

INSIGHT

CHAPTER XIX

GENERAL TRANSCENDENT KNOWLEDGE

If there is or if there is to be a higher integration of human living, then it will be known only through a knowledge that goes beyond the various types that hitherto have engaged our attention. But if the new knowledge is to be continuous with the old, then it will conform to the basic characteristics with which we have become familiar.

Perhaps the most fundamental of these characteristics appears in the distinction between a heuristic structure and its determination. The simple fact that man knows through intelligent inquiry and rational reflection, enables him to determine in advance certain general attributes of the object under investigation. So the methods of the empirical sciences rest on the anticipation of systems of laws, of ideal frequencies, of genetic operators, of dialectical tensions. So the metaphysics of proportionate being has been conceived as an implementation of integrated heuristic structures of empirical science. So the present chapter on general transcendent knowledge is

concerned to determine what we can and do know about transcendent being prior to the attainment of an act of understanding that grasps what any transcendent being is. To employ the terms that will be more familiar to many, the present chapter is concerned with the knowledge of God that, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, consists in knowing that he is but not what he is.

1. The Notion of Transcendence

Commonly transcendence is opposed to immanence, and then the simplest way to understand the opposition is to begin from the ordinary view that knowing consists in looking. For on that view the fact of error is somewhat disconcerting: either error consists in seeing what is not there or else it consists in not seeing what is there. But if the first look is erroneous, the second, third, fourth, or nth may err in the same or in some different fashion. Which is to be trusted? Is any to be trusted? Does not certitude require the possibility of some super-look in which one can compare the object to be looked at and the object as seen? Would not the super-look be open to exactly the same difficulty? Obviously, it would, and so one is brought to the conclusion that knowing is immanent not simply in the ontological sense that knowing occurs within the knower but also in the epistemological sense that nothing is known except the content immanent within the act of knowing.

General Transcendent Knowledge

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A first step towards transcendence, then, is to reject the mistaken supposition that knowing consists in taking a look. After all, even the above argument for immanence is not a matter of looking but a matter of understanding and judging, and so anyone that appeals to the above argument to affirm epistemological immanence might better appeal to the fact that he argues and so be led to reject the major premise² of the argument. Counter-positions invite their own reversal.

In a more general sense, transcendence means "going beyond". So inquiry, insight, and formulation do not merely reproduce the content of sensible experience but go beyond it. So reflection, grasp of the unconditioned, and judgment are not content with mere objects of supposing, defining, considering, but go beyond them to the universe of facts, of being, of what truly is affirmed and really is. Moreover, one can rest content with knowing things as related to us, or one can go beyond that to join the scientists in searching for knowledge of things as related to one another. One can go beyond both common sense and present science, to grasp the dynamic structure of our rational knowing and doing, and then formulate a metaphysics and an ethics. Finally, one can ask whether human knowledge is confined to the universe of proportionate being or goes beyond it to the realm of transcendent being; and this transcendent realm may be conceived either relatively or absolutely, either as beyond man or as the ultimate in the whole process of going beyond.

Clearly, ~~this process of going beyond~~, despite the imposing name, ~~of~~ transcendence, is the elementary matter of raising further questions. Thus, the present work has been written from a moving viewpoint. It began from insight as an interesting event in human consciousness. It went on to insight as a central event in the genesis of mathematical knowledge. It went beyond mathematics to study the role of insight in classical and statistical investigations. It went beyond the reproducible insights of scientists to the more complex functioning of intelligence in common sense, in its relations to its psychoneural basis, and in its historical expansion in the development of technology, economics, and politics. It went beyond all such direct and inverse insights to the reflective grasp that grounds judgment. It went beyond all insights as activities to consider them as elements in knowledge. It went beyond actual knowledge to its permanent dynamic structure to construct an explicit metaphysics and add the general form of an ethics. It has found man involved and engaged in developing, in going beyond what he happens to be, and it has been confronted both with man's incapacity for sustained development and with his need to go beyond the hitherto considered procedures of his endeavor to go beyond.

Transcendence, then, at the present juncture, means a development in man's knowledge relevant to a development in man's being. Hitherto we have been content with

knowledge of proportionate being. But man is in process of development. Inasmuch as he is intelligent and reasonable, free and responsible, he has to grasp and affirm, accept and execute his own developing. But can he? To grasp his own developing is for man to understand it, to extrapolate from his past through the present to the alternative ranges of the future. It is to extrapolate not only horizontally but also vertically, not only to future recurrences of past events, but also to future higher integrations of contemporary unsystematized manifolds. More fundamentally, it is to grasp the principles that govern possible extrapolations; for while possibilities are many and difficult to determine, principles may be few and ascertainable. Moreover, since finality is an upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism and since man is free, the real issue lies not in the many possibilities but in the few principles on which man may rely in working out his destiny.

2. The Immanent Source of Transcendence

The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know. As it is the origin of all his questions, it is the origin of the radical, further questions that take him beyond the defined limits of particular issues. Nor is it solely the operator of his cognitional development. For its

detachment and disinterestedness set it in opposition to his attached and interested sensitivity and intersubjectivity; and the knowledge it yields demands of his will the endeavor to develop in willingness and so make his doing consistent with his knowing.

Still if this tension is too manifest for the existence of the pure desire to be doubted, the claim that it is an unrestricted desire seems so extravagant as to cause misgivings even in those that already accept all its implications. Accordingly, it will be well to clarify once more this point before attempting to advance further in our inquiry.

The desire in question, then, is a desire to understand correctly. To affirm that the desire is unrestricted is not to affirm that man's understanding is unrestricted or that the correctness of his understanding is unrestricted. For the desire is prior to understanding and it is compatible with not understanding. Were it not, the effort and process of inquiry would be impossible; for inquiry is a manifestation of a desire to understand, and it occurs before one does understand.

Secondly, to affirm that the desire is unrestricted is not to affirm that the attainment of understanding will be unrestricted. For the transition from the desire to the attainment has conditions that are distinct from desiring. It is to help fulfill such conditions that scientific and

philosophic methods exist. Hence, to affirm an unrestricted desire to understand is to affirm the fulfilment of only one of many conditions for the attainment of unrestricted understanding. So far from stating that the other conditions will be fulfilled, it does not attempt to determine what the other conditions might be.

Thirdly, to affirm that the desire is unrestricted is not to affirm that, in a wisely ordered universe, the attainment of understanding ought to be unrestricted. Such an affirmation would follow from the premise^e, In every wisely ordered universe desire for attainment entails exigence for attainment. But the premise^a is obviously false; a desire to commit murder does not entail a duty to commit murder, and least of all does it do so in a wisely ordered universe. It may be contended, however, that the premise^e is correct when the desire is good, natural, spontaneous. But this contention has its own suppositions. In a universe of static horizontal strata, such as is envisaged by autonomous abstract physics, autonomous abstract chemistry, autonomous abstract biology, and so forth, the tendencies and desires, natural and spontaneous on any level, would have to be confined to that level; because they were confined to their own level, they could and would be fulfilled on their own level; and because they could and would be fulfilled on their own level, it would be true to claim that in a wisely regulated universe of static horizontal strata desire for attainment entailed exigence for attainment. It re-

mains to be shown, however, that this universe corresponds to a set of abstract, unrelated sciences and so consists in a set of static horizontal strata. The fact seems to be that this universe is concrete and that logically unrelated sciences are related intelligently by a succession of higher viewpoints. Accordingly, besides the tendencies

Tendencies and desires that go beyond any given level; they are the and desires confined to any given level, there are the reality of finality conceived as an upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism; and since this dynamism of finality attains its successive goals statistically, since probabilities decrease as attainment increases, the implication of unrestricted attainment in unrestricted desire is neither necessity nor exigence but, at most, negligible probability.

If one has to labor to clarify what the unrestricted desire is not, it is relatively simple to reveal what it is. Man wants to understand completely. As the desire to understand is the opposite of total obscurantism, so the unrestricted desire to understand is the opposite of any and every partial obscurantism no matter how slight. The rejection of total obscurantism is the demand that some questions, at least, are not to be met with an arbitrary exclamation, Let's forget it. The rejection of any and every partial obscurantism is the demand that no question whatever is to be met arbitrarily, that every question is to be submitted to the process of intelligent grasp and critical reflection. Negatively, then, the unrestricted

desire excludes the unintelligent and uncritical rejection of any question, and positively the unrestricted desire demands the intelligent and critical handling of every question.

Nor is the existence of this unrestricted desire doubtful. Neither centuries of inquiry nor enormous libraries of answers have revealed any tendency for the stream of further questions to diminish. Philosophies and counter-philosophies have been multiplied but, whether intellectualist or anti-intellectualist, whether they proclaim the rule of reason or advocate thinking with the blood, they do not exclude any field of inquiry without first arguing that the effort is useless or enervating or misleading or illusory. And in this respect we may be confident that the future will resemble the past for, unless some one comes forth to speak in the name of stupidity and silliness, he will not be able to claim that some questions, specified or unspecified, are to be brushed aside though there is no reason whatever for doing so.

Analysis yields the same conclusion. For, apart from being, there is nothing. The proposition is analytic, for it cannot be denied without internal contradiction. If, apart from being, there were something, that something would be; and if that something were, it would be another instance of being and so not apart from being. Moreover, being is the objective of the detached and disinterested desire to know;

for that desire grounds inquiry and reflection; inquiry leads to understanding, reflection leads to affirmation; and being is whatever can be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably. But being is unrestricted for, apart from it, there is nothing. Therefore the objective of the detached and disinterested desire is unrestricted. But a desire with an unrestricted objective is an unrestricted desire and so the desire to know is unrestricted.

Introspective reflection brings us once more to the same affirmation. For, whatever may be true about the cognitional aspirations of others, might not my own be radically limited? Might not my desire to understand correctly suffer from some immanent and hidden restriction and bias, so that there could be real things that lay quite beyond its utmost horizon? Might not that be so? Yet if I ask the question, it is in virtue of my desire to know; and as the question itself reveals, my desire to know concerns itself with what lies quite beyond a suspected limited horizon. Even my desire seems unrestricted.

3. The Notion of Transcendent Knowledge

Man's unrestricted desire to know is mated to a limited capacity to attain knowledge. From this paradox there follow both a fact and a requirement. The fact is that the range of possible questions is larger than the range of possible answers. The requirement is a critical survey of possible questions. For it is only through such a

critical survey that man can provide himself with intelligent and reasonable grounds both for setting aside the questions that cannot be answered and for limiting his attention to the questions to which answers are possible.

This critical undertaking is not as simple as has been supposed. For while the issue is formulated in terms of possibility and impossibility, it can be answered only in terms of fact. In the first place, the question of possibility is regressive. If any less general inquiry has to be preceded by a critical inquiry on its possibility, then critical inquiry has to be preceded by a pre-critical inquiry on the possibility of critical inquiry, the pre-critical needs a pre-pre-critical inquiry, and so on indefinitely. In the second place, questions of possibility and impossibility can be settled only by appealing to judgments of fact. For while there are analytic propositions and while they can be established ad libitum by postulating syntactical rules and defining terms subject to the rules, analytic principles are to be had only by meeting the further requirement that both the terms and the relations of the analytic propositions occur in concrete judgments of fact.

The paramount issue, then, in determining the possibility of knowledge is always the fact of knowledge. The argument always will be that knowledge is possible if in fact knowledge of that kind occurs. It follows that the critical issue can be tackled only piecemeal. Facts have to be settled one after another and it is only in the grand

strategy that guides the seriation of the facts that the answer to the critical issue appears.

In our own procedure four main stages may be distinguished. First, we centered attention on cognitional activity as activity and endeavored to grasp the key occurrences in learning mathematics, advancing science, developing common sense, and forming judgments in these fields. Secondly, we turned to cognitional activity as cognitional and began with the particular case of self-affirmation to show that self-affirmation occurred, that it is knowledge if knowing is knowing being, and that it is objective in certain determinable meanings of objectivity. Thirdly, we turned to the general case of knowledge of proportionate being and, because self-affirmation was a key act, we were able to set up a general dialectical theorem that divided the formulations of the discoveries of human intelligence into positions and counter-positions and that showed positions to invite development and counter-positions to invite reversal. On this basis it was shown to be possible to set up a metaphysics of proportionate being and a consequent ethics.

The fourth stage of the argument is concerned with human knowledge of transcendent being. The bare bones of the procedure are simple enough. Being is whatever can be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably. Being is proportionate or transcendent according as it lies within

or without the domain of man's outer and inner experience. The possibility of transcendent knowledge, then, is the possibility of grasping intelligently and affirming reasonably a transcendent being. And the proof of the possibility lies in the fact that such intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation occur.

But, as has been observed, so general an outline cannot reveal whether or not the procedure possesses critical significance. For such significance lies, not in the proof of possibility from fact, but in the strategic choice and seriation of the facts. For the moment, then, all that can be said is that the fourth stage of the argument will contribute to a determination of the power and of the limitations of the human mind in the measure that intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation of transcendent being prove to be the inevitable culmination of our whole account of understanding and of judgment.

Finally, it may not be amiss to note that this section on the notion of transcendent knowledge calls for no comment on the views of positivists and Kantians. For though both groups are loud in their negations of the possibility of transcendent knowledge, their failure to give an adequate account of proportionate knowledge has forced us to register our differences at a more elementary stage of the argument. Unless one considers Comte's mythic religion of humanity to be positive, positivism has nothing positive to add to the counter-positions as illustrated by materialism,

empiricism, sensism, phenomenism, solipsism, pragmatism, modernism, and existentialism. In contrast, Kantian thought is rich and fertile in the problems it raises. But its transcendental aesthetic has been mauled by more recent work in geometry and in physics, and the transcendental logic suffers from an incoherence that seems irremediable. For the transcendental dialectic rests its affirmation of a transcendental illusion on the ground that the unconditioned is not a constituent factor in judgment but simply a regulative ideal of pure reason. However, the schematism of the categories provides the link between sense and the pure categories of the understanding; such a link is prior to judgment and a constituent factor in judgment as concrete. Finally, while Kant does not notice that the schematism is simply an application of the virtually unconditioned (e.g., if there is a filling of the empty form of Time, there is an instance of the Real; the filling occurs; hence, there is an instance of the Real), the fact remains that the unconditioned grounds the schematism and so grounds concrete judgment on Kant's own showing.

4. Preliminaries to Conceiving the Transcendent Idea

Knowledge of transcendent being involves both intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation. But before we can affirm reasonably, we must grasp intelligently; and before we can grasp transcendent being intelligently, we have to extrapolate from proportionate being. The present

section, then, is concerned with that extrapolation.

The nature of the extrapolation may best be illustrated by comparing it with mathematics. For the mathematician differs both from the logician and from the scientist. He differs from the logician inasmuch as he cannot grant all the terms and relations he employs to be mere objects of thought. He differs from the scientist inasmuch as he is not bound to repudiate every object of thought that lacks verification. In somewhat similar fashion, the present effort to conceive the transcendent idea is concerned simply with concepts, with objects of supposing, defining, considering, and therefore no question of existence or occurrence arises. None the less, the extrapolation to the transcendent, though conceptual, operates from the real basis of proportionate being, so that some elements in the transcendent idea will be verifiable just as some of the positive integers are verifiable.

The question that leads to the extrapolation has been raised already but not answered. For we have identified the real with being but we have not ventured to say just what being is. What, then, is being?

Let us begin by taking our bearings. One may distinguish 1) the pure notion of being, 2) the heuristic notion of being, 3) restricted acts of understanding, conceiving, and affirming being, and 4) the unrestricted act of understanding being.

The pure notion of being is the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know. It is prior to understanding and affirming, but it heads to them for it is the ground of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection. Moreover, this heading towards knowing is itself a notion, for it heads not unconsciously, as the seed to the plant, nor sensitively, as hunger for food, but intelligently and reasonably, as the radical noësis towards every noëma, the basic pensée pensante towards every pensée pensée, the initiating intentio intendens towards every intentio intenta.

Secondly, since the pure notion of being unfolds through understanding and judgment, there can be formulated a heuristic notion of being as whatever is to be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably.

Thirdly, though the pure notion is unrestricted desire, still it is intelligent and reasonable desire. Hence, it is content to restrict itself provisionally, to ask one question at a time, to prescind from other questions while working towards the solution of the issue in hand. From such prescinding, which anticipates comparative negative judgments, as the notion of nature or essence or universal anticipates the content of intelligent definition, there follow restricted inquiries, restricted acts of understanding and conceiving, reflection on such conceptions, and judgments about particular beings and particular domains of being.

Fourthly, none of the foregoing activities enables one to answer the question, What is being? The pure notion of being raises all questions but answers none. The heuristic notion envisages all answers but determines none. Particular inquiries solve some questions but not all. Only an unrestricted act of understanding can meet the issue. For being is completely universal and completely concrete; apart from it, there is nothing; and so knowledge of what being is cannot be had in anything less than an act of understanding everything about everything. Correlative to an unrestricted desire to understand, there may be posited either an indefinite process of development or an unrestricted act of understanding. But the content of developing understanding never is the idea of being, for as long as understanding is developing, there are further questions to be answered. Only the content of the unrestricted act of understanding can be the idea of being, for it ^{is} only on the supposition of ~~the~~ ^{an} unrestricted act that everything about everything is understood.

It follows that the idea of being is absolutely transcendent. For it is the content of an act of unrestricted understanding. But such an act not only takes us beyond all human achievement but also assigns the ultimate limit to the whole process of going beyond. Insights and viewpoints can be transcended as long as further questions can be asked. But once all about all is understood, there ^{is} is no room for further questions.

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We have extrapolated from the question, What is being? to the absolutely transcendent idea of being and, obviously, the critical question arises. Because man's desire to know is unrestricted while his capacity to know is limited, one does not have to be a fool to ask more questions than a wise man can answer. Certainly, men ask, What is being? Indeed, ever since we identified the real with being we have been laboring to stave off that question until we could tackle it properly. But though the question arises very naturally, it does not follow that man's natural resources suffice to answer it. Clearly, man cannot answer it by enjoying an unrestricted act of understanding, for then his capacity to know would not be limited and he would have no need for critical investigations. But it seems equally clear that man can answer the question by working out the conclusion that the idea of being is the content of an unrestricted act of understanding; for the fact proves possibility; and we have reached that conclusion. Moreover, what we have determined already in a highly general fashion, may be determined in a more detailed fashion. For on the one hand we have worked out the outlines of a metaphysic of proportionate being and so we have at our command at least one segment in the total range of the idea of being. On the other hand, we have been engaged throughout the present work in determining the nature of understanding in mathematics, in common sense, in the

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sciences, and in philosophy; and so we have at our disposal a body of evidence that provides some determinations for the notion of an unrestricted act of understanding. Accordingly, we are led to the conclusion that, while man cannot enjoy an unrestricted act of understanding and so answer the question, What is being? still he can determine a number of features of the answer by proceeding on the side of the subject from restricted to unrestricted understanding and on the side of the object from the structure of proportionate being to the transcendent idea of being.

Indeed, such a procedure not only is possible but also imperative. For the pure desire excludes not only the total obscurantism, which arbitrarily brushes aside every intelligent and reasonable question, but also the partial obscurantism, which arbitrarily brushes aside this or that part of the range of intelligent and reasonable questions that admit determinate answers. Just as the mathematician legitimately and fruitfully extrapolates from the existent to series of the non-existent, just as the physicist profits from mathematical knowledge and adds such extrapolations of his own as the absolute zero of temperature, so an exploration of the idea of being is necessary if one is to measure the power and the limitations of the human mind.

5.

The Idea of Being

An idea is the content of an act of understanding. As a sense datum is the content of an act of sensing, as an

image is the content of an act of imagining, as a percept is the content of ~~an~~ act of perceiving, as a concept is the content of an act of conceiving, defining, supposing, considering, as a judgment is the content of an act of judging, so an idea is the content of an act of understanding.

Being is the objective of the unrestricted desire to know. Therefore, the idea of being is the content of an unrestricted act of understanding.

Again, apart from being there is nothing. Therefore, the idea of being is the content of an act of understanding that leaves nothing to be understood, no further questions to be asked. But one cannot go beyond an act of understanding that leaves no questions to be asked, and so the idea of being is absolutely transcendent.

Again, being is completely universal and completely concrete. Therefore, the idea of being is the content of an act of understanding that grasps everything about everything. Moreover, since that understanding leaves no questions to be asked, no part of its content can be implicit or obscure or indistinct.

Again, being is intrinsically intelligible. Therefore, the idea of being is the idea of the total range of intelligibility.

Again, the good is identical with the intelligible. Therefore, the idea of being is the idea of the good.

Again, the unrestricted act of understanding is one act. Otherwise, it would be an aggregate or a succession of acts. If none of these acts was the understanding of everything about everything, then the denial of unity would be the denial of unrestricted understanding. If any of these acts was the understanding of everything about everything, then at least that unrestricted act would be a single act.

Again, the idea of being is one idea. For if it were many, then either ^{the many} they would be related intelligibly or not. If they were related intelligibly, the alleged many would be intelligibly one, and so there would be one idea. If they were not related intelligibly, then either there would not be one act or the one act would not be an act of understanding.

Again, the idea of being is one but of many. Similarly, it is immaterial but of the material, non-temporal but of the temporal, non-spatial but of the spatial. For it has been shown that the idea is one, yet it is the content of an unrestricted act that understands at least the many beings that there are in all their aspects and details. Again, it is the content of an act of understanding, and understanding has been shown to be intrinsically independent of the empirical residue ; but what is intrinsically independent of the empirical residue can be neither material nor temporal nor spatial, for these all depend intrinsically on the empirical residue; at the same time,

the act of understanding in question is unrestricted; it understands perfectly all the beings that there are and some of them, at least, are material, temporal, and spatial.

Again, there is no paradox in affirming that the idea of being is one, immaterial, non-temporal, and non-spatial, yet of the many, the material, the temporal, and the spatial. For what is possible in the content of restricted acts of understanding, is not beyond the attainment of unrestricted understanding. But our understanding is one yet of many, for in a single act we understand the whole series of positive integers. Similarly, it is immaterial, for it abstracts from the empirical residue, yet of the material, for it advances in understanding of this universe. Again, while it is involved in an ordinal time, for it develops, it is not involved in the continuous time of local motion, for its development is not through a sequence of non-countable stages. Finally, while it pertains to a spatially conditioned subject, it is non-spatial, for it deals with the non-countable multiplicity of space through invariants that are independent of particular spatial standpoints.

Again, in the idea of being a distinction is to be drawn between a primary and a secondary component. For the one is not identical with the many, nor the immaterial with the material, nor the non-temporal with the temporal, nor the non-spatial with the spatial. But in the one idea there are to be grasped many beings; in the immaterial, non-

temporal, non-spatial idea there are grasped the material, the temporal, and the spatial. There must be, then, a primary component grasped inasmuch as there is a single act of understanding, and a secondary component that is understood inasmuch as the primary component is grasped. For just as the infinite series of positive integers is understood inasmuch as the generative principle of the series is grasped, so the total range of beings is understood inasmuch as the one idea of being is grasped.

6. The Primary Component in the Idea of Being

The idea of being has been defined as the content of an unrestricted act of understanding; and in that content a distinction has been established between a primary and a secondary component. Naturally one asks just what is the primary component, and the answer will be that the primary component is identical with the unrestricted act. It will follow that, as the primary component consists in the unrestricted act's understanding of itself, so the secondary component consists in the unrestricted act's understanding of everything else because it understands itself.

However, certain preliminary clarifications are in order. On the counter-position there is an ultimate duality between knower and known; for objectivity is conceived on the analogy of extroversion; and so knowing is essentially a looking, gazing, intuiting, beholding, while the known has

to be something else that is looked at, gazed upon, intuited, beheld. On the position, such a duality is rejected; knowing is knowing being; in any given case the knowing and the known being may be the same or different; and whether or not they are the same or different, is to be determined by making the relevant correct judgments.

Further, the adjective, intelligible, may be employed in two quite different senses. Ordinarily, it denotes what is or can be understood, and in that sense the content of every act of conceiving is intelligible. More profoundly, it denotes the primary component in an idea; it is what is grasped inasmuch as one is understanding; it is the intelligible ground or root or key from which results intelligibility in the ordinary sense. Moreover, there is a simple test for distinguishing between the ordinary and the profounder meaning of the name, intelligible. For the intelligible in the ordinary sense can be understood without understanding what it is to understand; but the intelligible in the profounder sense is identical with the understanding, and so it cannot be understood without understanding what understanding is.

For example, the positive integers are an infinite series of intelligibly related terms. Both the terms and the relations are understood by anyone that can do arithmetic, and one can do arithmetic without understanding what is to understand. But besides the terms and their relations there is the generative principle of the series; inasmuch

as that generative principle is grasped, one grasps the ground of an infinity of distinct concepts. Still, what is the generative principle? It is intelligible, for it is grasped, understood. But it cannot be conceived without conceiving what an insight is, for the real generative principle of the series is the insight; and only those ready to speak about insight are capable of asking and answering the question, How does one know the infinite remainder of positive integers denoted by the "and so forth"?

There follows a needed clarification of the notion of the spiritual. A distinction was drawn between the intelligible that is also intelligent and the intelligible that was not. Again, a distinction was drawn between what intrinsically is independent of the empirical residue and what intrinsically is not independent of the empirical residue. The spiritual was identified both with the intelligible that is intelligent and with what is independent intrinsically of the empirical residue. However, a difficulty arises when one asks whether an essence as conceived is or is not spiritual. For an essence as conceived is abstracted from the empirical residue, but it is not intelligent and it does not understand. A solution is to be had by appealing to the two meanings of the term, intelligible. If there is an intelligible in the profounder sense, there also is an act of understanding with which it is identical; and then the intelligible is spiritual both in the sense that it is identical with understanding

and in the sense that it is intrinsically independent of the empirical residue. On the other hand, if there is an intelligible in the ordinary sense, then it is not identical with an act of understanding; but it may be abstracted from the empirical residue inasmuch as it results from a spiritual act; and so essences as conceived are spiritual in the sense that they are products of spirit but not in the sense that they are intelligent intelligibles.

With these clarifications, we may return to our problem. The idea of being is the content of the unrestricted act of understanding, and that content relentlessly divides into a primary component, which is one, immaterial, non-temporal, and non-spatial, and a secondary component, which is many and includes the material, the temporal, and the spatial. That, then, is the primary component? It is the unrestricted act of understanding.

For if an act of understanding is unrestricted, it understands understanding; it understands not only restricted acts but also the unrestricted act; understanding the unrestricted act it must understand its content, otherwise the understanding of the unrestricted act would be restricted; but the content of the unrestricted act is the idea of being, ~~and so if the unrestricted act is the idea of being,~~ and so if the unrestricted act understands itself, it thereby also understands everything else.

It follows that the unrestricted act of understanding is itself the primary component in the idea of being. For the primary component is the immaterial, non-temporal, non-spatial unity such that, if it is grasped, everything about everything else is grasped. But the unrestricted act satisfies this definition. For it is one act; it is spiritual, and so it is immaterial, non-temporal, and non-spatial; and it has just been shown that, if it is grasped, then everything about everything else also will be grasped.

Accordingly, instead of speaking of primary and secondary components in the idea of being, we may distinguish between a primary intelligible and secondary intelligibles. The primary intelligible is by identity the unrestricted act of understanding. It is intelligible in the profounder sense, for it is an intelligible that is identical with intelligence in act. It is a unique intelligible, for it is identical with the unique act of unrestricted understanding. On the other hand, the secondary intelligibles ^{are} what ~~is~~ also grasped inasmuch as the unrestricted act understands itself. They are intelligible in the ordinary sense, for they are understood; but they are not intelligible in the profounder sense, for the unrestricted act is one understanding of many intelligibles, and only the unique, primary intelligible is identical with the unrestricted act.

7. The Secondary Component in the Idea of Being

Because it understands itself, the unrestricted act of understanding understands in consequence everything about everything else. But is this consequence possible? After all, we have found the existing universe of being to include a non-systematic component. Moreover, at each instant in the unfolding of this universe, there are a number of probable alternatives and a far larger number of possible alternatives. There is, then, an enormous aggregate of similar, possible universes, and in each of them there would be a similar non-systematic component. Now the non-systematic is the absence of intelligible rule or law; elements are determinate; relations between elements are determinate; but there is no possibility of a single formula that is satisfied by the sequence of determinate relations. It seems to follow that the non-systematic component in the actual universe and in other possible and even more probable universes excludes the possibility of an unrestricted act that understands everything about everything.

Such is the problem of the secondary intelligibles in the idea of being, and our solution will be that, from the viewpoint of unrestricted understanding, the non-systematic vanishes. But, first, we must recall how the notion of the non-systematic arises, for otherwise its exact implications cannot be determined.

Our analysis, then, acknowledged the possibility of complete knowledge of all systems of laws but held such systems to be abstract and so to be in need of further determinations if they were to be applied to the concrete. It inferred that such further determinations could not be related systematically to one another, for complete knowledge of all laws would include complete knowledge of all systematic relations. However, it did not deny the further determinations to be related intelligibly to one another. On the contrary, it acknowledged the existence of schemes of recurrence in which a happy combination of abstract laws and concrete circumstances makes typical, further determinations recurrent, and so brings them under the domination of intelligence. Moreover, it acknowledged that concrete patterns of diverging series of conditions are intelligible; granted both the requisite information and mastery of the systematic laws, it is possible in principle to work from any physical event, Z, through as many prior stages of its diverging and scattering conditions as one pleases; and it is this intelligibility of concrete patterns that grounds the conviction of determinists, such as A. Einstein, that statistical laws fall short of what there is to be known.

However, we agree with the indeterminists inasmuch as they deny in the general case the possibility of deduction and prediction. For while each concrete pattern of diverging conditions is intelligible, still its

intelligibility lies not on the level of the abstract understanding that grasps systems of laws but on the level of the concrete understanding that deals with particular situations. Moreover, such concrete patterns form an enormous manifold that cannot be handled by abstract systematizing intelligence for the excellent reason that their intelligibility in each case is concrete. There results the peculiar type of impossibility that arises from mutual conditioning. Granted complete information on a totality of events, one could work out from knowledge of all laws the concrete pattern in which the laws related the events in the totality. Again, granted knowledge of the concrete pattern, one could use it as a guide to obtain information on a totality of relevant events. But the proviso of the first statement is the conclusion of the second; the proviso of the second statement is the conclusion of the first; and so both conclusions are merely theoretical possibilities. For the concrete patterns form a non-systematic aggregate, and so it is only by appealing to the totality of relevant events that one can select the correct pattern; on the other hand, the relevant totality of events are scattered, and so they can be selected for observation and measurement only if the relevant pattern is known already.

Still, if there is an unrestricted act of understanding, then it will understand everything about everything with no further questions to be asked. But concrete patterns of diverging series of scattering conditions are each intel-

ligible, and so an unrestricted act will understand each of them. Moreover, to understand each concrete pattern entails knowledge of the totality of events relevant for each pattern, for the concrete pattern includes all the determinations and circumstances of each event. Nor does this conclusion contradict our prior conclusion. For the unrestricted act of understanding proceeds, not from a grasp of abstract systems of laws, but from a grasp of itself; it does not attempt the impossible task of relating through an abstract system the concrete patterns but grasps the lot of them in a single view inasmuch as it understands itself. It does not offer either to deduce or to predict events, for it has neither need nor use for deduction or prediction since in a single view it grasps the totality of concrete patterns and in each pattern the totality of its relevant events.

To resume the argument, deduction and prediction in the general case are impossible. They are impossible for man's limited understanding, because limited understanding could master the manifold of concrete patterns of diverging series of scattering conditions, only if that manifold could be systematized; and it cannot be systematized. On the other hand, though for a different reason, deduction and prediction are impossible for the unrestricted act of understanding; for it could deduce only if it ad-

vanced in knowledge either by transforming one abstract ~~premise~~ into another or by combining abstract ~~premises~~ ~~premises~~ with concrete information; but unrestricted understanding does not advance in knowledge, for it already

knows every thing. Again, unrestricted understanding could predict only if some events were present relative to it and other events were future relative to it; but unrestricted understanding is non-temporal; it is, so to speak, outside the totality of temporal sequences, for that totality is part of the everything about everything else that it grasps in understanding itself; and as it grasps everything about everything else in a single view, so it grasps the totality of temporal sequences in a single view.

8. Causality

By asking what being is, we have been led to conceive an unrestricted act of understanding. If now we ask what causality is, we shall be led to affirm that there is such an unrestricted act.

In general, causality denotes the objective and real counterpart of the questions and further questions raised by the detached, disinterested, and unrestricted desire to know. As such questions are of various kinds, distinctions are to be drawn between different types of causes.

The basic division is between external and internal causes. Internal causes are the central and conjugate potency, form, and act, which already have been examined. External causes are efficient, final, and exemplary, and they

may be considered in three manners, namely, in concrete instances, in principle, and in the fulness that results from applying the principles. Thus, in some concrete instance, a community may be divided by a river and see in a bridge the solution to many of its problems; an engineer will examine the site and design an appropriate ^{structure;} bridge; finally, contractors will assemble laborers and materials to build it. The final cause in this case will be the use to which the bridge is put by the community; the efficient cause will be the work of building it; the exemplary cause will be the design grasped and conceived by the engineer. However, one may not assume that the universe is just like a bridge, and so if one is to affirm efficient, final, and exemplary causality as generally valid principles, one must go to the root of these notions and determine whether or not they are of general validity. Finally, if such general validity is affirmed, then since efficient, final, and exemplary causes are external, one will be led sooner or later to conceive and affirm a first agent, a last end, a primary exemplar of the universe of proportionate being, and then the principle of causality will acquire a significance and fulness that it lacked as long as its concrete implications had not been ascertained.

Our first task, accordingly, is to investigate the transition from familiar but anthropomorphic notions of external causality to their root in a universally applicable principle. We assume that exemplary causality is a fact illustrated by inventions, that efficient causality is a

fact illustrated by industry, and that final causality is a fact illustrated by the use to which the products of invention and industry are put. We ask whether such facts are instances of a principle capable of bearing human knowledge from the realm of proportionate being to that of transcendent being. Our answer will be affirmative, and the reasons for it run as follows.

different

In the first place, being is intelligible. It is neither beyond nor apart nor *different* from the intelligible. It is what is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation. It is the objective of the detached and disinterested desire to inquire intelligently and to reflect critically; and that desire is unrestricted. On the other hand, what is apart from being is nothing, and so what is apart from intelligibility is nothing. It follows that to talk about mere matters of fact that admit no explanation is to talk about nothing. If existence is mere matter of fact, it is nothing. If occurrence is mere matter of fact, it is nothing. If it is a mere matter of fact that we know and that there are to be known classical and statistical laws, genetic operators and their dialectical perturbations, explanatory genera and species, emergent probability and upward finalistic dynamism, then both the knowing and the known are nothing. This is rude and harsh, and one may be tempted to take flight into the counterpositions, to refuse to identify the real with being, confuse objectivity with extroversion, mistake mere experiencing for human knowing. But any such escape is only

temporary. Despite their pullulating variety and perennial vitality, the counter-positions bring about their own reversal the moment they claim to be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably. Since the claim cannot be avoided by an intelligent and reasonable subject, the reversal cannot be avoided; and since the reversal cannot be avoided, ultimately one will be back to affirm that being is intelligible and that the mere matter of fact without explanation is apart from being.

In the second place, one cannot confine human knowledge within the domain of proportionate being without condemning it to mere matters of fact without explanation and so stripping it of knowledge not only of transcendent but also of proportionate being. In other words, every positivism is involved essentially in the counter-positions.

For we do not know until we judge; our judgments rest on a grasp of the virtually unconditioned; and the virtually unconditioned is a conditioned that happens to have its conditions fulfilled. Thus, every judgment raises a further question; it reveals a conditioned to be virtually unconditioned and by that very stroke it reveals conditions that happen to be fulfilled; that happening is a matter of fact and, if it is not to be a mere matter of fact without explanation, a further question arises.

But proportionate being is being proportionate to our knowing. As our judgments rest on a grasp of the virtually unconditioned, so every proportionate being in its

every aspect is a virtually unconditioned. As a matter of fact, it is, and so it is unconditioned. But it is unconditioned, not formally in the sense that it has no conditions whatever, but only virtually in the sense that its conditions happen to be fulfilled. To regard that happening as ultimate is to affirm a mere matter of fact without any explanation. To account for one happening by appealing to another is to change the topic without meeting the issue, for if the other happening is regarded as mere matter of fact without any explanation then either it is not being or else being is not the intelligible.

Such is the nerve of the argument, and it can be given as many distinct applications as there ^{are} distinct features of proportionate being.

If nothing existed, there would be no one to ask questions and nothing to ask questions about. The most fundamental of all questions, then, asks about existence yet neither empirical science nor a methodically ~~un-~~restricted philosophy can have an adequate answer. Statistical laws assign the frequencies with which things exist, and the explanation of statistical laws will account for the respective numbers of different kinds of things. But the number of existents is one thing, and their existing is another. Again, in particular cases, the scientist can deduce one existent from others, but not even in particular cases can he account for the existence of the others to which he appeals for his premises. As far as empirical

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science goes, existence is just a matter of fact. Nor is the methodically restricted philosophy better off. So far from accounting for existence, the philosopher can establish that it cannot be accounted for within the limits of proportionate being. For every proportionate being that exists, exists conditionally; it exists inasmuch as the conditions of its existence happen to be fulfilled; and the contingency of that happening cannot be eliminated by appealing to another happening that equally is contingent.

What is true of existence, is no less true of occurrence. Both questions and answers occur, and so without occurrences there would be neither questions nor answers. Statistical laws assign the less respective numbers of different kinds of occurrences, but their numbers are one thing and their occurring is another. In particular cases, the scientist can deduce some occurrences from others, but the others are no less conditioned than those that are deduced. Without initial premises, there is no deduction; and without conditions that happen to be fulfilled, there are no initial premises. As far as empirical science goes, occurrence is just a matter of fact, and a methodically restricted philosophy can repeat the argument about existence to show that occurrence too must be regarded as mere matter of fact as long as one remains within the realm of proportionate being.

show ~

Further, everything that is to be known by empirical science and by restricted philosophy is penetrated

by the contingency of existence and occurrence. Classical laws are not what must be; they are empirical; they are what in fact is so. Genetic operators enjoy both a minor and a major flexibility, and so in each concrete case the operator is what in fact it happens to be. Explanatory genera and species are not avatars of Plato's eternal Ideas; they are more or less successful solutions to contingent problems set by contingent situations. The actual course of generalized emergent probability is but one among a large number of other probable courses, and the probable courses are a minority among possible courses; the actual course, then, is what in fact it happens to be. So far from eliminating such contingency, the scientist is restricted by his method to ascertaining what in fact are the classical laws and genetic operators, what in fact are the explanatory genera and species, what in fact is the actual course of generalized emergent probability. Nor can a philosophy restricted to proportionate being offer more than an account of what in fact the structure of this universe is, nor can he base this account on more than what in fact the structure of human knowing is.

Our first step was to affirm the intelligibility of being and the nothingness of the mere matter of fact that admitted no explanation. Our second step was to affirm that, if one remained within the limits of proportionate being, one was confronted at every turn with mere matters of fact with no possible explanation. There follows at once the negative conclusion that knowledge of transcendent

being cannot be excluded, if there is proportionate being, and being is intelligible. And this conclusion gives rise to the further question, In what does our knowledge of transcendent being consist?

In the third place, then, a transcendent being relevant to our problem must possess two basic attributes. On the one hand, it must not be contingent in any respect, for if it were, once more we would be confronted with the mere matter of fact that we have to avoid. On the other hand, besides being self-explanatory, the transcendent being must be capable of grounding the explanation of everything about everything else; for without this second attribute, the transcendent being would leave unsolved our problem of contingency in proportionate being.

The foregoing requirements may be expressed in another manner. Every proportionate being is a conditioned that happens to have its conditions fulfilled. But being is intelligible, and so there is no mere happening, no contingency that is ultimate. Still, proportionate being both exists and exists contingently; therefore, it is not ultimate; therefore, some other being is ultimate, and it is not contingent. Moreover, the ultimate being not only must be self-explanatory itself but also it must be capable of explaining everything else; for otherwise proportionate being would remain a conditioned that merely happened to have its conditions fulfilled; in its every aspect it would be mere matter of fact; and as mere matter of fact is nothing,

it would be nothing.

To put the same point in still another fashion, one has only to formulate correctly the already acknowledged facts of final, exemplary, and efficient causality.

For one misses the real point to efficient causality if one supposes that it consists simply in the necessity that conditioned being becomes virtually unconditioned only if its conditions are fulfilled. On that formulation, efficient causality would be satisfied by an infinite regress in which each conditioned has its conditions fulfilled by a prior conditioned or, perhaps more realistically, by a circle illustrated by the scheme of recurrence. However, the real requirement is that, if conditioned being is being, it has to be intelligible; it cannot be or exist or occur merely as a matter of fact for which no explanation is to be asked or expected, for the non-intelligible is apart from being. Now both the infinite regress and the circle are simply aggregates of mere matters of fact; they fail to provide for the intelligibility of conditioned being; and so they do not succeed in assigning an efficient cause for being that is intelligible yet conditioned. Nor can an efficient cause be assigned, until one affirms a being that both is itself without any conditions and can ground the fulfilment of conditions for anything else that can be.

Again, if there are conditioned beings, there also is the fulfilling of their conditions; and if there are no mere matters of fact that remain ultimately unexplained, then no conditions are fulfilled simply at random; *if none are fulfilled simply at random,* then all are fulfilled in accord with some exemplar; and so there must be an exemplary cause that can ground the intelligibility of the pattern in which are or would be fulfilled all conditions that are or would be fulfilled.

Again, because being is intelligible, it also is good. As potentially intelligible, it is a manifold, and this manifold is good inasmuch as it can stand under the formal good of order. But possible orders are many; they include incompatible alternatives; they develop but do so flexibly in a variety of manners; they can fail at any stage in many different ways to bring forth their dialectical correction. If then in any universe there is one actual order, if that actual order lies within being and so is not mere matter of fact, then the order must be a value and its selection due to rational choice. Similarly, if in every possible universe being is intelligible and the intelligible is good, then the possibility of every universe is the possibility of its being selected by an ultimate rational choice.

This may seem too rapid, and so it may be well to go back over the argument. First, the universe of proportionate being is shot through with contingency. Secondly, mere contingency is apart from being, and so

T there must be an ultimate ground for the universe, and that ground cannot be contingent. Thirdly, the necessary ultimate ground cannot be necessitated in grounding a contingent universe, and it cannot be arbitrary in grounding an intelligible and good universe. It cannot be necessitated, for what follows necessarily from the necessary is equally necessary. It cannot be arbitrary, for what results arbitrarily from the necessary results as a mere matter of fact without any possible explanation. But what is neither necessary nor arbitrary yet intelligible and a value, is what proceeds freely from the reasonable choice of a rational consciousness.

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The final cause, then, is the ground of value, and it is the ultimate cause of causes for it overcomes contingency at its deepest level. Being cannot be arbitrary, and contingent being must be ^a reasonably realized possibility. Its possibility is grounded in the exemplary cause, its realization in the efficient cause, but its reasonableness in the final cause. Without that reasonableness, it would be arbitrary and so it would be apart from being; but what is apart from being, is not possible; and what is not possible, cannot be realized.

Such, then, is the transition from efficient, exemplary, and final causality as facts within the domain of proportionate being to universal principles that bear our knowing into the domain of transcendent being.

The reader, perhaps, will feel that the transition has failed to free these notions of causality from their anthropomorphic quality. So far from getting away from man, they lead rather obviously to the affirmation of ^{an}unconditioned intelligent and rational consciousness that freely grounds the universe in much the same fashion as the conditioned intelligent and rational consciousness of man grounds freely his own actions and products. Our answer is twofold. On the one hand, the specifically human, the anthropomorphic, is not a pure intelligent and rational consciousness but a consciousness in tension between the pure desire and other desire. On the other hand, in so far as one considers in man solely his intelligent and rational consciousness, one cannot but deal with what is related intimately to the universe and its ultimate ground. For what is the universe and its ground but the objective of man's detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know?

9.

The Notion of God

If God is a being, he is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation. Accordingly, two questions arise, namely, what is God and whether God is. But by asking what being is, already we have been led to the conclusion that the idea of being would be the content of an unrestricted act of understanding that primarily understood itself and consequently grasped every other intelligibility. Now, as will appear, our concept of an unrestricted act of understanding has a number of implications and,

when they are worked out, it becomes manifest that it is one and the same thing to understand what being is and to understand what God is.

First, then, if there is an unrestricted act of understanding, there is by identity a primary intelligible. For the unrestricted act understands itself.

Secondly, because the act is unrestricted, there would be no possibility of correction, or revision, or improvement, and so the unrestricted act would be invulnerable as understanding. Moreover, since it knew itself, it would know it was unrestricted and so invulnerable. Accordingly, by identity, it would be a reflective act of understanding grasping itself as unconditioned and ~~so~~ therefore correct and true; and so, by identity, the primary intelligible would be also the primary truth.

Thirdly, what is known by correct and true understanding is being; so the primary intelligible would be also the primary being; and the primary being would be spiritual in the full sense of the identity of the intelligent and intelligible.

Fourthly, the primary being would be without any defect or lack or imperfection. For were there any defect or lack or imperfection, at least unrestricted understanding would grasp what was missing. But the consequent is impossible, and so the antecedent must be false. For the primary being is identical with what is grasped by the unrestricted

act, and so the primary being has all the perfection grasped by the unrestricted act.

Fifthly, the good is identical with intelligible being, and so the primary intelligible and completely perfect primary being also is the primary good.

Sixthly, as the perfection of the spiritual requires that the intelligible also be intelligent, so too it requires that affirmable truth be affirmed and the lovable good be loved. But the primary intelligible also is the primary truth ~~and being~~ and the primary good; and so in a completely perfect spiritual being the primary intelligible is identical not only with an unrestricted act of understanding but also with a completely perfect act of affirming the primary truth and a completely perfect act of loving ~~and~~ the primary good. Moreover, the act of affirming is not a second act distinct from the unrestricted act of understanding, nor the act of loving a third act distinct from the understanding and the affirming. For if they were, then the primary being would be incomplete and imperfect and in need of further acts of affirming and loving to be completed and perfected. Hence, one and the same reality is at once unrestricted understanding and the primary intelligible, reflective understanding and the unconditioned, perfect affirming and the primary truth, perfect loving and ^{the} primary good.

Seventhly, the primary intelligible is self-

explanatory. For if it were not, it would be incomplete in intelligibility; and we have already shown any defect or lack or imperfection to be incompatible with unrestricted understanding.

Eighthly, the primary being is unconditioned. For the primary being is identical with the primary intelligible; and the primary intelligible must be unconditioned, for if it depended on anything else, it would not be self-explanatory. Finally, it is impossible for the primary intelligible to be completely independent and the primary being, identical with it, to be dependent on something else.

Ninthly, the primary being either is necessary or impossible. For it cannot be contingent, since the contingent is not self-explanatory. Hence, if it exists, it exists of necessity and without any conditions; and if it does not exist, then it is impossible, for there is no condition from which it could result. But whether it exists or not, is a question that does not pertain to the idea of being or to the notion of God.

Tenthly, there is only one primary being. For entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem, and there is no necessity for more than one. Moreover, if there was more than one primary being, then each would or would not be identical with an unrestricted act of understanding. If not, then the intelligibles identical with restricted acts of understanding would not be primary beings. If so, there would be several primary beings similar in all

respects; for unrestricted acts cannot grasp different objects without one or more failing to grasp what another grasps and so ceasing to be unrestricted acts. But there cannot be several primary beings similar in all respects, for then they would differ merely empirically; and the merely empirical is not self-explanatory. Accordingly, there can be only one primary being.

In the eleventh place, the primary being is simple. For the primary being is a single act that at once is unrestricted understanding and perfect affirming and perfect loving; and it is identical with the primary intelligible and the primary truth and the primary good.

It does not admit the compositeness of central and conjugate forms. For there are no other beings of the same order with which it could be conjugate; and as it is but a single act, it has no need of a unifying central form.

Nor does it admit the compositeness of potency and form. For it is a spiritual being beyond all development, and potency has been identified either with a capacity to develop or with the empirical residue and materiality.

Nor does it admit the compositeness of distinct form and act. For if it exists, it exists necessarily. Moreover, if the primary intelligible and primary being and primary good are named form or essence, and the unrestricted act of understanding, affirming, loving are named act or existence or occurrence, still they are not distinct but

identical.

In the twelfth place, the primary being is timeless. It is without continuous time, for it is spiritual while continuous time presupposes the empirical residue and materiality. And it is without ordinal time, for it does not develop.

In the thirteenth place, if the primary being exists, it is eternal. For it is timeless, and eternity is timeless existence.

However, besides the primary intelligible, there are to be considered the secondary intelligibles; for the unrestricted act of understanding, inasmuch as it understands itself, also grasps everything about everything else.

In the fourteenth place, then, the secondary intelligibles are conditioned. For they are what is to be understood, if the primary intelligible is understood.

It follows that they are distinct from the primary intelligible, for they are conditioned and it is unconditioned.

Still, though the secondary intelligibles are distinct from the primary, they need not be distinct realities. For knowing does not consist in taking a look at something else and so, though the secondary intelligibles are known, they need not be something else to be looked at.

secondary

Moreover, the primary being is without any lack or defect or imperfection; but it would be imperfect if further realities were needed for the unrestricted act of understanding to be unrestricted.

Finally, the secondary intelligibles may be mere objects of thought. For they are grasped as distinct from the primary intelligible, yet they need not be distinct realities. Thus, the infinity of positive integers is grasped by us in ^{the insight that is} grasping the generative principle of the ~~series~~ ^{terms and relations of the series.}

In the fifteenth place, the primary being is the omnipotent efficient cause. For the primary being would be imperfect if it could ground all possible universes as objects of thought but not as realities; similarly, the primary good would be imperfect if it was good in itself but not the source of other instances of the good. But the primary being and primary good is without any imperfection; and so it can ground any possible universe and originate any other instance of the good.

In the sixteenth place, the primary being is the omniscient exemplary cause. For it is the idea of being, and in itself it grasps the intelligible order of every possible universe of beings in their every component and aspect and detail.

In the seventeenth place, the primary being is free. For the ^{secondary} intelligibles are contingent:

they need not be distinct realities; they can be merely objects of thought; they are not unconditioned either in intelligibility or in goodness, and so they are not unconditioned in being, which is not apart from intelligibility and goodness. But contingent being as contingent cannot be necessary and as being cannot be arbitrary; it remains that, if contingent beings exist, they exist in virtue of the freedom of unrestricted understanding and perfect affirming and perfect loving.

In the eighteenth place, because man develops, every additional element of understanding and affirming and willing is a further act and reality in him. But the perfect primary being does not develop, for it is without defect or lack or imperfection; and so the unrestricted act understands and affirms and wills contingent beings to be without any increment or change in its reality.

There follow a number of conclusions of considerable importance. Though often enough they are supposed to be extremely difficult, the only difficulty lies in grasping the differences that separate grammar, logic, and metaphysics. Grammar is concerned with words and sentences; logic is concerned with concepts and judgments; but metaphysics is concerned with the enumeration of the necessary and sufficient realities on the supposition that judgments are true.

concerning The first corollary is that every contingent predication concerning God also is an extrinsic denomination.

In other words, God is intrinsically the same whether or not he understands, affirms, wills, causes this or that universe to be. If he does not, then God exists and nothing else exists. If he does, God exists and the universe in question exists; the two existences suffice for the truth of the judgments that God understands, affirms, wills, effects the universe; for God is unlimited in perfection, and what is unlimited in perfection must understand, affirm, will, effect whatever else is.

The second corollary is that, though the extrinsic denominator is temporal, the contingent predication concerning God can be eternal. For an eternal act is timeless; in it all instants are one and the same instant; and so what is true at any instant is true at every instant. Hence, if at any instant it is true that God understands, affirms, wills the existence of Alexander's horse Bucephalus, then the metaphysical conditions of the truth are the existence of God and the existence of Bucephalus; moreover, though Bucephalus exists only for a short period, still God eternally understands, affirms, and wills Bucephalus to exist for that short period.

The third corollary is divine efficacy. It is impossible for it to be true that God understands, affirms, wills, effects anything to exist or occur without it being true that the thing exists or the event occurs exactly as God understands, affirms, or wills it. For one and the same metaphysical condition is needed for the truth of both

metaphysical

propositions, namely, the relevant contingent existence or occurrence.

The fourth corollary is inverse to the third, namely, that divine efficacy does not impose necessity upon its consequents. In the light of divine efficacy it is quite true that if God understands or affirms or wills or effects this or that to exist or occur, then it is impossible for the this or that not to exist or not to occur. Still, the existence or occurrence is a metaphysical condition of the truth of the antecedent, and so the consequence merely enunciates the principle of identity, namely, if there is the existence or occurrence, then there is the existence or occurrence. To recall Aquinas' repeated illustration, Socrates, dum sedit, necessario sedit, necessitate tamen non absoluta sed conditionata.

The fifth corollary is the scientia media. Since the divine act of understanding is unrestricted and true, it grasps not only every possible world order but also the foregoing four corollaries. Hence independently of any free decision (in signo antecedente omnem actum voluntatis) God knows that if he were to will any world order, then that order would be realized in every aspect and detail; but every world order is a single, intelligible pattern of completely determinate existents and events; and so quite apart from any divine decision, God knows exactly what every free will would choose in each successive set of circumstances contained in each possible world order.

The foregoing scientia media includes Molina's notion of divine wisdom grasping the order of every possible universe but it does not include Molina's tendency to speak of the conditioned futurables as entities at which God looks for guidance. Again, it rests neither on Molina's super-comprehension of the human will nor on Suarez' unexplained objective truth but on Aquinas' familiar contentions on the immutability of God and the conditioned necessity of what God knows or wills or causes. Finally, it is radically opposed to Scotist voluntarism and to the voluntaristic decreta hypothetice praedeterminantia.

In the nineteenth place, God would be the creator. For if God's efficient causality presupposed the existence of some matter and was limited to fashioning and ordering it, then the existence of this matter would be unexplained; but what ultimately is unexplained, does not pertain to being; and so the alleged matter would prove to be nothing.

It may be said that, in fact, there is in this universe a merely empirical residue that is unexplained. But one may answer that the empirical residue of individuality, of the continuum, of particular places and times, and of the non-systematic divergence of actual frequencies, while unexplained by the particular sciences, partly are understood in cognitional theory and metaphysics and ultimately are accounted for by God's creative decision. For the prime potency of individuality is the condition of the possibility of universal knowledge and common natures;

the prime potency of the space-time continuum is the condition of the possibility of abstract and invariant laws, of concrete probabilities, and of their cumulation into a world order of emergent probability; the non-systematic, finally, is transcended by an unrestricted act of understanding. Moreover, the empirical residue grounds the manifold of the potential good and, inasmuch as it stands under world order, it possesses the value that accrues to the contingent through the reasonableness of the freedom of a completely wise and good being.

In the twentieth place, God would be the conserver. His efficient causality would not produce a universe and then leave it to its own devices but, on the contrary, would be exercised as long as the universe or any of its parts existed. For the metaphysical condition of the truth of the proposition that A causes B is the reality of a relation of dependence (ut a quo) in B with respect to A. It is not, as the counter-positions would have it, an imaginable "influence" occupying the space intermediate between A and B. It is not a change in A, for the fire does not change when it ceases to cook the potatoes and begins to cook the steak. It is B as emerging or existing or occurring in intelligible dependence on A. But no contingent being is self-explanatory, and so every contingent being, as long as it is, is in intelligible dependence on the self-explanatory being.

In the twenty-first place, God would be the first agent of every event, every development, every emergent. For every such occurrence is conditioned, and either the conditions diverge and scatter throughout the universe or else they form a scheme of recurrence which, however, emerges and survives only on conditions that diverge and scatter throughout the universe. It follows that only the cause of the order of the universe can be the sufficient ground for the occurrence of any event; further, since every development and every emergence depends upon a complex of events, only the cause of the order of the universe can be the sufficient ground for any development or emergence.

It follows, further, that God applies every contingent agent to its operation. For the agent operates in accord with the pattern of world order when the conditions of the operation are fulfilled; but the conditions are fulfilled when other events occur; and God is the first agent of each of those occurrences. Moreover, it follows that every created agent is an instrument in executing the divine plan; for its operation is the fulfilment of a condition for other events; and so it is used by a higher agent for an ulterior end. Finally, it follows that God by his intelligence moves all things to their proper ends; for God causes every event and applies every agent and uses every operation inasmuch as he is the cause of the order of the universe.

It will be noted that this account of divine control of events differs from the accounts of both Banez and Molina. For they ascribe divine control of all events to the fact that God by a peculiar activity controls each. But on the above analysis God controls each event because he controls all, and he controls all because he alone can be the cause of the order of the universe on which every event depends. Moreover, though our analysis is cast in contemporary terms, one has only to replace modern by Aristotelian physics to arrive, I believe, at the thought and expressions of Aquinas. See my article on Gratia Operans, Theological Studies, III (1962), 387 ff.

In the twenty-second place, God would be the ultimate final cause of any universe, the ground of its value, and the ultimate objective of all finalistic striving. For, as we have seen, the primary intelligible would be incomplete if in it were not to be grasped every other intelligible; the primary being would be imperfect in being if it could not originate other being; and the primary good would be lacking in goodness if it were sterile and could not be the source of other instances of the good. Inversely, then, the secondary intelligibles are intelligible because of the completeness of the primary; contingent beings are possible because of the perfection of primary being; and other instances of the good can arise because of the excellence of the primary good. But what is possible because of the perfection and excellence of another, also will be actual because of that perfection and excellence; and so

God's perfection and excellence must be the final cause of everything else.

Moreover, a value is a possible object of reasonable choice, and so the ground of value is the ground of possibility in objects and of reasonableness in choosing. But every possible world order is grasped in the primary intelligible and derived from it; and any actual world order is chosen by a willing that not merely accords with unrestricted understanding but is identical with it. Hence God would be the ground of the value of any world order and, indeed, a ground that is identical with the standard of what true value is.

ground

Further, it has been seen that the immanent order of this universe is a compound conditioned series of things and schemes of recurrence realized in accord with successive schedules of probabilities; and it has been added that, from the viewpoint of unrestricted understanding, the non-systematic vanishes to yield place to a fully determinate and absolutely efficacious plan and intention. It follows that finality is to be conceived more accurately. Instead of an upward but indeterminately directed dynamism, there is the intended ordination of each potency for the form it receives, of each form for the act it receives, of each manifold of lower acts for the higher unities and integrations under which they are subsumed. So it is that every tendency and force, every movement and change, every desire and striving are designed to bring about the order

of the universe in the manner in which in fact they contribute to it; and since the order of the universe itself has been shown to be because of the perfection and excellence of the primary being and good, so all that is for the order of the universe is headed ultimately to the perfection and excellence that is its primary source and ground.

In the twenty-third place, there follows a transformation of metaphysics as we have conceived it. For the metaphysics of proportionate being becomes a subordinate part ~~of~~ of a more general metaphysics that envisages the transcendent idea of being.

to build In the twenty-fourth place, there follows a transformation of the ethics based on restricted metaphysics. For that ethics was concerned with the consistency of knowing and doing within the individual's rational self-consciousness. But now it is clear that ~~true~~ knowledge not only is true but also is an apprehension of the divinely ordained order of the universe, and that doing consistent with knowing not merely is consistent with knowing but also is man's cooperation with God in the realization of the order of the universe. Inversely, error becomes a deviation not only from truth but also from God, and wrong-doing takes on the character of sin against God.

In the twenty-fifth place, something must be said about evil and sin. For it would seem that, since God is the efficacious cause of everything in the universe, he

must be the author of all its evils and responsible for all its sins. But before leaping to that conclusion, let us distinguish between physical evil, moral evil, and basic sin.

By basic sin I shall mean the failure of free will to choose a morally obligatory course of action or its failure to reject a morally reprehensible course of action. Thus, basic sin is the root of the irrational in man's rational self-consciousness. As intelligently and rationally conscious, man grasps and affirms what he ought to do and what he ought not to do; but knowing is one thing and doing is another; if he wills, he does what he ought; if he wills, he diverts his attention from proposals to do what he ought not; but if he fails to will, then the obligatory course of action is not executed; again, if he fails to will, his attention remains on illicit proposals; the incompleteness of their intelligibility and the incoherence of their apparent reasonableness are disregarded; and in this contraction of consciousness, which is the basic sin, there occurs the wrong action, which is more conspicuous but really derivative.

Next, by moral evils I shall mean the consequences of basic sins. From the basic sin of not willing what one ought to will, there follow moral evils of omission and a heightening of the temptation in oneself or others to further basic sins. From the basic sin of not setting aside illicit proposals, there follows their execution and a more positive heightening of tension and temptation in

oneself or in one's social milieu.

Finally, by physical evils I shall mean all the shortcomings of a world order that consists, in so far as we understand it, in a generalized emergent probability. For in such an order the unordered manifold is prior to the formal good of higher unities and higher orders; the undeveloped is prior to the developed; there are false starts, break-downs, failures; advance is at the price of risk; security is mated with sterility; and the life of man is guided by an intelligence that has to develop and a willingness that has to be acquired.

Now it is not difficult to grasp the relevance of this threefold distinction to our problem. For a problem is a question for intelligence; it defines an intelligibility to be grasped; and clearly intelligence cannot lump together basic sins, moral evils, and physical ills.

In the first place, all that intelligence can grasp with respect to basic sins is that there is no intelligibility to be grasped. What is basic sin? It is the irrational. Why does it occur? If there were a reason, it would not be sin. There may be excuses; there may be ~~palliations~~ and extenuating circumstances; but there cannot be a reason, for basic sin consists, not in yielding to reasons and reasonableness, but in failing to yield to them; it consists not in inadvertent failure but in advertence and in acknowledgement of obligation that, none the less,

is not followed by reasonable response.

Now if basic sin is simply irrational, if understanding it consists in grasping that it has no intelligibility, then clearly it cannot be in intelligible dependence on anything else. But what cannot be in intelligible dependence on anything else, cannot have a cause; for cause is correlative with effect; and an effect is what is in intelligible dependence on something else. Finally, if basic sins cannot have a cause, God cannot be their cause. Nor does this conclusion contradict our earlier affirmation that every event is caused by God. For basic sin is not an event; it is not something that positively occurs; on the contrary, it consists in a failure of occurrence, in the absence in the will of a reasonable response to an obligatory motive.

Further, when a problem contains the irrational, it can be handled correctly only in a highly complex and critical fashion. If the mathematician attributed to imaginary numbers exactly the same properties as he finds in real numbers, then certainly he would blunder. A graver but no less inevitable blunder awaits anyone that fails to draw the distinctions and follow the rules necessitated by the irrationality of basic sin. For the familiar disjunction of the principle of excluded middle (Either A or not A) must be replaced by a trichotomy. Besides what is positively and what simply is not, there is the irrational constituted by what could and ought to be

but is not. Besides the being that God causes, and the non-being that God does not cause, there is the irrational that God neither causes nor does not cause but permits others to perpetrate. Besides the actual good that God wills and the unrealized good that God does not will, there are the basic sins that he neither wills nor does not will but forbids.

Clearly, it is not evil but good to create a being so excellent that it possesses rational self-consciousness whence freedom naturally follows. It is not evil but good to leave that freedom intact, to command good indeed and to forbid evil, but to refrain from an interference that would reduce freedom to an illusory appearance. Consequently, it is not evil but good to conceive and choose and effect a world order, even though basic sins will and do occur; for it is only fallacy to argue that basic sins either are entities or nonentities and that, if they are entities, they must be due to God's universal causality, or if they are nonentities, they must be due to God's unwillingness to cause the opposite entities.

There remain physical and moral evils. Now if the criterion of good and evil are sensitive pleasure and pain, then clearly physical and moral evils are ultimately evil. But the proper criterion of the good is intelligibility, and in this universe everything but basic sin can be understood and so is good. For the imperfection of the lower is the potentiality for the higher; the undeveloped

is for the developed; and even moral evils through the dialectical tension they generate head either to their own elimination or to a reinforcement of the moral good. So it is that a generalized emergent probability can be grasped even by our limited understanding as an immanently and highly intelligible order embracing everything in our universe.

In the twenty-sixth place, God is personal. Though we began from the highly impersonal question, What is being, though we have been working out the implications of an unrestricted act of understanding in itself and in its relations to the universe, though we have been speaking of an object of thought, which if it exists, will be known as an object of affirmation in the objective domain of being, still the notion at which we have arrived is the notion of a personal being. As man, so God is a rational self-consciousness, for man was made in the image and likeness of God. But what man is through unrestricted desire and limited attainment, God is as unrestricted act. But an unrestricted act of rational self-consciousness, however objectively and impersonally it has been conceived, clearly satisfies all that is meant by the subject, the person, the other with an intelligence and a reasonableness and a willing that is his own.

Moreover, as the idea of being is the notion of a personal God, so too it implies a personalist view of the order of the universe. For that order is not a blueprint

such as might be drawn up by an architect for a building, nor is it a plan such as might be imposed by a government given to social engineering, but it is an intelligibility that is to be grasped only by compounding classical and statistical, genetic and dialectical methods, that includes the commands and prohibitions that express the willing of one about the willing of others, that has room for the forbearance with which even omnipotent will refuses to interfere with the will of other persons, that contains the apparent anomaly of the trichotomy that goes beyond the principle of excluded middle to make place for the surd of basic sin.

10. The Affirmation of God

Our knowledge of being is by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation. By asking what being is, we have been led to grasp and conceive what God is. Since it has been shown that being is the core of all meaning, it follows that our grasp and conception of the notion of God is the most meaningful of all possible objects of our thought. Still every object of thought raises a further question; for once the activity of intelligent consciousness is completed, the activity of reflective consciousness begins. Is then God merely an object of thought? Or is God real? Is he an object of reasonable affirmation? Does he exist?

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These three further questions are one and the same. For the real is being, and apart from being there is nothing. Being is not known without reasonable affirmation, and existence is the respect in which being is known precisely inasmuch as it is affirmed reasonably. Hence, it is one and the same thing to say that God is real, that he is an object of reasonable affirmation, and that he exists.

Again, to affirm that God exists is not to ascribe to him the Existenz or geworfen-in-der-Welt-sein of existentialist thought. For such existence is the existence of man, not as intelligently grasped and reasonably affirmed, but as experiencing, inquiring, and reflecting, yet not obtaining any definitive answers to his questions about himself.

Further, while both the existence of any proper-

tionate being and the existence of God are to be known through a rationally posited "Yes," it does not follow, that both the existences are the same. For the meaning of the "Yes" varies with the question that it answers. If one asks whether a contingent being exists, an affirmative answer means a contingent existence. But if one asks whether a self-explanatory being exists, an affirmative answer means a self-explanatory existence.

Again, in the self-knowledge of a self-explanatory being it would be one and the same thing for him to know what he is and whether he is. For his knowledge of what he is would consist in a grasp of the formally unconditioned, and as the grasp answers the question, What? so the unconditioned answers the question, Whether?

But it does not follow that the two questions have a single answer in our knowledge. For when we grasp what God is, our grasp is not an unrestricted act of understanding but a restricted understanding that extrapolates from itself to an unrestricted act and by asking ever further questions arrives at a list of attributes of the unrestricted act. Accordingly, what is grasped is not the unrestricted act but the extrapolation that proceeds from the properties of a restricted act to the properties of the unrestricted act. Hence, when the extrapolation is completed, there remains the further question whether the unrestricted act is just an object of thought or a reality.

It follows that all forms of the ontological argument are fallacious. For they argue from the conception of God to his existence. But our conceptions yield no more than analytic propositions. And, as has been seen, one can effect the transition from the analytic proposition to the analytic principle only inasmuch as the terms and relations of the proposition occur in concrete judgments of fact. Hence, while there is no difficulty in so conceiving God that the denial of his existence would be a contradiction in terms, still that conception yields no more than an *analytic proposition*; and the proposition in question can become an analytic principle only if we can affirm in a concrete judgment of fact that God does exist.

The Anselmian argument, then, is to be met by distinguishing the premise^e, Deus est quo maius cogitari nequit. One grants that by appropriate definitions and syntactical rules it can be made into an analytic proposition. But one asks for the evidence that the terms as defined occur in concrete judgments of fact.

The Cartesian argument seems to be from the concept to the existence of a perfect being. This would be valid if conceiving were looking and looking were knowing. But that view involves the counter-positions; and when one shifts to the positions, one finds that conceptions become knowing only through reflective grasp of the unconditioned.

The Leibnizian argument is from the possibility

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to the actuality of God. As we have seen, God is either necessary or impossible. But he is not impossible, for the notion of God is not a contradiction in terms. Therefore, he exists necessarily. But the major is only an analytic proposition, and so the conclusion can be no more than an analytic proposition. Further, the reason offered for the minor calls for a distinction. If there is an omnipotent God, and if omnipotence consists in the power to produce whatever does not involve an internal contradiction, then the absence of internal contradiction proves possibility. But if one does not presuppose the existence of divine omnipotence, then the absence of internal contradiction proves no more than the coherence of an object of thought.

However, if the ontological argument is to be regarded as fallacious, it may seem that there is no possibility of affirming rationally the existence of God. For our distinction between analytic propositions and analytic principles is equivalent to the verification principle of the logical positivists. But there seems no possibility of verifying an unrestricted act of understanding either in our external or in our internal experience. And even if the experience were possible, still there would be needed the fact before the existence of God could be affirmed reasonably.

This objection, however, rests on an identification of the notions of verification and of experience. Yet clearly if the law of falling bodies is verified, it is not

aggregate

experienced. All that is experienced is a large aggregate of contents of acts of observing. It is not experience but understanding that unifies the aggregate by referring them to a hypothetical law of falling bodies. It is not experience but critical reflection that asks whether the data correspond to the law and whether the correspondence suffices for an affirmation of the law. It is not experience but a reflective grasp of the fulfilment of the conditions for a probable affirmation that constitutes the only act of verifying that exists for the law of falling bodies; and similarly it is a reflective grasp of the unconditioned that grounds every other judgment.

*postulating ~
unconditioned*

Moreover, the point to the demand for a transition from analytic propositions to analytic judgments primarily is a distinction between different types of unconditioned and only secondarily does it involve a resemblance to the verification principle. There is a virtually unconditioned that has its conditions fulfilled solely by acts of defining and postulating; such is the analytic proposition. To this virtually unconditioned there can accrue a further fulfilment inasmuch as what it defines and what it postulates also prove to be virtually unconditioned; such is the analytic principle. This further fulfilment arises in concrete judgments of fact, such as occur in the process of verification; and so our position resembles that of the logical positivists. But resemblance need not be identity. For unlike the logical positivists, we are completely disillusioned of the notion that knowing the real is somehow

looking at what is already out there now. Unlike them, we have much to say about the unconditioned and, indeed, it is in the unconditioned that we place the whole meaning and force of verification.

On the one hand, then, the ontological argument is to be rejected, for conception alone is an insufficient ground for judgment. On the other hand, what has to be added to mere conception is, not an experience of God, but a grasp of the unconditioned. Affirming is an intrinsically rational act; it proceeds with rational necessity from grasp of the unconditioned; and the unconditioned to be grasped is, not the formally unconditioned that God is and that unrestricted understanding grasps, but the virtually unconditioned that consists in inferring God's existence from premisses that are true. There remains but one more preliminary. Already we have remarked but again we must repeat that proof is not some automatic process that results in a judgment, as taking an aspirin relieves a headache, or as turning on a switch sets the digital computer on its unerring way. All that can be set down in these pages is a set of signs. The signs can represent a relevant virtually unconditioned. But grasping it and making the consequent judgment is an immanent act of rational consciousness that each has to perform for himself and no one else can perform for him.

The existence of God, then, is known as the conclusion to an argument and, while such arguments are

many, all of them, I believe, are included in the following general form.

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists. But the real is completely intelligible. Therefore, God exists.

To begin from the minor premise², one argues that being is completely intelligible, that the real is being, and that therefore the real is completely intelligible.

Now being is completely intelligible. For being is the objective of the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know; this desire consists in intelligent inquiry and critical reflection; it results in partial knowledge inasmuch as intelligent inquiry yields understanding and critical reflection grasps understanding to be correct; but it reaches its objective, which is being, only when every intelligent question has been given an intelligent answer and that answer has been found to be correct. Being, then, is intelligible, for it is what is to be known by correct understanding; and it is completely intelligible, for being is known completely only when all intelligent questions are answered correctly.

Moreover, the real is being. For the real is what is meant by the name, real. But all that is meant is either a mere object of thought or else both an object of thought and an object of affirmation. The real is not merely an object of thought; and so it is both an object

of thought and an object of affirmation. Nor is the real merely some of the objects of both thought and affirmation but all of them. And similarly being is all that is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.

If this coincidence of the real and being presupposes an acceptance of the positions and a rejection of the counter-positions, the reader will not expect at this stage of the argument any repetition of the basic points that have been made over and over again in the preceding pages of this work. To accept the positions is to accept one's own intelligence and reasonableness and to stand by that acceptance. To reject the counter-positions is to reject the interference of other desire with the proper functioning of the detached, disinterested, and unrestricted desire to know. Hence, every counter-position leads to its own reversal; for it is involved in incoherence as soon as the claim is made that it is grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably; and an intelligent and reasonable subject cannot avoid making that claim.

There remains the major premiss^a, namely, If the real is completely intelligible, then God exists. The argument may be cast as follows.

If the real is completely intelligible, then complete intelligibility exists. If complete intelligibility exists, the idea of being exists. If the idea of being exists, then God exists. Therefore, if the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

Let us comment on each of the premises in turn.

First, if the real is completely intelligible, then complete intelligibility exists. For just as the real could not be intelligible, if intelligibility were non-existent, so the real could not be completely intelligible, if complete intelligibility were non-existent. In other words, to affirm the complete intelligibility of the real is to affirm the complete intelligibility of all that is to be affirmed. But one cannot affirm the complete intelligibility of all that is to be affirmed without affirming complete intelligibility. And to affirm complete intelligibility is to know its existence.

Secondly, if complete intelligibility exists, the idea of being exists. For intelligibility either is material or spiritual or abstract: it is material in the objects of physics, chemistry, biology, and sensitive psychology; it is spiritual when it is identical with understanding; and it is abstract in concepts of unities, laws, ideal frequencies, genetic operators, dialectical tensions and conflicts. But abstract intelligibility necessarily is incomplete as long as it can inquire. Finally, material intelligibility necessarily is incomplete, for it is contingent in its existence and in its occurrences, in its genera and species, in its classical and statistical laws, in its genetic operators and the actual course of its emergent probability; moreover, it includes a merely empirical residue of individuality, non-countable infinities,

incomplete, for it arises only in the self-expression of spiritual intelligibility. Again, spiritual intelligibility is

and/or

particular places and times, and for systematic knowledge a non-systematic divergence. It follows that the only possibility of complete intelligibility lies in a spiritual intelligibility that cannot inquire because it understands everything about everything. And such unrestricted understanding is the idea of being.

Thirdly, if the idea of being exists, God exists. For if the idea of being exists, at least its primary component exists. But the primary component has been shown to possess all the attributes of God. Therefore, if the idea of being exists, God exists.

Such, then, is the argument. As a set of signs printed in a book, it can do no more than indicate the materials for a reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned. To elicit such an act is the work that the reader has to perform for himself. Further, inasmuch as any reader has been impressed by the widely diffused contemporary view that the existence of God cannot be proved, he will be wondering just where the fallacy lies, just when the unjustified step was taken, in the foregoing endeavor to accomplish the reputedly impossible. Let us join him in his reflection.

Certainly, there would have to be some fallacy in the argument, if it did not presuppose a complete break with the various currents of modern thought that insist on atheism or agnosticism. But such a complete break does

exist in the rejection, root and branch, of the counter-positions and in a complete acceptance of the positions. Granted that the real is being, granted that being is known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation, then God is a reality if he is a being and he is a being if intelligent grasp conceives him and reasonableness affirms what intelligence conceives. Again, granted the exclusion of all obscurantism, intelligence is committed to the effort to conceive a notion of God; for if the real is being, then one must face the question, What is being? and as has been seen, the answer to that question includes the answer to the question, What is God? But the answer to a question for intelligence necessarily raises the corresponding question for reflection, and the exclusion of obscurantism once more commits us to an effort to answer. If the answer is negative, atheism is correct. If no answer is possible, agnosticism is correct. If the answer is affirmative, theism is correct. The only issue is to decide which of the three is the answer to be given by the unity of empirical, intelligent, and rational consciousness that I happen to be. Finally, if I am operating in the intellectual pattern of experience, if I am genuine in my acceptance of the domination of the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to inquire intelligently and reflect reasonably, then I have no just grounds for surprise if I find myself unable to deny either that there is a reality or that the real is being or that being is completely intelligible or that complete intelligibility is unrestricted understanding or that unrestricted

understanding is God.

Still, a conclusion can contain no more than its premises. If at the start one does not know that God exists, at least that knowledge must emerge in the process if it is to be present at its end. Where, then, in the process does knowledge of God's existence make its implicit entry?

It is a fair question but to answer it a distinction has to be drawn between 1) affirming a link between other existence and God's and 2) affirming the other existence that is linked to God's existence. The second element lies in the affirmation of some reality: it took place in the chapter on Self-affirmation, and it was expanded to the universe of proportionate being in subsequent chapters. The first element is the process that identifies the real with being, then identifies being with complete intelligibility, and finally identifies complete intelligibility with ^{the} unrestricted act of understanding that possesses the properties of God and accounts for everything else. In this process the expansive moment is the first: for if the real is being, the real is ^{the} objective of an unrestricted desire to understand correctly; to be such an objective, the real has to be completely intelligible, for what is not intelligible is not the objective of a desire to understand, and what is not completely intelligible is the objective, not of an unrestricted desire to understand correctly, but of such a desire judiciously blended with an obscurantist refusal to understand. Once this

expansive moment is achieved, the rest follows. The real cannot be completely intelligible, if complete intelligibility is unreal. Nor can complete intelligibility be real, if the unrestricted act of understanding is merely an object of thought. For the intelligibility of the merely conceived is not real; the intelligibility of material reality is dependent on a merely empirical residue and so it is incomplete; the intelligibility of inquiring and developing intelligence is seeking its own completion and thereby proclaiming its incompleteness; and so the ~~only~~ only possibility of an intelligibility that is at once complete and real is the unrestricted act of understanding.

Yet who are we to pretend to knowledge of every possibility? Might not there be some further alternative? Might not intelligibility be both real and complete in some quite different fashion that lies beyond the narrow confines of our comprehension? There might be, if we were ready to take refuge in the counter-positions or to give way to our tendencies to obscurantism. But the presupposition is that we are not. And if we are not, then the possible is possible being, being is intrinsically intelligible, and the intelligible either is identical with understanding or else related to it as something that could be understood. But intelligibility of the latter type is incomplete, for it is conditioned in its very intelligibility by its relation to something else. Nor is inquiring and developing understanding complete. So there remains only the

remains / ~

unrestricted act of understanding. Nor is there any paradox in our claiming to envisage all possible alternatives; for if we can know that our attainment is extremely limited, we can do so because our knowledge springs from an unrestricted desire to understand correctly; and so it is one and the same unrestricted desire that both reveals to us the vastness of the range of possibilities and, by the same stroke, defines the basic conditions that every possibility must satisfy.

Finally, it may be objected that, for all we know, an unrestricted act of understanding may be a contradiction in terms. But at least an unrestricted desire to understand correctly is not a contradiction, for it is a fact. Nor has contradiction any other origin but the existence of different acts of understanding with respect to the same object. Nor does contradiction imply impossibility unless reality is completely intelligible. But the unrestricted act of understanding is a single act, so that contradiction cannot originate from it; and only because the unrestricted act grounds all that is and would ground all that could be, is it true that the contradictory cannot be.

11.

Comparisons and Contrasts

It has been argued that our metaphysics of proportionate being supplies a universal viewpoint, and now that

that metaphysics has been transformed to include transcendent being, we must ask whether the universal viewpoint remains.

First, then our conception of God as the unrestricted act of understanding coincides with Aristotle's conception of the unmoved mover as $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \nu\omicron\eta\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma$, if $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ has the same meaning as $\nu\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\nu$ in the famous statement on insight in the De Anima, $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \nu\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\ \delta\ \nu\omicron\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \epsilon\iota\delta\eta\ \epsilon\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \gamma\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon$. Nor is there anything fanciful about such an interpretation. As Aristotle's metaphysics of matter and form corresponds to a psychology of sense and insight, so Aristotle's separate forms are, not Platonic Ideas without intelligence, but identities of intelligibility in act with intelligence in act.

Secondly, the series of attributes we have found in the unrestricted act of understanding reveal the identity of our conception with Aquinas' conception of God as ipsum intelligere, ipsum esse, summum bonum, the exemplar, efficient cause, first agent, and last end of all else that is or could be. Among Thomists, however, there is a dispute whether ipsum intelligere or ipsum esse subsistens is logically first among divine attributes. As has been seen in the section on the notion of God, all other divine attributes follow from the notion of an unrestricted act of understanding. Moreover, since we define being by its relation to intelligence, necessarily our ultimate is not being but intelligence.

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Thirdly, as Aquinas, so have we rejected the ontological argument and every other claim to immediate knowledge of God. However, as we have argued mediately from the reality of creatures to the reality of God, so we have made explicit the implication of this procedure by distinguishing two levels in metaphysics. For if creatures are known by us before God is known, then there is in our knowledge a metaphysics of proportionate being that is true as a matter of fact and as a matter of fact reveals the ontological structure of the proportionate universe. But mere matters of fact cannot be ultimate for intelligence, and so from proportionate metaphysics we are led from contingency through causality to being as at once transcendent idea and transcendent reality.

Fourthly, the five ways in which Aquinas proves the existence of God are so many particular cases of the general statement that the proportionate universe is incompletely intelligible and that complete intelligibility is demanded. Thus, there is an argument from motion, because the transition from potency to act is conditioned and an unlimited aggregate of conditioned transitions does not add up to complete intelligibility. There is an argument from efficient causality, for the intelligible dependence of effect on cause becomes completely intelligible only if there is a cause that is intelligible without being dependent. There is an argument from contingency, for the contingent is as a matter of fact,

and the matter of fact is not completely intelligible. There is an argument from the several levels of being, for the many can be completely intelligible only by being related to the one and unique. There is an argument from the order of the universe, for the intelligibility of an order is conditioned in its intelligibility by its relation to an intelligence.

Fifthly, besides Aquinas' five ways, there are as many other proofs of the existence of God as there are aspects of incomplete intelligibility in the universe of proportionate being. In particular, attention must be drawn to the epistemological problem. For as nothing in the proportionate universe is a complete intelligibility, so our knowing is not. Inversely, unless we know some reality, there is no possibility of deducing the existence of God. It follows that first we must establish that as a matter of fact we know and that as a matter of fact there is some reality proportionate to our knowing. For only after the facts are known can we entertain any hope of reaching an explanation of the possibility of a correspondence between our inquiry and understanding, our reflection and judgment, and on the other hand the real as it really is.

Accordingly, we are led to disagree with what seems to have been Schleiermacher's procedure. Correctly he maintained that our knowing is possible only if ultimately there is an identity of Denken and Sein. But it does not

follow that in our knowledge such an identity must be genetically first. And so it does not follow that the whole of our knowing rests on a belief, prompted by religious feeling, in the ultimate identity. As has been seen, our own unrestricted desire to know defines for us what we must mean when we speak of being; in the light of that notion we can settle by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation what in fact is and what in fact is not; and while this procedure does not explain why every possible and actual reality must be intelligible, it does settle what in fact already is known to be true and, at the same time, it gives rise to the further question that asks for complete explanation and complete intelligibility.

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Sixtly, as the metaphysics of proportionate being rests on the isomorphism of the proportionate known to the knower, so the transition to the transcendent is effected by proceeding from the contingent subject's unrestricted desire to know to the transcendent subject's unrestricted act of understanding. Again, as the structure of proportionate being can be deduced from the structure of the contingent subject, so certain general properties of any possible universe can be deduced from the attributes of the transcendent subject. However, while the metaphysics of proportionate being can be developed by appealing to common sense and to the empirical sciences, the general properties of any possible universe are bound to remain generalities in our knowledge for we have no empirical knowledge of other universes than the one in which we exist.

There follows a corollary of considerable theological importance, namely, that our knowledge of possible worlds is, in general, no more than an inference from our knowledge of God. Thus, because God is omnipotent, one can infer that every non-contradictory statement would be true in some possible world. Because divine wisdom equals divine power, one can say that every possible world would be ordered in accord with infinite wisdom. Because divine goodness accords with divine wisdom, one can say that any possible world would be worthy of infinite goodness. But because our understanding is not the unrestricted act, we are not in a position to go into details. Briefly, we are committed to the sobriety of Aquinas in the twenty-fifth question of the first part of his Summa Theologiae, and we are led to reject as methodologically unsound the Scotist view that a question becomes scientific when it is raised with respect to all possible worlds. The fact is that a question then usually becomes indeterminable, and to no small extent the sterility of later Scholasticism seems attributable to its mistaken conceptions on the nature of scientific knowledge.

Seventhly, if our account of the notion and the affirmation of God may be placed within the Aristotelian and Thomist tradition, it also meets the requirement of explaining the existence of other views. For though we have gone beyond the metaphysics of proportionate being to the transcendent idea and transcendent reality of being, still our base of operations has remained the same. We raised

the question of the notion of God by asking what being is. We answered the question whether God exists by affirming that the real is being and that being is the completely intelligible objective of an unrestricted desire to understand correctly. Nor was it obscure at any decisive point in the process that we were reaching our answers by remaining true to the positions and by rejecting the counter-positions. But the polymorphism of human consciousness is not suppressed by the mere fact that a man is asking what and whether God is. Accordingly, just as our notion and affirmation of God result from the positions, so other views on the divinity may be reached by supposing different stages in the development of the positions and in the aberration of the counter-positions.

It follows that the universal viewpoint of proportionate metaphysics has been preserved yet expanded. For a viewpoint is universal in the measure that 1) it is one and coherent, 2) it raises issues too basic to be dodged, and 3) its analysis of the evidence is penetrating enough to explain the existence of every other view as well as to establish its own. But the notion and affirmation of God is one, for God is one; it is coherent, for coherence results from the unity of a single act of understanding, and God is a single, unrestricted act of understanding. Again, to ask what being is ^{and} whether the real is being, is to raise questions that are too basic to be dodged. Finally, as our answer results from the positions at the present stage of their development, so other answers (at least if we prescind

for the moment from the mystic's affirmation of the ineffable and the believer's affirmation of a divine revelation) can be derived by assigning different values to the variables in man's polymorphic consciousness.

To illustrate this conclusion briefly, the positions develop primarily inasmuch as sense is distinguished from understanding and both sense and understanding from judgment, and they develop secondarily inasmuch as the positions are distinguished sharply and effectively from the counter-positions. Pythagoras and Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas are the great names in the primary process, while the break-down of medieval Scholasticism and the methodological efforts of modern philosophy set the problem of the secondary development, and the advance of mathematics and empirical science provide the precise information needed to effect it.

In the measure that the primary and secondary developments have not occurred or are not assimilated, not only is human consciousness polymorphic but its various components are unresolved. Man affirms the divine, and obscurely he knows what he means. As best he can, he expresses his meaning, but his resources for expression are unequal to the task. He can give God a name, but there are many tongues, and so there are many names. He can indicate divine attributes by analogy, but he cannot disassociate the analogies he employs from their imperfections. To make God a cause is also to relegate him to the past;

to make him an end is to postpone him to the future; to insist upon his immediacy and relevance to the world and to human living is to involve him in the hearth and the family, in the emphases of patriarchal and matriarchal arrangements, in the concerns of hunters and fishers, of agriculturalists, craftsmen, and nomads, in the interests of property and the state, in the occupations of peace and war. The fourfold bias of the dramatic and the practical subject of common sense re-appears in the conception of the divine and by this reinforcement and sanction it heads, first, to an ever fuller expansion but, ultimately, to its own reversal. So the empires of the Mediterranean basin gathered the gods of their peoples into pantheons; syncretists reduced their numbers; allegorists gave new meanings to their exploits; and philosophers discovered and preached the primacy of the Intelligible and of the One.

Still the emergence of philosophy as a distinct field of inquiry merely transposes the issue. The many gods give place to the many philosophies. The intellectualism of a Plato and an Aristotle is opposed by the atomism of a Leucippus and Democritus. Time divides the Old, the Middle, and the New Academies. The Lyceum deserts the fifty odd unmoved movers of Aristotelian cosmology to settle down to empirical research. Philosophy itself becomes practical in the primarily ethical concern of Cynic and Cyrenaic, of Epicurean and Stoic, and the brilliant speculation of a Plotinus ends in the more effective oddities of a Proclus and Jamblichus.

Again, if the sustained montheism of the Hebraic and Christian traditions and of some of their offshoots can be argued to exhibit a historical singularity, it cannot be said to have exercised the polymorphism of human consciousness. Besides the true believers, there have been the heretics. The apparently monolithic front of medieval Scholasticism, on closer inspection, splinters into schools and within each school men dispute about their special orthodoxy. Behind the certitudes of a common faith, there arise the doubts and denials about the independent range and value of human reason. The Cartesian rebirth is followed by the opposition of rationalism and empiricism. The Kantian compromise is deserted for idealism on the one hand and for irrationalism on the other. To fill the increasing vacuum, science becomes scientism to proclaim that as the earth is just one of the planets, so man is just one of the brutes, God is just a projection from the psychological depths, and religion is just a facade for economic and social interests.

Now if the notion and affirmation of God pertain to the positions, not in any incidental fashion, but as necessary answers to the inevitable questions about the idea of being and the identity of being with the real, it follows that the counter-positions, ever sustained by the polymorphism of human consciousness, will involve pre-philosophic notions of the divine in the mythical, will generate counter-philosophic misconceptions, doubts, and denials, and will tend to corrupt even correct notions and affirmations if they are unsupported by an effective criticism of the influences that rise from the unconscious

doubts

into human sensitivity and intersubjectivity and that invade the realm of truth at the demand of tribal, national, economic, and political necessity and utility.

If then the procedure of the present chapter in conceiving the nature and affirming the reality of God appears to be excessively laborious, complex, and difficult, it would be unfair to overlook the fact that our concern has been, not to select the easiest approach to the notion of God, not to offer the simplest proof of his existence, but so to advance from ~~the~~ proportionate to transcendent being that the universal viewpoint, attained in the earlier stages of the argument, might be preserved as well as expanded. It is an old saying that veritas est una et error multiplex, but even truth changes its appearance as human understanding develops, and it is not a negligible advantage to be able to account from a single base not only for the changing face of truth, not only for the multiplicity of error, but also for the worst of enemies, the one in a man's own household, that so spontaneously and so naturally tends to adjust and color the truth one knows to the exigences of one's socio-cultural milieu and to the hue of one's temperament.

what | Eighthly, because it is difficult to know what our knowing is, it also is difficult to know ~~what~~ our knowledge of God is. But just as our knowing is prior to an analysis of knowledge and far easier than it, so too our knowledge of God is both earlier and easier than any

attempt to give it formal expression. For without any formulation of the notion of being, we use it whenever we inquire and understand, reflect and judge. Without any explicit repudiation of obscurantism, we ask questions and further questions in our search for the intelligible and unconditioned. But all that we know and can know about ourselves and about the world around us, raises the same further question; for it ^{is} known to be just as a matter of fact through a reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned; and the ubiquitous and incessant further question admits only one answer, namely, an intelligibility that formally is unconditioned. So it is that, just as all men understand what they mean by the "nature of..." though they are at a loss to say what they mean, similarly they all understand what they mean by God though they are at a loss when asked to explain so basic and familiar a notion. Again, just as every inquirer knows something when he knows that there is a nature to be known though he still has to discover what the nature is, similarly everyone knows something when he knows that there is a God even though he entertains no hope of ever reaching an unrestricted act of understanding and so knowing what God is. Again, just as the notion of nature can be misused by the gnostic and the magician yet, if used properly, provides the dynamic base on which the whole of scientific knowledge is erected, so too the notion of God can be corrupted by mythical consciousness and distorted by misplaced practicality yet, if used

misplaced

properly, it supplies the dynamic base on which rise not only the whole of intelligent and rational knowing but also the whole of intelligent and rational living. Finally, just as misuse of the notion of nature makes it ridiculous in the eyes of those most eager to know what is to be known by understanding, so too misconception and misuse of the notion of God lead to its rejection by the very men that are most insistent in denouncing obscurantism, in demanding judgments to rest on the unconditioned, and in calling for consistency between knowing and doing. But if one is eager to know what is to be known by understanding, one can ridicule the notion of nature only because one does not know what the name means; and if one is genuine in denouncing obscurantism and in demanding the unconditioned, either one already adores God without naming him or else one has not far to go to reach him.

Ninthly, we have admitted the existence of a critical problem because man's unrestricted desire asks more questions than man's limited attainment can answer; we have contended that a solution to the problem must be piecemeal because questions of possibility are to be settled only by appealing to facts; and we have pointed out that the piecemeal solution becomes methodical in the measure that it executes a comprehensive and effective strategy in selecting the facts to which it successively appeals. Earlier elements in the strategy, which we have been following, already are familiar to the reader; but it

remains to be shown that the fact that we can conceive God as the transcendent idea and affirm him as the transcendent reality of being not only is continuous with all that has gone before but also is its culmination.

Our subject has been the act of insight or understanding, and God is the unrestricted act of understanding, the eternal rapture glimpsed in every Archimedean cry of Eureka. Understanding meets questions for intelligence and questions for reflection. The unrestricted act meets all at once; for it understands understanding and all the intelligibility based on it; and it understands its own understanding as unrestricted, invulnerable, true. What is known by true understanding is being, and the being known by unrestricted understanding's self-knowledge is primary being, self-explanatory, unconditioned, necessary without any lack or defect. The good is the intelligible, and so the primary being also is the primary good. As intelligibility without intelligence would be defective, so also would truth without affirming, or the good without loving; but God is without defect, not because the act of understanding is complemented by further acts, but by a single act that at once is understanding and intelligible, truth and affirming, goodness and loving, being and omnipotence.

Our subject has been understanding in its genesis. It arises in intelligent and rational consciousness but,

before it arises, it is anticipated, and that anticipation is the spontaneous ground that, when reflectively enucleated, becomes the methods of science and the integral heuristic structure implemented in the metaphysics of proportionate being. But the fundamental anticipation is the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to understand correctly; the fundamental assumption is that the real is coincident with the grounded intelligibility to be known by correct understanding; the fundamental reflective enucleation of all intelligent and rational anticipation and assumption is to conceive the idea of being, and thereby the notion of God, and to affirm that the real is being, and thereby to affirm the reality of God.

counter-philosophies
Our subject has been the flight from understanding in the scotosis of the dramatic subject, in the threefold bias of common sense, in the murkiness of mythical consciousness, in the aberrations of the counter-philosophies. But it is not the spirit of inquiry that refuses to ask what being is, nor critical reflection that ignores the question whether ^vbeing and only being is the real. It is not flight from understanding that forms the notion of an unrestricted act of understanding, nor the demand of rational consciousness for the unconditioned that draws back in alarm when there arises a demand for the formally unconditioned. It is by the positions that the notion of God is developed and the affirmation of God is sustained, and it is by the counter-positions that the issues are misconceived and confused.

Kant spoke of a transcendental illusion and, if what he meant has been shown to be a mistake, the expression survives to generate distrust. But it is not the detached and disinterested desire to understand correctly that can be named an illusion, for it is interference with that desire that is at the root of all error. Nor can the unrestricted desire be named a transcendental illusion, for there has to exist some illusion before it can be either immanent or transcendental. Nor can one say that the pure desire exists, that it is not illusory, yet in fact it is not unrestricted. After all, Kantians and positivists are not deluded but merely mistaken when they endeavor to restrict human inquiry within bounds that everyone naturally and spontaneously transcends.

What, then, is critical method? It is method with respect to the ultimate, method applied to the most basic issues. Now it has been seen that the method of the empirical sciences rests on the heuristic structure of man's desire and capacity to understand data correctly. In similar fashion the method of metaphysics consisted in integrating and implementing classical and statistical, genetic and dialectical methods. Critical method differs from other methods only in its subject-matter. As they, so it grasps and affirms an object correlative to the desire. As they, so it insists both that general statements can be made about the object before it actually is understood and that such statements, though valid and

true and useful, fall far short of what is to be known if understanding is attained. In brief, critical method neither is nor can be the bland procedure of consigning transcendental issues to oblivion. Just as scientific method does not repudiate the notion of nature but makes it explicit and precise as the indeterminate function to be determined, as the ideal frequency from which actual frequencies cannot diverge systematically, as the genetic operator, as the dialectical tension and opposition between the pure desire and human sensitivity, so critical method does not repudiate the notion of God but formulates it as the unrestricted act of understanding and works out its general attributes. Just as scientific method does not confuse knowledge of method with its fruits, so critical method does not confuse our formulation of unrestricted understanding with a claim that we understand everything about everything. Just as the scientist is ready to abandon every scientific hypothesis and theory without losing confidence in the correctness of scientific method, so the metaphysician affirms the reality of what the scientist seeks to know, and the critical thinker does not allow developments in the notion of God to generate any doubt that it is one and the same being to which all men refer whether they are more or less successful in conceiving him, whether correctly they affirm his existence, or mistakenly they deny it.