

Prof. Gilkey was kind enough to suggest the topic for this talk,
'The General Character of the Natural Theology contained in my book, Insight.'

The natural theology in that book is found in chapter XIX and it consists
in an argument for the existence of God.

Before attempting to outline that argument, I had best say something
about the general character of its presuppositions worked out in the previous
eighteen chapters.

In the main they are concerned with three rather basic and closely
connected questions:

What am I doing when I am knowing---cognitive theory,
Why is doing that knowing-----epistemology,
What do I know when I do it_____ metaphysics.

The use of the first personal pronoun is deliberate: the book invites
the reader to a self-appropriation, to a coming-to-know and take possession
of himself,

at the same time it is an invitation to authenticity, to taking possession
of his true self, to an intellectual conversion.

The basic task is to acquire familiarity with one's own cognitive
operations, to find out from performing the operations what the operations
are and how they are related to one another

The reader is presumed to be sufficiently familiar with seeing, hearing,
touching, smelling, tasting.

The act of understanding, however, is set up for scrutiny throughout
the whole first part of the book.

Chapter I: mathematical understanding; clearest, most sharply
Chapters II-V: scientific, understanding and developing
Chapters VI, VII: commonsense understanding, development and aberration
Chapter VIII: the notion of the thing
Chapters IX-XI: reflective understanding and judgement including
the judgement, I am a knower, in the sense that I perform such and such
operations related in such and such manners.

Whence

human knowing is not some one type of operation but a compound of
different types, roughly, experience, understanding, judging.

The objectivity of human knowing is not some single property but
a compound of different properties proper to different types of
operation: experiential, normative, absolute.

The proportionate object of human knowing is not some simple object
but a compound of different partial objects assembled in the compound of
different operations.

Hence, open system: basic terms and relations, mutually determined:
basic terms refer to my operations; basic relations are the dynamic
relations between my operations; isomorphic to these are terms and
relations in the appropriate object.

1. In chapter XIX of my book, Insight, I worked out an argument for the existence of God.

It is, presumably, this argument that constitutes any "Natural Theology" I happen to have, and so an account of this argument.

2. Briefly the argument reads:

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

But the real is completely intelligible.

Therefore, God exists.

3. Substantially this argument is quite traditional, but it differs from the old proofs of the existence of God in two manners, and in each case it does so to meet later developments.

3.1 The hypothetical premiss (If the real is completely...) is a variant on the appeal to causality.

In the medieval period, theology, philosophy, and science were distinguished but they were not separated.

The distinction of theology and philosophy became a separation with Descartes: he wanted his philosophy based on certitudes quite distinct from his religious faith.

However, in Descartes philosophy and science are not yet separate: he proved the conservation of momentum by appealing to the immutability of God.

That separation, however, was effected virtually by Newton's Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica, and formally by Laplace's proof of the periodicity of planetary motion and his famous remark about the First Mover, "Nous n'avons plus besoin de cette hypothese."

With the separation of philosophy and science, there was developed a scientific notion of causality, a notion that relates effects only to causes within the observable, created universe.

Accordingly, if God's existence is to be proved, there has to be formulated a complementary, philosophic notion of causality.

Within the Scholastic tradition this commonly is done by a metaphysical formulation.

My own formulation is, however, gnoseological: it speaks of the complete intelligibility of the real.

It does so because, for me, a metaphysics is not first but derived from cognitional theory and epistemology.

In other words, my position is transcendental, in the sense that I would say that our knowledge of objects is constructed by the subject's activities.

3.2 I said the argument departed from the traditional proofs in two manners. The first was a variant on the principle of causality. The second is a matter of taking a precise philosophic position.

It is not from the world as interpreted in any philosophy that the existence of God can be proved. One cannot prove the existence of God to a Kantian without first breaking his allegiance to Kant. One cannot prove the existence of God to a positivist without first converting him from positivism. A valid proof has philosophic presuppositions, and the presuppositions of the argument set forth in Insight are indicated in the antecedent, the real is completely intelligible.

3.3 So much for my first remark on the general character of my position
Substantially it is the traditional manner of proof.

But it departs from older formulations

first, inasmuch as it assumes a precise philosophic stance or horizon
by stating, the real is completely intelligible,
secondly, by departing from the medieval view of causality (which
did not differentiate philosophy and science) and from the subsequent
Scholastic formulations in terms of metaphysics, to a transcendental formu-
lation in terms of the manner in which our apprehension of the universe
is to be constructed, namely, with an exigence for complete intelligibility.

4. Let us now devote a little more attention to the categorical
premise, the real is completely intelligible.

Its meaning maybe clarified by introducing a middle term and arguing:

Being is completely intelligible.

But the real is being.

Therefore, the real is completely intelligible.

5. Being is completely intelligible.

a Basically, being is what is intended in questioning.

Such intending is not knowing. When a question is genuine, the answer
is not yet known. When one questions, then, one intends what as yet one
does not know.

On the other hand, such intending is not complete ignorance. At
least one knows enough to know one does not know and to ask the question
that would bring the remedy.

Such intending, then, is somewhere between knowing and total ignorance.
It is the conscious dynamic element in the process of man's coming to know.

Moreover, such intending presupposes something previously given,
presented, somehow known. But it goes beyond that to an unknown. Such
going beyond is a priori: it is just the opposite of the a posteriori which
is given, perceived, known, for its concern is beyond to the as yet unknown.

b Some further properties of the notion of being had best be noted.

(1) The use of the a priori intention has to be intelligently controlled.

There is a strategy in our choice of questions, a tactic in the order
in which they are to be raised, limits to the questions that can usefully
be investigated now, etc.

(2) The necessity of such control arises from the fact that the a priori
intention of itself is unrestricted.

It is not limited to some genus, like sight to color or hearing
to sound. We inquire about any genus or species whatever.

It is not limited to what we can know.

Man's knowing is limited. Just where the limits lie, is a matter
of dispute. But no matter where the limits are placed, there can and
does arise the question whether there is beyond the limits anything to
be known.

(3) The a priori intention is not abstract.

People think of metaphysics as abstract.

Scotus and Hegel agreed that the notion of being coincides with the minimal concept, not-nothing.

But just as our questions, of themselves, are unrestricted in extent, so too they are unrestricted in intent. As we may ask about everything, so too we may ask everything about anything.

What is the concrete? One knows a thing concretely when one knows it completely. One intends the concrete by the intention of being.

(4) The a priori intention is not optional.

It is the nerve of all questioning, of all learning, of all correcting mistakes, of all inquiry and insight, of all reflection and judgement, of all deliberation and reasonable choice.

Human living is solving problems and living out the solutions.

c As being is intended by asking questions, so it is to be known by answering them correctly

asking and answering suggest a dialogue, a catechism, at least a flow of words

but the verbal aspect is posterior

prior to the formulated question there is the surprise, the wonder that Aristotle described as the beginning of all science and philosophy

prior to the answers there are the insights formulated in hypotheses, hunches

and the reflection that weighs the evidence and comes to affirm or deny with probability or at times with certainty.

So being may be re-defined as what is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.

d Being is completely intelligible.

(1) It is by the exercise of our intelligence that we come to know

mere gaping (unintelligent looking) is not human knowing

we have to look but we also have to inquire, investigate, come to understand

merely understanding is not human knowing; insights are a dime a dozen; they have to be developed; corrected, complemented, rounded out

to get beyond myth to science, astrology to astronomy, alchemy to chemistry, legend to history, it is not enough to understand

one has to reflect, critically weigh the evidence, judge reasonably.

(2) What is known by the exercise of intelligence is the intelligible

the sensible is potentially intelligible: what can be understood
ideas are formally intelligible: the content of insight
affirmations are actually intelligible: the intelligibility that is so.

(3) What is to be known by the exercise of intelligence is completely intelligible

for every obscurantism is reprobated
while there are illegitimate, mistaken, inopportune questions,
still no question can be brushed aside without some reason being assigned--and questions do not stop, they keep coming, libraries full

6. The real is being.

When I was a boy, I remember being surprised by a companion who assured me that air was real.

Astounded, I said, No, It's just nothing.

He said, There's something there all right. Shake your hand and you will feel it.

So I shook my hand, felt something, and concluded to my amazement that air was real.

Whether my conclusion was correct, we need not consider. The point is that all of us in childhood have to solve implicitly and pragmatically a whole series of questions in cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics. We have to distinguish dreaming and waking, imagining and seeing, stories and what really happened; we have to discover the possibility and learn to suspect the occurrence of a sibling's joke, trick, fib.

So it is, perhaps, that we arrive at the manifest, unquestionable, self-evident certitudes that later make the problems of philosophers seem so absurd to us.

But the fact is, it seems to me, that besides retaining not a little of the mythical world of childhood

we also move into the universe of being: we know by experiencing and inquiring, by understanding and reflecting, by weighing the evidence and judging

the world mediated by language also is a real world.

When, then, I say that the real is being

I am saying that we have to recapitulate in ourselves the old Greek break-through from mythos to logos

that we have to do so consistently, completely, rigorously,
that unless we do so, we shall be forever caught in the toils of a Kantianism, an idealism, an existentialism, or a positivism,

that if we are so caught, then we cannot find any valid proof for the existence of God.

7. The realities of this world are of themselves not completely intelligible.

I.e., questions arise that are not to be answered in terms of the nature of causality of minerals, plants, animals, men

Aliter, questions arise and are not to be answered by the use of scientific method, or by the use of empirical science.

From that use one event or existence can be accounted for by appealing to other events or existences.

But no attempt is made or can be made to meet the questions, Why does anything exist? Why does anything occur?

Existence and occurrence are known in judgement; judgement rests on virtually unconditioned: virtually unconditioned is a conditioned whose conditions happen to be fulfilled.

3. If the real is to be completely intelligible, we have to go beyond this world to a completely intelligible being that accounts for the existences and occurrences of this world.

That completely intelligible being would be an unrestricted act of understanding

and such an act has the properties traditionally associated with God.

Moreover, this apprehension of notion of God is open; it admits further determinations from revelation:

De Deo Trino.