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## Editorial The Golden Rule

*“Do to others what you want others to do to you.”* This is the one sublime law that has won universal acceptance and respect and is popularly known as the *golden rule*. In the beginning it was not a written prescription but one with a verbal formulation. At the summit of his sermon on the mount Jesus has uttered this rule. The rule evokes lofty and balanced idealism, albeit with a tinge of positive idealism, and it amply radiates rich moral, spiritual and human impulses. It upholds and celebrates the equality of individuals without regard to creed, colour, caste, gender, religion and is infused with an exceptional and positive thrust that can ably help the forming and nurturing of true humanity. Nobody can deny or bypass the rational and moral worth and integrity of this regulation with excuses, argumentations or with any sort of alibis. It contains a realistic and welcome truism as it visualises a magnificent vision of impartiality and neutrality. The golden rule is much-reputed for being the most culturally universal ethical tenet in human history. According to William Barclay “it is the topmost of social ethics, and the Everest of all ethical teaching.”

*“Do to others what you want others to do to you.”* This golden rule belongs to the cultural and moral heritage of humanity. This is the rule that, in effect, has no defect of any sort. The rule rejects not only any kind of discrimination but also projects actions of mercy and compassion. On that account, this is the one rule that must be brought back into the conscious territory of our time. The golden rule commands an exceptional respect because of its straightforwardness and the magnificent loftiness of the truth value it contains and the style of life-attitude it demands. The rule is like a designed front door that welcomes all without hesitation and thus inaugurates a social and moral space of cohesion where the tree of life can produce fruits that never decay: fruits of *universal brotherhood / sisterhood* in a *global village*.

We designate something as golden if it is so precious. Gold is the metal that is widely considered valuable, attractive and above all precious. We qualify various phenomena as golden on the basis of the radical and exceptional effect that emanated from them. We speak, for example, of golden era, meaning a period of unusual prosperity, peace and harmony. We speak of golden decade, meaning an extraordinary ten years of exceptional progress. We speak of golden decision when a decision has led to a huge positive transformation. Sometimes constructions are called “golden” because of the colour they are given. There is, for example, golden temple. Shakespeare has made the famous statement: “all that glitters is not gold.” When a rule is extolled as golden, what is underlined and emphasised is the extraordinary worth and lustre of that rule and the extraordinary flood of light that the rule bequeaths.

The golden rule contains the golden wisdom that is capable of transforming the thinking pattern and life style of the individuals as well as elevating the society as a whole out of the cultural slumber in which it has fallen. The rule calls for openness to others and acceptance of others as they are. This rule is a must for the betterment and keeping up of a healthy and just society. Where this rule is denied there will be the explosion of fear and anxiety and as a result walls and barriers of all sorts will come up everywhere. That is not a good omen in the contemporary world where a concerted and unified effort is the need of the time to break the bondages of illiteracy, poverty and discrimination. We must bid good bye to greed and say welcome to solidarity. Persons and eco-systems, rather than profit, must be given the priority in the decision making processes.

The golden rule has a silver version too and that is in the negative form: “Do not do to others what you want others not to do to you.” It is when we take cognizance of both the versions of the rule that we arrive at the maximum extension of the golden rule. It is rather easy to comply with the silver version by avoiding doing any harm to others. If a man is driving his vehicle, he is legally bound to drive in such a way that he does not harm other travellers. But seeing a weary man walking by the wayside with a heavy

luggage and if he stops to give him a lift, the action turns into a golden action. That is an action in the spirit of the golden rule. That is a beautiful action. Such are actions with the extra aura.

The golden rule is psychologically healthy, too. In it there is the acceptance of the self and there is the recognition of the other. Selfless service is traditionally extolled as a service done forgetting the self or denying the self. That is an illusion and is not sound. It is the one who accepted himself who is better equipped to accept the other. The way to the other is through the door of I or the self. Denial of the I will lead to the denial of the other.

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In the first article *Coherence of Belief in God: A Philosophical Analysis* Dr. Chacko Nadackaveliyil takes up for discussion one of the popular themes in philosophy of religion. The interest in God and belief in spite of the secular attempt to kill the validity of the sacred is not only on the increase but also making the return of God and religion into the public sphere. Immanuel Kant is the one thinker who had made an audacious attempt to think of religion within the bounds of reason alone. He hesitated to mix reason and faith. Alvin Plantinga is the contemporary thinker who very energetically writes and argues for the validity of religious patterns of thinking.

In the second article Dr. Sooraj Pittappillil researches into a comparative study on Levinas and Nietzsche. He titles his article: *Ethics as Optics: Levinas Interrogates Nietzsche*. Realities that are vulnerable are not realities that are poor in being. Vulnerability is the nature of all realities in nature. All valuable realities are vulnerable. Encountering such realities we are called to become responsible protectors of them. Nietzsche had a vulnerable body. He then tried to visualize a world without the traits of weakness. Suffering under the sick body and thinking incessantly about weakness he ended up a sick thinker. He dreamt of the arrival of *Übermensch*. He requested the human majority to do the essential sacrifice to enable the birth of such a

powerful and audacious being. In the world of vulnerable realities compassion, mercy, and magnanimity are superlative ethical patterns. In the Nietzschean world citizenship is reserved and restricted for the mighty and the strong (option for the mighty). In contrast, in Levinas we see the readiness to see the dignity of the weak. For him the face of the other is a sacred symbol that demands respect. In the Levinasian world citizenship is preferentially granted to the weak and the vulnerable (option for the poor).

In the third article titled *Bayesian Probabilistic Arguments for the Existence of God*, Dr Lindo John analyses the certainty of probability, an interesting area in philosophy of God. Mathematical world is generally perceived as a territory of absolute certitude. But, it is quite evident that as we climb higher up in the scale of numbers we reach a realm where certainty dissipates into the realm of the probable. The human mind in its search for utmost certitude has very often remained satisfied with the certitude of probability. Probability is not non-sense; it is a meaningful path-finder. "Probability can be applied to events and to verify the truth of statements. If someone says that there is  $\frac{1}{2}$  chance of a particular event happening, it means the probability of that particular event happening is 50 percent." The discussion calls us to appreciate the merit of probability. Why? Because, probability is very close to certitude. Probability is the immediate neighbour of certitude. The way of probability is the way to certitude.

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The wise master asked the students: when is the time that bells the end of night and the beginning of dawn? The students looked at one another in surprise.

Then, one of them said: "Perhaps it is the time when there is enough sun light and one can distinguish from a distance a dog from a sheep." The master shook his head as if in disapproval.

Another of the students said: Is it perhaps the moment when one has sufficient sun light to distinguish a date tree from a fig tree. The master nodded again in disapproval.

The students were totally perplexed. They asked the master: “But, when is it then?”

The master responded: “It is the moment when you look at the face of a human and recognises in that face your brother or sister that you enter the territory of light. Until the arrival of that moment you are still in darkness.”

That is the magical moment that opens the door of the heart to welcome the dawn of light into the life of an individual.

Dr. Joseph Konickal MCBS  
8. December, 2018

## **Coherence of Belief in God: A Philosophical Analysis**

Dr. Chacko Nadackaveliyil  
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*Abstract: The paper discusses one of the key themes in the philosophy of religion, “coherence of theistic belief.” On the one hand theists believe that there is a creator God and He has infinite existence, power and pervasiveness. But on the other hand, they attribute cognitive properties to him that are finite and temporal. This incurs an epistemological and metaphysical inappropriateness to all such references. This paper critically analyses Alvin Plantinga's arguments against the incoherency problem attached to the theistic belief as a whole and Christian belief in particular. We also debate whether his defence of belief in God is logically coherent and epistemologically appropriate.*

*Key Words: Belief, Coherence, God, Person, problem of referentiality.*

### **Introduction**

One of the most discussed themes in the philosophy of religion is about the coherence of theistic belief. Is belief in God coherent, logically and epistemologically appropriate? Almost all the major religions believe that there is a creator God and He has infinite existence, power and pervasiveness. On the other hand, we who refer to God, speak about him, attribute cognitive properties to him are finite and temporal. This incurs an epistemological and metaphysical inappropriateness to all references to such an ontologically different being. Taking Christian belief as a default belief, in *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga argues that theistic belief does not commit any epistemic inappropriateness and

incoherence. In this article, we shall critically discuss Alvin Plantinga's arguments against the incoherency problem attached to the theistic belief as a whole and Christian belief in particular.

### **The Propositional Content of Christian Belief**

Before we analyse the question, 'is it rational, justified, and warranted to hold Christian belief' or the intellectual or rational acceptability of Christian belief, we need to discuss a prior issue: what is Christian belief? What does it include? What are its propositional contents? Two important issues are involved here. Firstly, Christian belief is a sort of umbrella concept. It can be applied to a wide variety of beliefs ranging from the extreme conservative positions to highly liberal views. Hence, the important question is: What kind of Christian belief do we want to show here as epistemologically appropriate? Secondly, can our concepts refer to a being like God as understood, believed and worshiped by Christians? In other words: Is Christian belief coherent with our human rational apparatus? Let us begin this discussion of the cognitive uprightness of Christian belief by clarifying these two issues.

### **Christian Belief and its Propositional Components**

The term Christian belief means the “Great Creeds” of the main branches of Christian church. It is understood in a broader sense and does not mean the minute faith differences of various individual churches. In other words, Christian belief means “what unites Calvin and Aquinas, Luther and Augustine, Menno Simons and Karl Barth, Mother Teresa and St. Maximus the Confessor, Billy Graham and St. Gregory Palamas – classical Christian belief, as we might call it.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, vii.

The “Great Creeds” of the main branches of Christian belief has two components: a theistic component and a uniquely Christian component. The theistic component is common to all the great faith traditions like Islam, Judaism and Christianity etc. It states that there is a being as God. He is a *person* in the sense that God is a being with intellect and will, knowledge and belief, affection and hate, and intention and capability to fulfil what he is intended. God is all-knowing and all-powerful, but at the same time he is perfectly good and wholly loving. This theistic component also says that God in his supreme power created our gigantic universe and continually upholds and providentially guides it.<sup>2</sup>

Besides this common theistic component, “the Great Creed” has also a unique Christian component, something very specific to the Christian belief. This specific Christian component states that “we human beings are somehow mired in rebellion and sin, so that we consequently require deliverance and salvation, and that God has arranged for that deliverance through the sacrificial suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was both a man and also the second member of the Trinity, the uniquely divine Son of God.”<sup>3</sup> The propositional content of Christian belief involves both theistic and the unique Christian components.

### **Coherence of Christian Belief in God**

Is Christian belief as described above coherent? Can the characteristics and attributes of God as understood by the Christians give a coherent understanding of God? Many philosophers and theologians argue that it cannot. Christians believe that there is an all-powerful, all-knowing and wholly good God, who has created our gigantic world and all its animate and inanimate things, who loves us unconditionally and was willing to send his only son into the world to undergo suffering, humiliation and

<sup>2</sup> See, *Warranted Christian Belief*, vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, vii.



death to redeem us who were fallen from grace due to sin. Christians not only believe that there *is* such a being, but also that we are able to *address* him in prayer, *refer* to him, *think* and *talk* about him, and *predicate* properties like all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving and having created the universe, etc to him. Besides, they also believe that this God is infinite, transcendent and ultimate.<sup>4</sup> The problem of incoherence arises from the fact that how is it possible to predicate properties like infinite, transcendent all-knowing and morally perfect to such a being as God? We are finite and imperfect beings and our knowing is limited. If this is the case, how can we know something about a being like God? How can we apply our limited and incomplete concepts to an infinite and perfect being? The perceived complicatedness of human concepts to refer to a being like God, has led to a heated discussion in analytic philosophy and in philosophy of religion.<sup>5</sup> Many theologians and philosophers consider that our concepts cannot really apply to God.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is argued that even if there exists such a being as God, we cannot think about him, cannot talk about him and cannot ascribe properties to him as normally believers do. If this contention is true, “then strictly speaking, Christian belief, at least as the Christian understands it, is impossible. For Christians believe that there is an infinite, transcendent, ultimate being about whom they hold beliefs; but if our concepts cannot apply to a being of that sort, then there cannot be beliefs about a being of that sort.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Plantinga, scepticism with respect to the referentiality of God is based on the belief that Immanuel Kant and his contemporary followers (Gordon Kaufman and John Hick, for instance) have shown

<sup>4</sup> See, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> For the detailed analysis of the problems related to the meaning of religious propositions, See, Joseph M. Bochenski, *The Logic of Religion*, New York: New York University Press, 1965, 96-117.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, John Hick is of the opinion that we cannot really comprehend the *noumina*. We shall discuss this point in the later part of this thesis.

<sup>7</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 4.

that reference to or thought about such a being as God, even if there is one, is impossible or at least deeply problematic.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in WCB Plantinga makes an enquiry into the writings of Kant and the rest of referentiality critics to see whether there is something in them to suggest that our concepts really cannot apply to God, or they cannot function the way the ordinary believers use them to refer to God. According to Plantinga those who think or suspect that Kant showed it to be the case, “do not ordinarily develop the point in detail. They either content themselves with a ritual bow in Kant's direction or they do not explain *how* they think these things were shown and what are the arguments establishing them.”<sup>9</sup> So he begins his enquiry into the referentiality problem of God by looking into the question: what does it really mean when someone claims that our concepts do not apply to God? State it argumentatively:

(1) If there were an infinite, transcendent, and ultimate being, our concepts could not apply to it.

According to Plantinga, this proposition initially seems to be right, because those who claim this set up “a certain subject for prediction - God- and then declare that our concepts do not apply to this being.” If this is the case at least “one of our concepts –being such that our concepts don't apply to it– *does* apply to this being.”<sup>10</sup> It means that there is at least one reference to God possible; one of our concepts can be applied to him. Otherwise the claim (the proposition 1) itself does not make any sense.<sup>11</sup>

Suppose (1) were a true proposition then it would mean that we have some grasp of the properties such as being infinite, transcendent and

<sup>8</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> See this explanation in *Warranted Christian Belief*, page numbers 5 and the following.

<sup>11</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 6.

ultimate etc. For instance an infinite being is the one that is unlimited with respect to power, knowledge, goodness, love, compassion etc. Similarly a being is transcended, if it is not created, not identical with any being in the universe and not depended on anything for its existence. This shows that we have some idea of what a transcendent and infinite being is. Hence what does the proposition (1) say? Does it say that if there is an infinite being, then none of our concepts, especially concepts like infinity and transcendence could not apply to it? According to Plantinga, it cannot be the case, because we have some idea of these properties; otherwise we will not be able to understand the proposition in question and grasp the meaning of it. Therefore, the proposition (1) possibly means that “these concepts are impossible, incoherent, like concept of a round square, a concept such that we can just see *a priori* that it couldn't apply to anything, that there couldn't be a thing to which it applied,” says Plantinga. It means that we have no experience of an all-powerful and all-knowing being to which these properties apply. Therefore these properties cannot be applied to God. If this is the case the proposition (1) could be re-written as follows:

(1\*) If there were an all-powerful, all-knowing being, our concepts *would* apply to it, if we had an experience of such a being.

However Plantinga deems that 'presumably it is not the idea here'.<sup>12</sup> According to him, the best way to understand the idea behind the proposition (1) is to consider it along the line of the argument of John Hick. For Hick, God is a being to whom none of our *positive, non-formal* concepts apply because God *ansich* has none of the positive, *non-formal* properties of which we have concepts. He is wholly inaccessible to us. However, this being somehow is the one with which Christians,

<sup>12</sup> Plantinga does not explain here why it cannot be the case. Perhaps the reason might be that the point of discussion here is not an evidential/existential question - whether one can have a priori experience of God- but rather epistemological one; whether our concepts really applied to God or not. Hence for Plantinga, the proposition (1\*) is not the case of discussion here.

Muslims, Jews, and others are in touch in their religious practices. But Plantinga thinks that this argument of Hick “isn't good enough; it suffers from serious, indeed fatal difficulties.”<sup>13</sup>

However, Plantinga does not give any direct argument here. Instead, he considers that the inspiration for the argument 'that we cannot refer to or think about God, even if there is such a being', comes from the writings of Immanuel Kant. So he first turns to Kant and enquires: Whether he has shown that our concept does not really apply to God or at least that there is undefeatable epistemic problem with our referentiality of God. If Kant does not show it, his modern representatives like Kaufman and Hick are simply mistaken to hold the proposition (1). But, if Kant has shown that there is a serious problem in the traditional Christian belief that there is being such as God and to whom our concepts apply, then Kaufman and Hick will be right in their sceptical claim and in that case the propositions Christians used to express belief in God, like God is all-powerful and all-mighty, Jesus is the son of God, He died and rose from the dead etc will be a “disguised nonsense” without much epistemic worth.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Plantinga's strategy here is not to show that Christian belief is a “disguised nonsense”, but to show that there is nothing in Kant's epistemology to recommend that our concepts do not apply to God and hence Hick's sceptical assertion with respect to the referentiality of God is false.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This is explained in *Warranted Christian Belief*, 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> The non-epistemic status of religious belief has been an important idea of logical positivists. Along the same thinking of logical positivists, many argued that the sentences believers ordinary use like 'God loves me', 'God consoles me, when I am sad', 'God has created this universe' etc - do not convey much meaning. These propositions look like that they convey some meaning, but fail to express any meaning in reality. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Bochenski's, *The Logic of Religion*. See also A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, New York: Dover Publications, 1946.

<sup>15</sup> It is to be noted here that Plantinga does not give any positive argument to show that our concepts can refer to God; but he takes it for granted that they can. What he really argues for is that Kant and his contemporaries do not really prove that we cannot think about God, refer to him, or address him in prayer.



## Immanuel Kant and Coherence of Theistic Belief

One of the known characteristics of Kant is the looming ambiguity of his writings. Therefore, Plantinga is of the opinion that we should not just rely on the established interpretations of Kant to verify whether he held the view that “our concepts can't apply to God”. According to Plantinga, contrary to popular sceptical claim, the first thing to note in Kant is that he often writes “as if we *can* perfectly refer to God.”<sup>16</sup> Kant seems to suggest that the real issue is not that we cannot *think* about or refer to a being such as God, but that we cannot come to the speculative and metaphysical *knowledge* of God.<sup>17</sup> Therefore his aim in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to curb knowledge<sup>18</sup> to make the room for God-talk. If this is case, it does not make sense to argue that Kant has showed that we cannot think of or refer to God.<sup>19</sup>

However, Plantinga acknowledges that the traditional view that our concepts couldn't apply to God is not a mere fabrication or a thoughtless misunderstanding. It has a strong textual base in *Critique of Pure Reason*; more specifically in the analysis of the 'categories of understanding'. For Kant 'the categories of understanding' are concepts in first place. These concepts are applicable only to the realm of appearance and experience. Beyond the world of *phenomena* and appearances, they do not refer to the things in themselves. If it is the case that the categories of understanding cannot be applied to things *in themselves*, then they do not also refer to God, because he is a being *inexcelsis*. When we do this - If we apply our concepts that are limited by the phenomenal world to God - then we commit a categorical mistake.

<sup>16</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> See, the preface to second Edition, Bxxx, 29, where Kant has said; “I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for faith.”

<sup>19</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 9.

Therefore traditionally, it is argued that in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant has showed that our concepts do not apply to God and hence we cannot refer to God, think about him, or address him prayer.

The traditional sceptical understanding of Kant with respect to referentiality problem is decidedly linked to his ontology; specifically to his categorical distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena*. This raises an interesting question: Are there two worlds in Kant or only one world? According to Plantinga, the position one takes here is crucial to our question, whether Kant has shown that we cannot refer to or think about a being such as God? The scholars are divided in their opinion here. According to the traditional picture, Kant held the view that there are two fundamentally different kinds of things, constituting two unrelated realms of objects; the world of *phenomena* and the world of *noumena*. Phenomena are things *für uns*.<sup>20</sup> These are things as they appear to us and as we understand them. But *noumena* are the things in themselves (*ansich*) to which we have no direct cognitive access. This distinction shows that “on one hand on this picture, there are tables and chairs, horses and cows, stars and planets, the oak tree in your backyard, just as we ordinarily think. These things really exist and are really there. They are *phenomenally real*, real parts of the world of experience. But they are also *transcendentally ideal*: that is, they are not part of the world as it is independent of human experience. On the other hand, there are the *noumena*, which are transcendentally real. These are the things as they are in themselves; they do not depend for their existence or character upon human beings or human experience. These two realms are disjoint: none of the phenomenal objects is a *noumenon*, and none of the *noumenal* objects is a phenomenon.”<sup>21</sup> In the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

<sup>20</sup> This is the Planting's view on how Kant is traditionally understood. I will highlight here only this Plantingan understanding of the traditional two-world picture in Kant. See *Warranted Christian Belief*, 10-30.

<sup>21</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 11.

Kant himself wrote about this categorical distinction.<sup>22</sup>

In nutshell, according to the traditional picture the *phenomenal* world is constructed by us from physical experience of things and from the human intuition to the sense data gained by experience and other evidential facts. Hence phenomenal world is intuited in space and time and depends on us for its existence. On the other hand, the *noumenal* world is not dependent on us and we have no intuition or direct experience of it. However “there is a connection between the two worlds in that something like a causal transaction between the *noumena* and the transcendental ego (itself a *noumenon*) produces in us the given out of which we construct the phenomenal world.”<sup>23</sup> This two-world picture is understood in two ways. According to the first way of understanding, at least some of our concepts apply to the *things in themselves* and hence, we can think about them and refer to them. However, when we do this, we do not find real and complete *knowledge* of them, but only predicating properties to them. When we predicate properties to *things in themselves*, we are only making speculations about them. When we predicate more properties to things, it is only a “mere beating of wings against the void.”<sup>24</sup> Plantinga calls this understanding, “moderate sub-picture.” According to him, this “moderate sub-picture” is not satisfactory. Kant considers his work in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as knowledge and as certain and conclusive. He also seems to tell us about considerable account of the *Dinge*: that they are not limited by time and space, that the phenomenal world is a result of the causal transaction between the *Dinge* and the transcendental ego, that the transcendental ego has no real intuition into the *Dingeansich*. It means that on one hand Kant seems to say that we cannot extend our intuition into the *Dinge* and

<sup>22</sup> See, Immanuel Kant, A. 249.

<sup>23</sup> Note that this is Plantinga's interpretation of Kant. See *Warranted Christian Belief*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 17.

when we extend and refer, it does not bring knowledge of the things *ansich*. But on the other hand, he himself predicates properties to them, refers to them and maintains that his explanation is a certain account. Therefore, there is an inconsistency with “moderate sub-picture” explanation of reality. It gives “no aid and comfort to the claim that our concepts do not apply to God,”<sup>25</sup> says Plantinga.

Another understanding of the two-world picture is called “the radical sub-picture.” According this understanding, we can neither refer to *Ding* (God) nor predicate properties to him. The phenomenal world is a world of appearance and is wholly different from the realm of *things in themselves*, the *noumenal* world. However, the *things in themselves* somehow impinge on us due to the productive interaction between the *Dinge* and transcendental ego of us, resulting in manifold experiences. We construct the phenomenal object from these manifold experiences by applying concepts. It means that in the “radical sub-picture”, concepts are nothing but the rules to construct phenomenal object from the manifold experience.<sup>26</sup> “We may now characterise it as the faculty of rules.... Sensibility gives us forms (of intuition) but understanding gives us rules,” says Kant. If concepts are understood in this way – as rules for constructing the phenomenal objects out of manifold of experience, then they cannot be applied to *noumena*, *Dinge ansich*. Similarly, in the radical sub-picture, our concepts also do not refer to God, because God is a *noumenainexcelsis*; he cannot be constructed by applying our concepts to the manifold of experiences. According to Plantinga, this radical sub-picture “has deep incoherence.” On one hand, Kant holds that the *Dinge*

<sup>25</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 18.

<sup>26</sup> This is the Plantingan understanding of Kant. He calls this understanding the “hart of the radical sub-picture.” However Plantinga admits that it should not be seen as the only interpretation of Kant, but rather a possible suggestion one can draw from him; “Aagain, I don't mean to suggest that this is Kant's view, but some of what he says suggests it. (Some of what he says also suggests that it is false; that is part of his charm). See *Warranted Christian Belief*, 19.

somehow show themselves to us through manifold experience through transcendental ego. But on the other hand, he maintains that they are not in space and time. How can he refer to the *Dinge* and at the same hold that they are non-temporal and non-spatial? If this picture were really correct, then we should drop the *noumena* altogether, because the reality beyond our phenomenal construction would be practically unthinkable.<sup>27</sup> Hence the “radical sub-picture” does not offer any positive argument for the sceptical assertion that our concepts can't refer to God.

Contrary to the dominant two-world picture, there is another interpretation of Kant which is the position of Plantinga himself. According to this interpretation, there aren't really two worlds in which the *phenomenal* world is seen as distinct from the *noumenal* world. In actuality there is only one world; the world of *noumenal* objects. However there are two distinct ways of understanding and thinking about them; the *phenomenal* and *noumenal*. Therefore “the *phenomena-noumena* distinction is not between two kinds of objects, but, rather between how the things are in themselves and how they appear to us.”<sup>28</sup> It means that the distinction is merely two different ways of understanding one and the same thing. Plantinga calls this one-world understanding of Kant as “the one that more recently has (perhaps) achieved majority status.”<sup>29</sup> According to him this model provides a

<sup>27</sup> See, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> One of the prominent representatives of the one-world picture is Graham Bird. According to his analysis, “such phrases [e.g., ,transcendental objects and empirical objects'] should be understood to refer not to two different kinds of entity, but instead to two different ways of talking about one and the same thing.” See his book, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, New York: Humanities Press, 1962, 37. Michael Devitt says that “It is tempting to equate an appearance with the foundationalist's sense datum, taking the thing-in-itself as the unknowable external cause of this mental entity. Kant's writing often encourages this temptation. Nevertheless,

better understanding of Kant and is also the one in agreement with Aristotle and Aquinas.

According to this most accepted one-world picture, our concepts do *refer* to *Dinge*; we can think about them and talk about them, because they are the only objects that really exist and about which we can think and reflect. If this is the case, how could it be that “the categories and our other concepts do not apply to them?” Plantinga asks.<sup>30</sup> If his case succeeds, the same can be also applicable to God - our concepts do apply to God, because what holds for *Dinge* also holds for everything else, argues Plantinga.<sup>31</sup>

In short, according to Plantinga, the analysis of the Kantian ontology does not show that our concepts do not apply to God. Therefore, he concludes the first chapter of *Warranted Christian Belief* with a strong anti-sceptical statement: “it doesn't look like as if there is good reason in

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scholars seem generally agreed – and have convinced me – that this two-world interpretation is wrong. What Kant intends is the following influential, but rather mysterious, one world view.” See his book, *Realism and Truth*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 37. There are many more philosophers who are of the same view. See, D.P. Dryer, *Kant's Solution for Verification in Metaphysics*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966, Chapter 11 Section vi; Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. I am indebted to Plantinga for this explanation. See *Warranted Christian Belief*, 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> It is to be noted here that when I say, I have the concept of *being intelligent*, only if I grasp, apprehend and understand the property of *being intelligent*. So having positive concepts imply the apprehension of the respective properties. In this sense, it can be said that our 'positive concepts' do not apply to things as they are in themselves. This is because there is no positive property we grasp that characterises things as they are in themselves. In this sense, we can say that we cannot ascribe any positive properties to God, because there is no positive property we grasp that characterises God in himself. Hence Plantinga says; “it is not the case that our concepts fail to apply to God in such way that we cannot refer to and think about him. What *would* follow, given that he is a *noumenon* (of course, in this way of thinking, *everything* is a *noumenon*) is that God would not have any of the positive properties of which we have a grasp.” See, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 16.

Kant or in the neighbourhood of Kant for the conclusion that our concepts do not apply to God, so that we cannot think about him. Contemporary theologians and others sometimes complain that contemporary philosophers of religion often write as if they have never read their Kant. Perhaps the reason they write that way, however, is not that they have never read their Kant but rather that they *have* read him and remain unconvinced...that Kant actually claimed that our concepts do not apply to God. Alternatively, they may concede that Kant did claim this, but remain unconvinced that he was *right*... Either way, they, they don't think Kant gives us reason to hold that we cannot think about God."<sup>32</sup>

### Contemporary thinkers and Coherence of Theistic Belief

Having argued that Kant didn't show that our concepts do not refer to God, he asks further: Does any contemporary thinker give us reason to accept such conceptual scepticism? To this, he critically analyses the ideas of the two prominent contemporary sceptical thinkers; Gordon Kaufman and John Hick<sup>33</sup> and says that they also do not give us any positive argument to show the non-referentiality thesis is right and our concepts cannot be applied to God.

Kaufman, one of the prominent anti-exclusivist philosophers says that none of our human concepts refers to God. Central to this non-referentiality thesis lies the following argument: "As the Creator or Source of all that is, God is not to be identified with any particular finite reality; as the proper object of ultimate loyalty or faith, God is to be distinguished from every proximate or penultimate value or being. *But if absolutely nothing within our experience can be directly identified as*

<sup>32</sup> See, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Since I will discuss John Hick at length in the fifth chapter, I elaborate only Plantinga's critique on Kaufman here.

*that to which the term "God" properly refers what meaning does or can the word have?"*<sup>34</sup> Plantinga calls this argument as the one that awakes "Kantian echoes." According to him this argument of Kaufman has two claims:<sup>35</sup>

(a) If God is not a finite reality, then absolutely nothing within our experience can be directly identified as that to which the term 'God' properly refers.

(b) If nothing within our experience can be directly identified as that to which the term 'God' properly refers, then the term 'God' doesn't refer to anything, or at least it is problematic when it does.

The first claim (a) means that to apply a term to an object, the object our reference should be directly and immediately available to our experience. Since God is an infinite reality, the term 'God' does not apply to anything within our experience: an infinite and omniscient being is beyond our finite world of experience; we cannot hear him, we cannot touch him and we cannot perceive him. Against this claim, Plantinga argues that how is it that the fact that God is infinite means that we cannot experience him? On the contrary, believers all over the world say that they have experienced God; spoken to him and got a special message from him etc. Plantinga takes here words from Jonathan Edwards and asks, 'are they not then experiencing God'. If they are not true experiences why should great contemporary thinkers like, William P. Alston take it up as an important theme for discussion.<sup>36</sup> The fact that

<sup>34</sup> See, Gordon Kaufman, *God the Problem*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, 7. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>35</sup> The detailed analysis of Kaufman's thought can be found in Warranted *Christian Belief*, 32-42. For this discussion, I am indebted to this section of Plantinga.

<sup>36</sup> Many Christians and Jews believe that God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, to Abraham in a dream and today to people in different ways. According to William P. Alston they should be accepted with proper epistemic merit. See, Alston's book, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, New York: Ethaca, 1993, 34.



God is infinite with respect to power, knowledge and goodness doesn't follow that he cannot make himself heard or we cannot experience him.

Plantinga calls the claim in the second premise(b) - if nothing within our experience can be directly identified as that to which the term 'God' properly refers, the term 'God' doesn't refer to anything, or at least it is problematic when it does - as “dubious” and unconvincing. The second premise suggests that if a concept does not refer to an immediate object of our experience, it doesn't mean that we cannot understand it or refer to it is problematic. Against it, Plantinga argues that “cosmologist tell us of the Big Bang, an event that occurred several billion years ago in which an explosion of enormous energy caused an expansion from an initial configuration of enormous density. I suppose the Big Bang is not something within our experience, something that can be directly identified as that to which the term 'the Big Bang' correctly refers; does it follow that there is a profound problem with this term?”<sup>37</sup> The meaning and ideas involved in the term 'Big Bang' is highly speculate in nature. We do not have direct and immediate access to the initial singularity or to the explosive cosmic expansion.<sup>38</sup> But the term 'Big Bang' applies to all that happened in the first decisive moments of the beginning of our universe. If there is no particular problem in using this term to the initial status of our universe to which we have no immediate and direct perceptual access, why should we attribute “some special problem in the case of God,” ask Plantinga.<sup>39</sup> It is in any case unfair to the theists.

Plantinga firmly believes that the claims of Kaufman's arguments, as

<sup>37</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 34.

<sup>38</sup> For an excellent account of the initial singularity and all what happened in the first few seconds of our universe, see, Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time, From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, New York: Bantam Books, 1989; Heinz Pagels R, *The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature*, New York: Bantam Books, 1982; Paul Davis, *God and New Physics*, New York: Penguin Books, 1983.

<sup>39</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 34.

explained above do not offer anything to declare that our concepts do not refer to God. Perhaps what he really meant might be the following:

(A) *The “real referent” for God is never accessible to us or in any way open to our observation or experience. It must remain always an unknown X.*<sup>40</sup>

According to Kaufman, when Christians say God has created the universe, He sent his only son Jesus Christ to the world, He redeemed the world through the sacrificial suffering and death of his son etc, they are not referring to the “real referent” of the term “God”, but *only* to the “available referent”. The “available referent” is simply a human construct – an imaginative creation - to conduct the human action in a morally and metaphysically acceptable way.

Now Plantinga asks, “Do the believers accept the claim (A) of Kaufman?” When they pray it does seem that they are worshipping an illusionary and imaginary being. In all religions the object of worship is real for the believers. Kaufman clarifies that “this fact that the God actually available to people is an imaginative construct, does not necessarily mean that God is “unreal” or “merely imaginary” or something of that sort. That question remains open for further investigation.”<sup>41</sup> According to Plantinga, the claim (A) of Kaufman seems to suggest that on one hand there is this “available referent”, an accessible human construct we have in mind when we call upon God. But on the other hand, there is a “real referent” of the term “God”, a being to

<sup>40</sup> See, *God the Problem*, 85.

<sup>41</sup> See, *God the Problem*, 86. Does the contention here mean that God does not exist and it is only a human imagination? Kaufman's answer is this: “Does this mean, then, that the conclusion is, after all, that God really does not exist, that He is only figment of our imagination? If those words are intended to put the speculative question about the ultimate nature of things, then, as we have seen, there is a possible way to give an answer.” See, *God the Problem*, 111, See also *Warranted Christian Belief*, 36.

which no cognitive contact is possible and to which we cannot speak. It means that there *might be* a “real referent” and even if there is such a referent, we cannot think about it, speak about it; he is wholly an unknown X. This would mean that when Christian say 'God is almighty and creator of the world' or address him in prayer with different qualifications, they are just referring to the “available referent” of the name God'.

According to Plantinga, this argument of Kaufman is problematic. First, the “available referent” is just a human construct seems to mean that it *wouldn't have existed* before there were human beings. If so, Plantinga argues that “how then did it manage to create the heavens and earth? Could it somehow do this before it existed? In any event, an imaginative construct, a symbol, a structure of meanings of some kind is just not the sort of thing that could create the heavens and the earth or, indeed anything else.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover “available referent” being an imaginative human construct, can *only* have the properties of being a construct, but it can never have the properties such as being infinite, creator of the world etc. Perhaps, it could be possible that the Christian are mistaken: they are referring to a being that they think has created this world, but in reality they are referring to a being that they themselves have created. According to Plantinga, this could be the case, but “surely a strong argument would be required to this even reasonably possible.”<sup>43</sup> Kaufman doesn't offer any such sound arguments for that.

Second, Kaufman's idea of “real referent” is incoherent. For Kaufman, our concepts do not apply to the “real referent”; it is an inaccessible X. If God is an inaccessible X, none of our concepts will apply to him. In that case, this “real referent” also does not have properties like being infinite, existence, being material object or immaterial object and being the creator of the world etc., because these are the properties of which we

<sup>42</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 36.

<sup>43</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 37.

have concepts. But Kaufman's description entails that at least *one* property applies to the “real referent”: it is a being that has no properties of which we have concepts. Therefore, Kaufman's very explanation of the term “real referent” contradicts the very idea itself.<sup>44</sup>

In wake of the staunch criticism, Kaufman seems to have given up the “real referent” idea in his recent writings. However, he still firmly believes that to attribute some qualities, such as infinite, holiness, omnipotence and all-loving, all-knowing etc., to God is epistemically wrong. “To regard God as some kind of describable or knowable object over against us would be at once a degradation of God and a serious category error... Contemporary theological construction needs to be recognized that these terms and concepts do not refer directly to “objects” or “realities” or their qualities and relations, but function rather as the building blocks or reference points which articulate the theistic world-picture or vision of life,” says Kaufman.<sup>45</sup>

Why does Kaufman believe that our concepts do not refer to God? According to Plantinga, apart from the epistemological reason, there is also a religious reason. Kaufman, though being a theologian does not believe in God; he thinks that there is no such person as God.<sup>46</sup> However,

<sup>44</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> See, Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981, 244.

<sup>46</sup> Kaufman in his article, “Evidentialism: A Theologian's Response” has given three reasons for his contention, why there is no God. First is the emergence of the new consciousness about the significance of religious pluralism. Second, “new theories about the ways in which cultural and linguistic symbolic or conceptual frames shape all our experiencing and thinking... have given rise in theologians to a new self-consciousness about the extraordinarily complex and problematic character of all so-called 'religious-truth-claims' including those that are made by Christian faith.” Third, Religions are the main cause of suffering and pain in the world. Especially Christian themselves are responsible for more of the evil in the world than they would like to think. See his article “Evidentialism: A Theologian's Response,” in *Faith and Philosophy* (January 1989), 30. See also *Warranted Christian Belief*, 39-40.



it does not mean that religion and its devout practices are meaningless to him. For him, religious practice still has an important social function in human life. Its function is not that of putting us in touch with a being with the properties traditionally ascribed to God or that of enabling us to appropriate the salvation in Jesus Christ. But rather, it should be used to promote *human flourishing, 'human fulfilment and meaning'*.<sup>47</sup>

According to Plantinga, this way of understanding the function of religion is simply irrelevant. First, it is something like pouring new wine into old wineskins. “What we have here is nothing like the rich, powerful, fragrant wine of the great Christian truths; what we have is something wholly drab, trivial, and insipid. It is not even a matter of throwing out the baby with the bathwater; it is, instead, throwing out the baby and keeping the tepid bathwater, at best a bland, unappetizing potion that is neither hot nor cold and at worst a nauseating brew, fit for neither man or beast,” says Plantinga.<sup>48</sup> Second, Kaufman's secular and human centred Christianity is something that can only encourage hypocrisy and dishonesty. This is because here there is no real belief in God, but one should act as if there is God for the well-fare of the society; one should accept Christian faith, but it should mean something else. In short, according to Plantinga, Kaufman's early “real and available referent” distinction and his later socio-functional understanding of religious belief do not offer any decisive argument for the epistemic scepticism with regard to the referentiality of our concepts to God. There is nothing in Kaufman to suggest that our concepts do not refer to God. John Hick is another contemporary thinker who voices similar scepticism. But he is “heavily indebted to Kant,” says Plantinga. Hence, the same incoherency problem is also applicable to his view.

<sup>47</sup> See, *The Theological Imagination*, 34. It is to be noted here that this explanation is Plantinga's understanding of Kaufman. See, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 40.

<sup>48</sup> *Warranted Christian Belief*, 42.

Subsequently, Plantinga claims that there is no serious incoherence in theistic belief in general and Christians' belief in particular.

### Conclusion

We have analysed the epistemic problems associated with the theistic belief and Plantinga's defence of the coherence of belief in God. I think these arguments and proposals are outstanding epistemic contributions of Plantinga to put the rationality of religious belief to the forefront; more accurately they are the grand philosophical arguments to show the epistemic appropriateness of what is specific to theistic belief. However the question still remains; 'did Plantinga succeed in articulating the epistemic coherence of Christian belief adequately'? Though Plantinga has shown that there are inconsistencies in the interpretation of “two worlds” in Immanuel Kant's epistemology and Kaufman's “available and real referent”, he still did not give any positive argument to show that we can refer to God *ansich*. The human conceptual inability to apprehend the *nominal* reality of God *in himself* will always remain a problem. Moreover, the plurality of religious truth claims also makes Plantinga's claim weaker. If we can know God and attribute properties to him, the question immediately arises here is this; why there are diverse religious truth claims then? Although religious pluralism does not make Plantinga's arguments irrelevant, it at least challenges Plantinga's arguments to a greater extent.

## Ethics as Optics: Levinas Interrogates Nietzsche

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### Abstract

*Life force philosophy found its most sprightly expression in F.W. Nietzsche. Being an admirer of a nature that does not permit any Achilles' heel to occur, Nietzsche dreamt of the reign of power. Throughout his literature, we find him lamenting the loss of virility in culture. He accuses Christianity of having introduced the 'effeminate' Mitleidsethik. This Mitleidsethik finds a strong philosophical justification in Emmanuel Levinas. In Levinas, 'care for the unfit' transcends the matrix of charity and reaches the level of responsibility. He traces out a nature that celebrates vulnerability. It makes the invisible visible.*

### Keywords

*Nietzsche, survival of the fittest, care for the unfit, Apollonian, Dionysian, Optics, Epiphany of the face, Mitleidsethik, superman, totality, infinity, Levinas.*

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**Overture**

Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood: wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods? Draw near them then in being merciful: sweet Mercy is nobility's true badge: thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.<sup>2</sup>

So laments Tamora, the queen of Goths in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, a play that has enough notoriety for violence to its credit. Tamora belongs to a group of war detainees who lost their war to the Empire of Rome. As a custom, the Romans, under the leadership of Titus, want to sacrifice Alarbus, the eldest son of Tamora, to appease the war Gods of Rome. Thus, Tamora bemoans the tragic fate of her son with a last but futile appeal to the magnanimity of Titus.

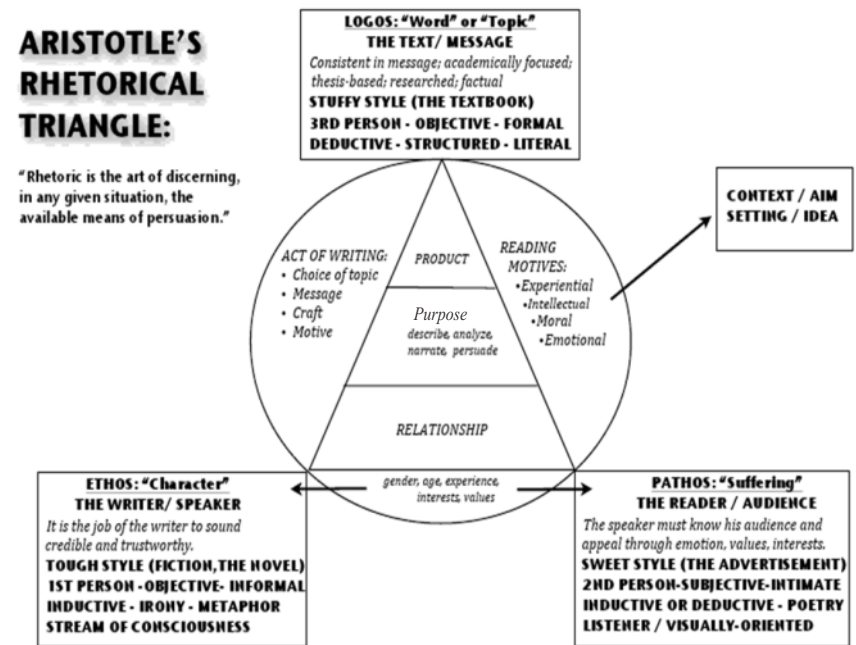
In the drama we see an obvious contrast. Tamora has neither ransom to pay nor any goods to offer Titus. Tamora is found in a beggarly situation while Titus assumes the air of a wielder of any graces as he pleases: a vacuum and a plenum *vis à vis*. Should Tamora get any favour at all, it depends solely on the chivalry of Titus. In other words, mercy is a process through which the investor of poverty and paucity gets a kickback or bonus back through, and due to, the bounty and nobility of a well-heeled free man. To the beneficiary, it happens all on a sudden like a bolt from the blue. There is, in short, nothing that necessitates a merciful act.

**1. Vacuum vs. Plenum: Classical Philosophical Concept of Mercy**

Classical antiquity attests to the above mentioned concept of mercy. In

<sup>2</sup> William SHAKESPEARE, *Titus Andronicus*, Act 1, scene 1. Shakespeare has still better passages on mercy in other plays too. "The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest: it blesseth him that gives and him that takes. 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown... *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, scene 1.

his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle differentiates between kindness and pity. However both of them must be placed against the backdrop of his larger project on *Rhetoric-Poetics*. According to Aristotle; "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (1.2.1).<sup>3</sup> It is nothing but the correct discerning and the systematic usage of the means of persuasion. Kindness and Pity belong to the Pathos (See the figure below).



Kindness — under the influence of which a man is said to 'be kind' — may be defined as helpfulness towards someone in need, not in return for anything, nor for the advantage of the helper himself, but for that of the person helped...an act may be an act of kindness because 1) it is a particular thing, 2) it has a particular magnitude or 3) quality, or 4) is done at a particular time or 5) place.

<sup>3</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, 1355b 26.

Aristotle emphasizes that an act of kindness is never accidental. It's rather a deliberate act. But Aristotle is much more mellifluous on his definition of pity.<sup>4</sup>

Pity may be defined as a feeling of pain caused by the sight of some evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon...It is therefore not felt by those completely ruined, who suppose that no further evil can befall them, since the worst has befallen them already; nor by those who imagine themselves immensely fortunate- their feeling is rather presumptuous insolence, for when they think they possess all the good things of life, it is clear that the impossibility of evil befalling them will be included, this being one of the good things in question.<sup>5</sup>

In *Poetics*, he tells us black and white that the end of tragedy is nothing but the arousal of pity and fear. This would have a cathartic (purgative) effect on the spectator.

Tragedy, however, is an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear...pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune.<sup>6</sup>

Pity has got an edge over kindness for, pity is always associated with a pain that moves and purges us. Still, a close analysis of Aristotle would tell us that there is nothing in our existential framework that necessitates

<sup>4</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, 1385a 18-20 & 1385b 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 1385b 13-25.

<sup>6</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1451b, 32 & 1453a 6. When pity is associated with undeserved misfortune, there comes the concept of justice too. In other words, deserved misfortunes- a case of justice- do not arouse pity.

pity.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.1 Post Aristotelian Era

In the history that follows Aristotle, we do seldom find any agreement among the philosophers on the concept of pity/ mercy. Stoics had a different concept of emotions. They too place pity among the emotions, which are nothing but mental perturbations to which a wise man does not yield. Augustine attests to the fact that the Stoics considered it as a vice.

And what is compassion but a fellow feeling for another's misery, which prompts us to help him if we can?...Cicero, who knew how to use language, did not hesitate to call this a virtue, which the Stoics are not ashamed to reckon among the vices...<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, Augustine, quoting Cicero, does not hesitate to call the Stoic antipathy for compassion a mere game of words (*Logomachy*).<sup>9</sup> However, the basic Stoic tenets make a sweeping denial of room for change in human life. It grew at the cost of unequalled miseries of myriads of people who were robbed of their fundamental urge to stand foursquare, realizing their full potential.<sup>10</sup> In that sense, anything that contributes to the change of life situations is not agreeable to the Stoics.

Virgil, the greatest of the Roman poets, also describes the heroic moment when Aeneas subdues all his inclinations to compassion for his sweetheart Dido.

<sup>7</sup> In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle speaks about two kinds of people who are foreign to pity. They are the extremely wretched ones and the extremely fortunate ones.

<sup>8</sup> AUGUSTINE, *The City of God*, Book IX, Ch. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. Ibid, Ch.5.

<sup>10</sup> Kancha Ilaiah calls the same situation of Indian casteism as spiritual fascism. Cfr Kancha ILAIAH, *Buffalo Nationalism: A Critique of Spiritual Fascism*, Samya Books, Kolkata, 2004, p. xvii.

Even thus, with ceaseless, ever-shifting cries the hero's heart is buffeted; he feels the deep grief through his mighty bosom thrill; the mind stands firm, and the tears are showered in vain.<sup>11</sup>

Virgil, here, approvingly places the resolute and manly will of Aeneas against the background of the effeminate compassion.

St. Thomas has indeed a great appreciation for mercy albeit he reckons it as something inferior to charity.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Transvaluation of All Values

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is best known in the history of philosophy for his vitriolic attack on the traditional morality. His onslaught starts right with Socrates, whom he calls a *décadent* who fought against the instincts of his age, and continues to smash on almost all the great figures of philosophy with a few exceptions such as Heraclitus. Nietzsche considered man as a partially evolved animal who must aspire to accomplish its evolution towards *Übermensch*/ Superman. Here, man is a bridge-to-be-surpassed between brute and superman. The way he advocates for man to find his legs is a purely biological and instinctive one. Accordingly, Nietzsche says that all kinds of compassion/ concern/ care were purchased at the high cost of denying an organic growth to the mankind.<sup>13</sup> He incriminates Christianity for this misdemeanour.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> VIRGIL, The Aeneid, Book IV, 447-9

<sup>12</sup> Thomas AQUINAS, Summa Theologica, Secunda Secundae, Q.30, Art. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche was an admirer of Darwinian evolution which advocated the survival of the fittest. Accordingly, care/concern (care for the unfit) is nothing but an anti biological instrument that falsifies this principle of the survival of the fittest.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche says: "This eternal accusation against Christianity I would fain write on all walls, wherever there are walls-I have letters with which I can make even the blind see... I call Christianity the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means are too venomous, too underhand, too underground and too petty-I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind." F.W. NIETZSCHE, The Antichrist, 62.

Christianity made all the expressions of power vice and professed humility and meekness to be virtues. This ethic of decadence,<sup>15</sup> as Nietzsche calls, has stolen away the very virility from all life. Better late than never! This situation must be overturned, to bring back the ethic of masculinity/ ethic of power (Will to Power). Therefore the exigent need of the time is the transvaluation of all values (*Umwertung aller werte*). Nietzsche anticipates his violent repudiation of egalitarianism and compassion in *Manusmriti*. In his *Twilight of the Idols*, he cajoles Manu for being a perfect system builder.

Christianity as sprung from Jewish roots and comprehensible only as grown upon this soil, represents the counter movement against that morality of breeding, of race and of privilege: it is essentially an anti-Aryan religion: Christianity is the transvaluation of all Aryan values, the triumph of Chandala values, the proclaimed gospel of the poor and of the low, the general insurrection of all the down-trodden, the wretched, the bungled and the botched, against the 'race'- the immortal revenge of the Chandala as the religion of love.<sup>16</sup>

Nietzsche sees God as an enemy of life and morality as an enemy of nature. What excites Nietzsche is the "*Care for the Unfit*" - the kernel of Christian Morality- which is the very reversal of the biological law of the *Survival of the Fittest*.

## 3. Mercy as a Relationship and Onus

Care for the unfit is the point of disagreement for both Stoics and Nietzsche. We must see mercy as a relationship. One cannot be merciful to himself. Therefore, mercy demands an existential framework that

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche calls the mercy and charity rich Christian ethics Mitleidsethik.

<sup>16</sup> F.W. NIETZSCHE, Twilight of the Idols, "The Improvers of Mankind", 4.



exceeds the singularity of a person. We must find out a philosophical platform that enables us turning the aforesaid Vacuum- Plenum structure of mercy upside down. In other words, the beneficiary of mercy must be credited with plenum (who is found with vacuum in the traditional philosophy). The philosopher who offers a helping hand here is Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>17</sup> His philosophy is an obvious departure from the apathetic/neutral ontology, seeking a *vis à vis* ethics.

According to Levinas, Ethics occurs at the very moment when the Ego is placed at the point blank of philosophical questioning. Levinas blames that the whole history of philosophy offers us unmistakable evidences of philosophizing from the point of view of Ego. The whole philosophy, thus, becomes a quixotic journey that endeavours the reduction of "other-than-ego" to Ego. Thus, anything other than Ego is reduced and subjugated to the "event horizon" of Ego. Anything that trespasses the "event horizon" of ego is totally lost within the Ego. The sophisticated term that we use for this reduction is knowledge. Therefore, no matter whether we call it metaphysics or epistemology, knowledge of the other is a reduction of his alterity to one's ego. Thus the Ego enjoys a narcissistic cheerfulness at the capture of any object through the knowing process. The known object becomes, thus, the property of Ego. In other words, both metaphysics and epistemology presuppose an Ego playing the central role. Thus the whole philosophy becomes "Egology".

...by saying that ethics occurs as the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, self-consciousness, or what Levinas, following Plato, calls the Same (*le même; to auton*). It is important to note at the outset that the Same refers not only to the *res cogitans*, but also to its *cogitata*. In Husserlian terms, the domain of the Same includes not only the intentional acts of

<sup>17</sup> Levinas (1906-1995) was a Franco-Lithuanian Jewish philosopher who revolutionized the traditional concepts of moral philosophy.

consciousness (*noeses*), but also the intentional objects which give meaning to those acts and which are constituted by consciousness (*noemata*). Or again, in Heideggerian terms, it includes not only *Dasein*, but the world which is constitutive of the Being of *Dasein* (*Dasein* as *in-der-Welt-Sein*). Thus, the domain of the Same maintains a relation with otherness, but it is a relation in which the 'I', ego, or *Dasein* reduces the distance between the Same and the Other, in which their opposition fades.<sup>18</sup>

Ego has always a tendency to capture anything through the process of knowing and it 'owns' the object thus. The whole horizon of Ego's knowledge is called **Totality**. Totality is nothing other than the domesticating chamber of Ego wherein everything other than Ego is translated into an egological language. Ego comprehends and engulfs all possible realities; Philosophy as ontology is the reduction of other to the *même*; alterity is digested like food or drink. This is the reason why Sartre called it "digestive philosophy".<sup>19</sup>

The visage of being that shows itself in war is fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates western philosophy. Individuals are reduced to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves. The meaning of individuals is derived from totality.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, there is an interiority within the other, the proper element that constitutes the alterity, which escapes and challenges all my attempts

<sup>18</sup> Simon CRITCHLEY, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. Jean-Paul SARTRE, 'Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 1, no. 2 (May 1970), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Emmanuel LEVINAS, *Totality and Infinity: An essay on Exteriority*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Boston, 1979, p.21-22.



of domestication. The being has got the characteristic of super fluidity which makes it flows out of the container of totality. Therefore, this super fluidity must be accounted for within a new platform: a platform without frontiers! That's **Infinity!**

Eschatology institutes a relation with *being beyond the totality* or beyond history...It is a relationship with a *surplus always exterior to the totality*.<sup>21</sup>

Infinity totally undoes the Ego's attempts to domesticate the alterity. The trace of the infinity is found on the face of the other. Therefore, the 'naked face of the other' always reminds me of the unyielding infinity. This is the epiphany of the face. Therefore, the very confrontation with the other reminds me of my existential incapacity to domesticate him. He solemnly and emphatically reminds me of my vacuum! He reminds me of his plenum! It turns the table of philosophy upside down and places ethics at first. The confrontation with the other is a pre-metaphysical, pre-epistemological moment. Thus ethics becomes the first philosophy. It places a sweeping demand before me; "Respect the alterity". Thus the other becomes master.

The first "vision" of eschatology reveals the very possibility of eschatology, that is, the breach of the totality, the possibility of a signification without a context. The experience of morality does not proceed from this vision-it consummates this vision; ethics is an optics.<sup>22</sup>

### Postscript: Sanctity of the Other

Such an approach thoroughly revolutionizes our philosophical vision of

<sup>21</sup> Cfr Ibid., p.23.

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel LEVINAS, *Totality and Infinity*, p.23.

mercy. The other is seen no more as somebody who awaits my chivalrous presence at the street. He is the one to whom I am bound. All the positive feelings, including compassion and mercy, must take their form according to this fundamental vision. Thus, Mercy becomes an onus and an imperative.

As an imperative it asks me not to trespass the sacred space of alterity. It also demands an unconditional respect for cultural, racial and ethnic entities. Ethics as optics, the science of light/vision must enable us to "see" the face of the other and recognize his identity. In one of the most sensitive novels of the twentieth century, *Invisible Man*, the American novelist, Ralph Ellison, says:

I am an invisible man...I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fibre and liquids-and I must even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me... Nor is invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality.<sup>23</sup>

The new ethics must make the hitherto 'invisible' identities visible.

Philosophy, once defined as the alchemy of altering alterity to sameness through the philosopher's stone of Ego, is now defined as the reverse alchemy of making the other "golden" through the philosopher's stone of "ethically reformed ego". Jacques Derrida observes:

<sup>23</sup> Ralph ELLISON, *Invisible Man*, Penguin Classics, London, 2001, p.3.

I believe that when Levinas speaks of ethics - I wouldn't say that this has nothing in common with what has been covered over in this word from Greece to the German philosophy of the 19th Century, ethics is wholly other (*tout autre*), and yet it is the same word.<sup>24</sup>

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## Bayesian Probabilistic Arguments for the Existence of God

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*Abstract: This article examines Bayes' theorem and how can it be used to assign various probabilities to the question of the existence of God. This article also examines how Stephen Unwin and Richard Swinburne argue that the evidences are enough to get us beyond a 50% probability for the existence of God. Even though it is less probable that any theist, agnostic or atheist would change their mind even after carefully following this method, it is still worth and meaningful to study, since there are no 100% objective arguments at hand.*

*Key Words: Existence of God, Bayes' theorem, Probability, Stephen Unwin, Richard Swinburne.*

Since the medieval period, one can notice that both philosophers and theologians have attempted to construct valid arguments for the existence of God. Even though medieval philosophers used the vocabularies related to probabilistic theory, it becomes a topic of public interest with the publication of *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioniet Proportionalita* by Italian mathematician, Fra Luca Bartolomeo de Pacioli.<sup>1</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, through the idea known as *A Gamblers Dispute*, the French mathematicians Blaise Pascal and Pierre

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<sup>1</sup> Luca Pacioli, *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioni Et Proportionalita*, trans. by P. Crivelli, Rirea, 2016.

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<sup>24</sup> Simon CRITCHLEY, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, p.16.

de Fermat developed the theory of probability and they are considered as the founders of probability theory as a mathematical enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

A probability is a number that reflects the chance or possibility for a particular thing to exist or for an event to happen. The concept of probability is essential to the study of inductive logic (in opposition to deductive logic) in which the premises provide strong support to the truth value of the conclusion.

Probability of a logical statement is measured on the basis of the validity of a statement becoming true. To make it clear, let us assign the numbers between 0 to 1 based on the probability of the following statements becoming true.<sup>3</sup>

Statement (S)	Probability (P) of becoming true (S)
All men are mortal and all men are immortal	0
Mr. Donald Trump will be the next president of India	0.00000000000001
The mayor of Delhi become the next mayor of Mumbai	0.00000001
My lottery ticket will win the first prize (if there are only 10000 tickets altogether)	0.00001
Next month there will be flood in Europe	0.003
Probability of winning a match between equally strong sides (if it is a fair play)	0.5
Trump will be re-elected as the president of United States	0.60
My favourite director will direct a film next year (since he directs one film in every year)	0.844
The sun will rise tomorrow	0.99999
All men are either mortal or immortal	1

<sup>2</sup> French nobleman Chevalier de Mere was interested in gambling. De Mere developed two methods of gambling. But he realized that the second method has worse results than the first. Based on his experiences with gambling, De Mere raised the question of probability regarding the success of the methods. He asked the help of Blaise Pascal to study the issue. Pascal along with his friend mathematician Pierre de Fermat worked through the problem and they shared their vast mathematical knowledge to solve the problem of probability. They found out that De Mere's first method had more probability than the second. E.T. Bell, *Men of Mathematics*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1953, 90ff.

<sup>3</sup> All values are approximate and not necessarily related to the original data.

Here in the above table one can see that the value 0 is given to the statement that is impossible to be true. The maximum value of 1 is given to the statement that cannot but be true. The statement that may be true or may not be true with equal probability is given the value of 0.5. Thus, in the above table, the probability of winning a fair match between two equally strong squads is 0.5, that is 50%. The intermediaries are given on the basis of their probabilities.

Probabilistic arguments for the existence of God are based on the Bayesian theory. First, we examine the theory, then it's application by two philosophers.

### Bayes' Theory

To argue that the existence of God is more probable than not, probabilistic argument employs Bayesian theory which is a form of inductive logic.<sup>4</sup> This theory was originally formulated by Thomas Bayes (died in 1761). He was a Presbyterian minister and mathematician. His theory was expanded after his death to make a systematic calculation of the probability based on the evidences at hand.<sup>5</sup> By using Bayes' theorem, one applies different inferences about the same subject matter when confronted with evidences. This provides the necessary tools for determining the probability of a hypothesis given that there is a particular piece of evidence. In other words, it provides an

<sup>4</sup> Bayesian probabilistic theory is employed in robotics, aeronautics, computer programs of all sorts, business and economic decision-making models, optimal ranking, expert systems, diagnostic programs, and spam filtering. William R. Clough, "God's Dice: Bayesian Probability and Providence", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, September 1, (2015) 7.

<sup>5</sup> Bayes' theorem was published in *An Essay Towards Solving a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances* (1763), which contributed the name to what is now known as Bayes' Theorem. Bayes also published two other works, one anonymously, with the ungainly title, *An Introduction to the Doctrine of Fluxions, and a Defence of the Mathematicians Against the Objections of the Author of the Analyst, so far as they are designed to affect their general Methods of Reasoning* (1736). See William R. Clough, "God's Dice: Bayesian Probability and Providence", 4.

assessment of how probable a hypothesis is in view of a given evidence. This theory establishes the norms for evaluating the validity and confirmation of a new hypothesis. It is a simple mathematical formula for calculating conditional probability. Probabilistic argument uses the framework provided by Bayes' theorem to construct a method for the verification of the arguments in favour of theism. The formula of Bayes' theorem is:

$$P(X|Y) = P(Y|X) \times P(X) / P(Y)$$

It describes how the probability of an event X changes related to the presence of another event Y. This formula allows one to explain the probabilities with mathematical precision. *Bayes' theorem* helps one to explain the confirmation and many other aspects of scientific reasoning. According to Bayes' theorem, the probability of a hypothesis, given that there is evidence and background knowledge, is directly proportional to the probability of the evidences having occurred, given that the hypothesis and the background knowledge are true; and it is inversely proportional to the evidence happens independent of the hypothesis.

It is easier to understand Bayesian theory with an example. Suppose every time your favourite Cricket team's captain goes for casting the toss, he has a 50 percent chance of winning, provided that it is a fair toss.<sup>6</sup> The probability of winning the toss is 1/2. Winning the toss twice consecutively is 1/4 which is 25 percent. Winning a single toss is more (twice) probable than winning two consecutive tosses. The probability of winning all the tosses in a captain's lifetime is nearly 0. If anything has the probability of 1, then it is 100 percent certain. If anything has 0 probabilities, it is impossible. Probability can be applied to events and to

<sup>6</sup> For the development of this particular paragraph I am indebted to Keith M. Parson, *God and the Burden of Proof: Plantinga, Swinburne, and the Analytic Defence of Theism*, Prometheus Books (1989), 68-69.

verify the truth of statements. If someone says that there is 1/2 chance of a particular event happening, it means the probability of that particular event happening is 50 percent. Here at this point one explains the probability calculus of statements. Probability calculus, shows how assessments of probability differ in relation to background evidence. Suppose the probability of a statement X is 1, which can be symbolically represented as  $P(X) = 1$ ; if the probability of X is 1/2, then the symbolic representation would be  $P(X) = 1/2$ . Thus, if the probability of X is more than 50 percent, then it would be  $P(X) > 1/2$ , and if the probability is less than 50 percent then  $P(X) < 1/2$ .

Another important concept necessary to grasp regarding Bayes' Theorem is conditional probability. If one states that the truth of a statement depends upon the validity of other statements, then we have conditional probability. For instance, the following statement

X: Paul Davies can play piano.

Y: Paul Davies is from South India and 99.9 percent of South Indian people cannot play piano.

Z: Paul Davies is a music teacher and almost all music teachers, say 90 percent of them, can play piano.

In this example, if one considers the statement X with Y, then the probability of X is a bare minimum; and if he considers the statement X with Z, then the statement of X is 90 percent probable. Thus, symbolically we can represent X given Y:  $P(X|Y) = 0.001$  and the probability of X given Z is 90 percent:  $P(X|Z) = 0.9$ . Bayes' theory not only tells us that a given piece of evidence confirms the hypothesis in question but also tells us the degree to which the evidence affirms the hypothesis.

Stephen Unwin and Richard Swinburne have applied Bayesian reasoning to matters of faith, such as trying to figure out the probability that God exists, given that there are evidences.

### Stephen Unwin

Stephen Unwin is a physicist and risk analyst and the author of *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation that Provides the Ultimate Truth*.<sup>7</sup> Unwin dismisses many of the traditional arguments for the existence of God including Fine-tuned universe and intelligent design. According to Unwin, scientific evidences does not help one to solve God-existence problem.<sup>8</sup> He confesses that the exact answer to God's existence cannot be found but argues that he can contribute where great philosophers has failed. According to Unwin, they “did not think of addressing the issue of God's existence in a formal, probabilistic setting. They looked at the question in a strictly binary, the deterministic way. They asked, 'Is there a God, yes or no?’”<sup>9</sup>

Unwin unlike other philosophers tries to show the probability of God's existence. The complete ignorance of an unbiased agnostic has 50-50 chance that God exists.<sup>10</sup> Unwin proposes a “Divine indicator scale” (from 0.1 to 10) to measure the probability of God's existence valued on the basis of the available evidences. A “D-value” of 0.1 is for the least

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Unwin, *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation that Provides the Ultimate Truth*, Three Rivers Press, New York (2004) 231.

<sup>8</sup> At this point, he makes a radical point against famous evolutionary biologist and atheist Richard Dawkins who considers the existence of God is a scientific hypothesis. Dawkins writes: “I hope [agnostics] will change your [their] mind, by persuading you[them] that 'the God Hypothesis' is a scientific hypothesis about the universe, which should be analysed as sceptically as any other.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Unwin, *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation that Provides the Ultimate Truth*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Unwin, *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation that Provides the Ultimate Truth*, 58.

possibility that God exists and the evidence is much more likely to be produced if God does not exist. A “D-value” of 1 shows that evidence is “God-neutral”. A “D-value” 10 means the evidences are much more likely to be produced if and only if God exists. There are all other possible numbers as well.

The 'evidences' that Unwin presents pro and con to the existence of God as identified by the author along with its Divine indicator values are:

- 1) The recognition of goodness, such as altruism (D=10).
- 2) The existence of moral evil, that is evil done by human beings (D=0.5).
- 3) The existence of natural evil such as natural disasters (D=0.5).
- 4) Intra-natural miracles that is minor miracles like answered prayers (D=2).
- 5) Extra-natural miracles, for example resurrection of the dead (D=1).
- 6) Religious experiences(D=2).

Unwin argues that he believes in God's existence with the help of the Bayesian analysis which supplies 67% probability and 'faith' fills in the rest that one needs to be there. Unwin admits that the 67% probability is subjective and may differ from person to person. He writes, “Your assessment of the evidence may differ. So now that you have the hang of the process, you may wish to adjust the numbers as you see fit and see what results you derive. You may have evidentiary areas to add.”<sup>11</sup> The reader will arrive at 67% probability if he agrees with all the assessments of Unwin.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Unwin, *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation that Provides the Ultimate Truth*, 129.



It should be noted that the most compelling reasons for one's belief, for many people, often involve the issues beyond rational analysis, such as personal and mystical experiences with the divine. One may be still influenced by the testimony of the forefathers and the community in which one is born. It is not at all clear that these reasons are excluded from the start in Unwin's work.

### Richard Swinburne

Richard Swinburne is the champion of using probability theory in developing his arguments for the existence of God.<sup>12</sup> The issue Swinburne addresses is not primarily whether God does exist or not, but considering the whole evidences (pro and contra), how probable is the existence of God. Swinburne presents six probabilistic arguments separately for the existence of God. Since the argumentative force of one inductive argument can be sharpened or weakened by that of the other, none of the arguments, taken in isolation can make the existence of God more probable than not. God is the best possible hypothesis for the rational justification of all the human experience. The conclusion drawn is that the existence of God is more probable than not.

<sup>12</sup> He was the Nolloth Professor of philosophy of Christian religion at the University of Oxford. He is known for applying the rigorous standards of analytical philosophy to scrutinize the coherence and meaningfulness of theistic claims along with the analysis of traditional Christian doctrines. He is considered to be "the foremost philosopher of religion of the past one-hundred years." B. Langtry, "Richard Swinburne", in G. Oppy – N. Trakakis, eds., *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. V, Acumen, Durham (2009) 285. Swinburne has published 23 books and 148 articles, explaining mainly that belief in Christianity is rational and coherent.

In the absence of valid deductive arguments for the existence of God, Swinburne follows inductive method.<sup>13</sup> He uses Bayesian theory which is a form of inductive logic. This theory establishes the norms for evaluating the validity and confirmation of a new hypothesis.

For Swinburne, the existence of God cannot be stated with absolute certainty. Swinburne follows a method that is analogous to science. He uses the scientific criterion of simplicity to choose between possible hypotheses. Using scientific language, Swinburne explains the theist's claim that 'God exists' has a significant degree of probability. Theism provides ultimate explanation for human experiences and the existence of the universe. Since theism is an explanation concerning the facts of the universe, it is in conformity with the principles of scientific explanation. One can say that for Swinburne that since God as conceived by theism is the simplest being and the simplest hypothesis (here in this context theistic) has higher degree of probability. He explains further that the theistic hypothesis of the existence of God, when combined with the historical proofs about the life and ministry of Jesus, makes it probable that there is a God who became human in Jesus and that Jesus resurrected from the dead.

$$P(H/E\&k) = \frac{P(E/H\&k)ph/k}{P(E/K)}$$

Here P stands for probability, H is whatever hypothesis is under consideration, E stands for the evidence and K for the background knowledge (knowledge of all that is relevant but not included in E).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> It is to be noted that Swinburne does not reject the validity of deductive arguments but they generally begin with premises that are not based on commonly accepted principles. In recent times, the inductive arguments have received more acceptance among the empirical sciences. Scientific theories like Einstein's theory of Relativity, Darwin's Evolution Theory, the Big Bang theory follow the inductive method. Swinburne as a philosopher uses the criteria of modern natural science, analysed with the severity of modern philosophy to provide the justification for existence of God.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1979) 17, 67.



Thus here, in the symbolic representation  $P(H/E.K)$ , is the probability of a hypothesis given the evidence and the background knowledge (i.e. posterior probability);  $P(E/H.K)$  is the probability of the evidences having occurred given that the hypothesis and the background knowledge is true;  $P(H/K)$  is the intrinsic probability of the hypothesis given that there is only the background knowledge (independent of particular evidence); and  $P(E/K)$  is the probability of evidence with respect to the background knowledge available (i.e. prior probability).  $P(E/H.K)/P(E/K)$  is the explanatory power of the hypothesis. According to Bayes' theorem, the probability of a hypothesis given that there is evidence and background knowledge, is directly proportional to the probability of the evidence's having occurred, given that the hypothesis, and the background knowledge is true, and to the probability of the hypothesis given that there is only the background knowledge; it is inversely proportional to the evidence happens independent of the hypothesis. Thus, a new hypothesis that fits well with the evidence and the background knowledge is likely to be true.

The advantage of the use of an inductive method is that it provides evidence for our empirical observations. It is precisely because of this, Swinburne prefers the inductive method. With regard to the use of the inductive method in the arguments for the existence of God, Swinburne writes: “relatively few philosophers today would accept that there are good deductive arguments to be had here. I shall devote most of my time to assessing the inductive strength of such arguments.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 14.

Swinburne distinguishes two types of inductive arguments: P-inductive and C-inductive arguments.<sup>16</sup> Concerning this he writes:

Let us call an argument in which the premises make the conclusion probable a correct P-inductive argument. Let us call an argument in which the premises add to the probability of the conclusion (that is, make the conclusion more likely or more probable than it would otherwise be) a correct C-inductive argument. In this latter case let us say that the premises 'confirm' the conclusion. Among correct C-inductive arguments, some will obviously be stronger than others, in the sense that in some the premises will raise the probability of the conclusion more than the premises do in other arguments.<sup>17</sup>

A good P-inductive argument has true premises which make theism more likely than not, that is  $P(E/H\&K) > \frac{1}{2}$ . Here P stands for probability, H is for theism, E stands for the evidence and K for the background knowledge (knowledge of all that is relevant but not included in E). In a good P-inductive argument, the evidence makes the hypothesis of theism H more probable than its negation -H.<sup>18</sup>

$$P(H/E\&K) > P(-H/E\&K)$$

The P-inductive argument makes the conclusion more probable than not. While in a C-inductive argument the premises increase the probability of

<sup>16</sup> Swinburne does not seem to be consistent with regard to the classification of the P-inductive and C-inductive arguments. In *The Existence of God*, the teleological argument arising from the orderliness and regularity of the universe is considered as a good C-inductive argument. However, the same argument given in *Is There a God* is more of P-inductive argument. In *The Existence of God*, Swinburne exposes only the good C-inductive arguments. Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (1996) 55. This description is provided while discussing the fifth way of Aquinas as “good evidence for the existence of God.”

<sup>17</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Martin, “Swinburne's Inductive Cosmological Argument”, *HeythropJournal* 27 (2):151–162 (1986) 151.

the conclusion. A good C-inductive argument has true premises and raises the probability of the theistic hypothesis. Let me illustrate this point with an example given by Swinburne:<sup>19</sup>

P: All of 100 ravens observed in different parts of the world are black.

C: All ravens are black.

Here the premise does not make the conclusion probable but increases the probability of the conclusion. In this instance the proposition that all 100 ravens observed in different parts of the world are black does not guarantee the conclusion that all ravens are black. It merely states that all the ravens observed are black and does not mean there cannot be a white raven that you have not observed. But at the same time, it increases the probability that there are only black ravens.

An important aspect of the inductive argument is that its probability is higher when the cumulative force of all evidence is taken together. If there is more evidence that support the same conclusion, then one can claim that the conclusion is more probable than having merely only one piece of evidence. Even though Swinburne begins considering each argument separately, he ultimately constructs a cumulative case argument on observable phenomena and human experience.

Swinburne illustrates the cumulative force of different evidence with an example.<sup>20</sup> An intelligent detective argues from various pieces of evidence, such as the bloodstains on the woodwork, John's fingerprints on the metal, Smith's corpse on the floor, money missing from the safe, Jones's having lot of extra money, to Jones's having intentionally killed

<sup>19</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 21.

Smith and stolen his money. Here he proceeds to an explanation of the various phenomena in terms of the intentional action of a rational agent. In the above-mentioned instance illustrated by Swinburne, if the detective takes each piece of evidence separately, failing to take the cumulative force of all the evidence the result would be far less than probable. He warns philosophers of religion who use the arguments for the existence of God in isolation from each other that many arguments taken together add more probability.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike Unwin, Swinburne does not provide exact values to the various probabilities. I think Swinburne's method can be strengthened if he assigns exact values.<sup>22</sup>

### Conclusion

It is to be noted that the employment of reason in the arguments for the existence of God does not lead to absolute certainty but rather to a higher degree of probability than atheism. An advantage of using inductive arguments based on Bayes' Theory is that the force of the cumulative evidence adds more probability to the strength of the argument. However, the probabilistic arguments lack a due appreciation of the subjective factors involved in assessing the probability of religious belief.

Religious readers may not accept this method without at least close to highest level of probability. Non-religious readers may be sceptical about this method since the application of the Bayesian probabilities sometimes may be highly subjective and not necessarily the case.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Gwiazda criticises Swinburne on this point. See Jeremy Gwiazda, "Richard Swinburne, The Existence of God, and Exact Numerical Values", *Springer Science -Business Media* (2009), 357-363.

Atheistic readers further object this level of probability.

Neither the theist nor the atheist would change their mind after following this method. However, the discussion shifts its focus from debating on the existence of God to that of discussing whether the order, beauty, goodness, evil, and wonders are more likely to happen in a world with God rather than without God. This is a much more substantial and meaningful enterprise than the ones that usually occur among theists, agnostics and atheists.

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