *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967, 1991).

11. Augustine also (and perhaps more frequently) speaks of the '*Civitas homini*'. Neither term is wholly felicitous: the second because the *Civitas* in question includes in its ranks nonhuman persons such as Satan and his cohorts, and the first ('*Civitas Mundi*') because the *Civitas* in question must not be confused with any earthly political entity (Rome, for example). I shall use '*Civitas Mundi*', asking you to bear in mind that *caveat*.

12. In *Why I am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957).

13. See J. J. C. Smart: *Our Place in the Universe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) for a simple and clear statement of naturalism.

14. An illustration: in "A Mechanism for Social Selection and Successful Altruism," (*Science* 250 [December, 1990] pp. 1665 ff.) Herbert Simon considers the problem, from the perspective of evolutionary naturalism, presented by altruistic behavior, such as that displayed by Mother Teresa, or The Little Sisters of the Poor. Why do these people do the sorts of things they do? The *rational* way to behave, says Simon, is to try to act in such a way as to increase one's personal fitness, i.e., to act so as to increase the probability that one's genes will be widely propagated, thus doing well in the evolutionary derby. Altruistic behavior, such as that of Mother Teresa and The Little Sisters, does no such thing; so what is the explanation of their behaving as they do? Simon proposes two mechanisms: "bounded rationality," and "docility":

Docile persons tend to learn and believe what they perceive others in the society want them to learn and believe. Thus the content of what is learned will not be fully screened for its contribution to personal fitness (p. 1666).

Because of bounded rationality, the docile individual will often be unable to distinguish socially prescribed behavior that contributes to fitness from altruistic behavior. In fact, docility will reduce the inclination to evaluate independently the contributions of behavior to fitness. . . . By virtue of bounded rationality, the docile person cannot acquire the personally advantageous learning that provides the increment, *d*, of fitness without acquiring also the altruistic behaviors that cost the decrement, *c* (p. 1667).

So the idea is that a Mother Teresa displays "bounded rationality"; she adopts those culturally transmitted altruistic behaviors without making an independent evaluation of their contribution to her personal fitness. If she *did* make such an independent evaluation (and was sufficiently rational to do it properly) she would see that this sort of behavior did not contribute to her personal fitness, would stop engaging in it, and would instead get to work on her expected number of progeny.

15. *Theology for a Nuclear Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 43.

16. Quoted in David Lyle Jeffrey, "Caveat Lector: Structuralism, Deconstructionism, and Ideology," *Christian Scholar's Review* (June, 1988).

17. According to the January, 1991 issue of *First Things*, the *New York Times* reported recently that

Scientific American denied a job to the gifted science writer, Forrest M. Mims, III. Mr. Mims had been doing a column for the magazine, titled "Amateur Scientist." But then his awful secret was discovered. According to Armaund Schwab, who was managing editor when the decision was made, Mr. Mims 'was a nonbeliever in evolution.' . . . Ever vigilant against extremisms, editor Jonathan Piel determined that hiring Mims would compromise the magazine's integrity (p. 64).

18. See my paper "When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible" with replies by Ernan McMullin, Pattle Pun and Howard Van Till, together with my response, all in *Christian Scholar's Review* (Sept. 1991).

19. Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (London and New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), pp. 6 and 7.

20. Well, not the *whole* range; many philosophical questions and projects arise out of a particular and non-Christian perspective and can hardly be sensibly pursued outside that perspective. Philosophers ask the question "How shall we think about mind from a naturalistic point of view?" or "Given that Nietzsche is right and God is dead, how shall we think about morality?" Many questions philosophers ask presuppose commitments the Christian philosopher doesn't accept; it is part of the task of Christian philosophical criticism to make these connections clear.

21. See Christopher Menzel and Thomas Morris, "Absolute Creation" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (1986), reprinted in T. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987) and Christopher Menzel, "Theism, Platonism and the Metaphysics of Mathematics" in *Faith and Philosophy* vol. 4, no. 4 (Oct., 1987), reprinted in *Christian Theism*, ed. Michael Beaty (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

22. In Aquinas' third way, there is the puzzling suggestion that there cannot be an infinite series of necessary beings each of which gets its necessity from another. What is puzzling here is the implicit suggestion that *some* necessary beings *do* get their necessity from another. Perhaps we can understand this suggestion along the above lines: perhaps, say, the proposition $7 + 5 = 12$ is both necessarily true and necessarily existent, an ingredient in every possible world. But perhaps it gets its necessary existence by virtue of the fact that God *thinks* it (thus producing it) in every possible world.

23. See my "Justification and Theism," *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 4, no. 4 (October, 1987), and see my *Warrant and Proper Function* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 1992), chs. I and II.

24. "Functional Analysis and Proper Functions," forthcoming in *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*.

25. Thus, for example, Thomas Aquinas:

Since human beings are said to be in the image of God in virtue of their having a nature that includes an intellect, such a nature is most in the image of God in virtue of being most able to imitate God (ST Ia q.93 a.4);

and:

Only in rational creatures is there found a likeness of God which counts as an image. . . . As far as a likeness of the divine nature is concerned, rational creatures seem somehow to attain a representation of [that] type in virtue of imitating God not only in this, that he is and lives, but especially in this, that he understands (ST Ia q.93 a.6).

26. See Richard Otte, "A Theistic Conception of Probability" in *Faith and Philosophy* vol. 4, no. 4 (Oct., 1987), reprinted in *Christian Theism*, ed. Michael Beatty (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

27. See Del Ratzsch, "Nomo(theo)logical Necessity" in *Faith and Philosophy* vol. 4, no. 4 (Oct., 1987), reprinted in *Christian Theism*, ed. Michael Beatty (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

28. According to Aquinas, there is a natural but confused knowledge of God.

29. Thus John Wippel: "Often enough those who reject the possibility of a Christian philosophy do so because they view philosophy only in its moment of proof—as a completed set of propositions including principles, proofs and conclusions. Here, it seems to me, they conclude correctly that nothing borrowed from religious belief or theology can enter in. To admit the contributions of faith into the process of proof would be to destroy the philosophical character of the undertaking and to turn it into theology or at the least, into an extension of religious belief." "The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy: a Thomistic Perspective," *Faith and Philosophy* (vol. 1, no. 3) July 1984, p. 280.

30. Here again I follow the Gilson of *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*; and once again I am less interested in the historical accuracy of these terms than in the positions themselves.

31. This paper draws heavily on my Stob Lectures, delivered at Calvin College in 1989 and entitled "The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship" (semi-published in pamphlet form and available from Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan). Here (as in those lectures) I wish to express my enduring gratitude to Henry Stob, and the late William Harry Jellema; most of the ideas to be found in this paper can be traced back to what I learned from them.