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Kant on the Theoretical Arguments for God's Existence

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KANT ON THE THEORETICAL
ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

BY

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ABSTRACT

Kant's statement limiting the material of cognitive categories to the empirical--that which appears to us in the manifold of sensible intuition--is examined in its relation to the concept of a Thing presumed by definition to be nonempirical or transcendent of the empirical, the God of modern theism. Kant's limiting statement forbids the application of the a priori concepts of understanding, the categories of Existence, Causality, and determinate Necessity, in three proofs of the existence of a transcendent ens realissimum. Rather the application of these categories is limited to natural states of affairs in the sections of Kant's Dialectic devoted to three traditional arguments for God's existence.

In what follows the Kantian theory of existence is explored in close detail as is Kant's limitation of the meaning of causality and necessity. Each proof is given in the formulation Kant examined, with reference to the source

of that formulation. A summary of Kant's treatment is then set forth and exposed to analysis.

If Kant's negative criticism of the three proofs under examination depends on his limiting statement, then we are naturally led to inquire after the logical status of that statement and Kant's defense of it. While it is beyond our scope to set forth and expound the theoretical foundation of Kant's principle of cognitive limitation, it becomes clear through analysis that that principle fails to limit to sensibilia the application of the categories, since that principle is itself the knowledge-claim that the category Limitation applies to the abstract and nonempirical class of all conceptual acts of knowledge. That is, Kant's statement of limitation knows what it professes not to know, that the category Limitation has an application outside objects of possible experience.

Thus, if Kant's limitative statement failed as a knowledge-claim in the manner indicated, it would appear that we need to seek elsewhere for a general epistemological principle for the criticism of theistic arguments.

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FOREWORD

Kant's statement and discussion of the traditional arguments for God's existence represent the locus classicus for contemporary discussion of those arguments. Presuppositions shared by both Kant's rationalist and empiricist predecessors also formed the foundation for Kant's exposition of the traditional arguments, in the Critique of Pure Reason.

In the present discussion we shall: state each argument as Kant found it in the writings of his modern predecessors; examine Kant's treatment of each argument in light of the theoretical constructs of the Critical philosophy (but not the practical constructs of that philosophy); and examine one of the major or foundational principles of Kant's theoretical philosophy. In following this program it is not practical to examine the relation of Kant and those who influenced him, nor is it expedient except as to discern the sources of the arguments with which Kant dealt. This shall serve as something of a limitation on the whole.

A more explicit limitation is that we have found it

appropriate in consideration of normal expectations as to the scope and size of an M.A. thesis to expound only Kant's discussion of the three traditional arguments. Gracious and helpful advice was given to the effect that the scope of the original project--an exposition of many of Kant's views on natural and moral theology--was excessive in its expectations, no matter how well that project may have succeeded in meeting those expectations. Hence, our formal discussion considers only Sections 4 through 6 of Kant's (Dialectic) Chapter, "The Ideal of Pure Reason". In addition, we consider the epistemological basis of Kant's exposition. Of course, it could not be helped that some larger considerations, including those Kant may have touched on in the Sections surrounding those named above, were brought into the argument. However, to give a good accounting of how those and other relevant Sections of the Critique affect what we have considered here, and then in addition to consider the convolutions of Kant's moral philosophy and its necessitarian view of God's existence and character (with respect to moral philosophy), would fill a mammoth treatise on the subject as we may attest from experience.

In full view of these considerations it became the expedient, and, it is hoped, fruitful project of the present writer to shorten the scope of the original project. What follows is the result of such labors as were necessary in order to make the shortened version an integral whole.

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CHAPTER ONE

Even the assumption--as made on behalf of the necessary practical employment of my reason--of God, freedom, and immortality is not permissible unless at the same time speculative reason be deprived of its pretensions to transcendental insight. For in order to arrive at such insight it must make use of principles which, in fact, extend only to objects of possible experience, and which, if also applied to what cannot be an object of experience, always really change this into an appearance, thus rendering all practical extension of pure reason impossible. I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.

--Immanuel Kant

Section I. Epistemological.

That Kant's general viewpoint about any natural theology (that it is epistemologically unwarranted) should come before his particularly brilliant discussion of the arguments themselves, has led to much confusion. It ought

therefore to be made clear both that Kant himself believed with conviction that there is a God, and that he is convinced that, in the context of morality at least, there is no reason why others should not share his belief. However, the present work under discussion is primarily epistemological, and Kant chose to begin his exposition of some attempts to know God with the sentence: "We have seen above that no objects can be represented through pure concepts of understanding, apart from the conditions of sensibility...."¹

Kant's general viewpoint does not entail that there is no natural theology. His point is that knowledge about these matters escapes us, on the count that knowledge is limited by the formation of its concepts to sense experience. We are tempted by imagination to try to evade this general point by pointing at Kant's own philosophy: Kant, in opposition to empiricists such as Hume, denies that our mode of knowledge arises out of sense experience. For Kant it is the knowing mind which, through our concepts (or Categories), shapes sense experience so that we may indeed know the sensibilia, as for example science knows what it knows. It may indeed be stated that Kant's paradigm for knowledge

makes objects conform to our concepts of them. Kant's general epistemology pointed out that it is by giving in to such persistent illusion as may be engendered by an epistemology of pure and constructive concepts that we attempt to exceed the limitations of any theory of knowledge appropriate to sensible experience: that very point, i.e. the limitation of knowledge, is the substance of Kant's critique of the traditional theoretical arguments for God's existence.

What confuses the reader is the expectation that that limit is all Kant had to say on the subject at hand. Even here, however, it is clear from Kant's words that there are other considerations relevant to the persistence of the illusion of knowledge. For example, a due consideration of some circumstance under which we need to decide² whether there is a God might lead us to conviction in that matter under the duress of some such circumstance. Such a conviction could even come about as the result of a consideration (such as an argument from natural theology) which by itself is insufficient with regard to theoretical objects. This circumstance together with one such argument might constrain some sort of obligation to believe that God exists.

Kant's Chapter is in fact fairly strewn with hints such as these, i.e. hints as to Kant's personal convictions in connection with the matter at hand. One encounters them frequently in a direct examination such as that on which we are about to embark. But we can now no more than mention them in a hope that they shall not confuse, because they are here at large in a territory which is unknown to them, and one which becomes explicit, as we said, only in Kant's moral philosophy.

At present we shall concern ourselves, and be limited to, Kant's epistemological limitation as it applies to the theoretical arguments for God's existence, leaving the problem of that limitation for a concluding statement, and leaving the background of that limitation in Kant's general epistemology to the commentators on Kant's Analytic. It is unfortunate that the hints mentioned above are a surprise to the readers of those commentaries, and this is the source of much confusion. However, many of the particulars of Kant's epistemology are more clearly reflected when concretely applied, as is the case in their application to the theistic arguments. Hence, it is better that we shall see the

theoretical limitation (and its consequent demarcation of the empirical and the nonempirical) at work and then make our evaluation on that basis.

We shall again mention Kant's introductory Sections (1 through 3) only as they serve to anticipate his discussion of the particular arguments, and as we come to understand the problematic of that limitation of knowledge primarily in the context of Kant's discussion of those arguments. We assume the reader's awareness of the context of Kant's main epistemological thesis and recent discussion of its shortcomings, especially, that is, in the area of the analytic/synthetic distinction.

Section II. Existence as a Category.

To begin to discuss the ontological argument could require us to do what Plantinga³ did and begin with its first formulation by St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). But that particular formulation, which Plantinga has Kant debating in Plantinga's chapter, is not the formulation Kant himself treated of, since Kant's Section (4) discussed "...the famous ontological argument of Descartes"⁴. So we do not need to examine Anselm's formulation except as to note how

it differs from Descartes'. In our exposition of Kant we will shortly examine Descartes' premisses.

Before doing so we need to establish two principles in order to carry out the exposition of Kant's Chapter. First, is the general epistemological limitation of Category application just discussed. In the case at hand the category to be examined is Existence. As mentioned above Kant's quite singular attitude is that, since categories may not be applied to any knowing except that under the conditions of sensibility, and since Existence is a category, we simply cannot have any way of knowing (or not knowing) any thing exists that is thought to be outside experience. Our language, as may be seen from the last clause of our last sentence, finds it difficult to express such a principle. For if it is thought to be outside experience, then we are still saying something about its existence, namely that we may think its existence. Such linguistic perplexity portends the philosophical perplexity we shall later encounter in Kant's limitation of knowledge. It also presages the thinkable existence in Kant's moral philosophy of objects unknowable in connection with his theoretical view of our mode of knowledge.

Be this as it may, here we need to remind that Existence is not applicable to any knowing outside the conditions of sense experience for Kant.

Second, we must not only remember that Existence is a Category for Kant, but that since all three (and any other variations) of the proofs are instrumentalities for knowing God's existence, and since Kant regarded knowledge of a nonsensible entity as impossible under the principles of the Analytic, they could not stand as proofs under Kant's parameter for knowledge in any way whatsoever. Of course, such a line of argument assumes that God is absolutely Other or transcendent of the world. That latter assumption Kant shared with his predecessors and contemporaries, and is a fundamental point of departure for the entire discussion of Kant's work on the subject. Given Kant's epistemology and absolute division between the world of appearance, or phenomenal world, and the world of things-in-themselves, or noumenal world, it should be clear that transcendent theoretical proof is impossible by Kant's theory of knowledge. This is not, however, the same as saying that Kant succeeded in the destruction of the theistic proofs, or that if he destroyed

the ontological argument he also destroyed the others (since they presuppose ontological necessity), which are together the usual points made when discussing Kant's treatment of the proofs in general. So we must agree with Bennett⁵, Ewing⁶, and Smith⁷ that Kant's discussion, in particular his critique of the ontological argument, is mainly or firstly in coherent agreement with the negative purpose of the Dialectic: to remove from transcendental theory all illusion transcendent of such theory based on the principles of the Analytic. And, although Strawson did not discuss the ontological argument, the other three commentators, at least, agree in discerning the Cartesian origin of that argument.

Hence, Kant's principles are, that the category Existence cannot be employed in any knowing outside experience, and that since all proofs of God's existence are, as proofs, instrumentalities for noncategorical knowing, they cannot be accepted under Kant's Analytic paradigm for knowledge. Therefore, no matter which of the three words Kant used that are translated "existence" by Kemp Smith⁸, the category Existence (Dasein) is inappropriately used, for Kant, if the transcendental Ideal were to be taken as a referring concept

for the purpose of denoting an object of possible knowledge.

We may slightly advance our argument if we pause a moment more to review Kant's prohibition in the Deduction of the Categories (in B), paragraph 22⁹. Both the Section title (The Category has no other Application in Knowledge than to Objects of Experience) and its conclusion prohibit the use of categories in the knowledge of things excepting knowledge within experience. The entire possibility of knowing Dasein is related for Kant to the proper use of the categories. In that paragraph Kant mentioned that although we may think concepts without intuitions, it is not possible to know an object without an intuition of that object, and since for Aesthetic all intuitions are possible only within sense-experience, "...the thought of an object in general... can become knowledge for us only in so far as the [pure] concept is related to objects of the senses...."¹⁰ Therefore, "...the categories, as yielding knowledge of things, have no kind of application, save only in regard to things which may be objects of possible experience."¹¹ This conclusion, Kant held, is of the utmost importance for his philosophy¹².

We shall in our next Chapter (on the cosmological proof) apply the same technique to the exposition of Kantian contingency, necessity and causality, categories all. For clear reference hereinafter, we name this technique the noumenalist technique, since it forbids the application of knowledge to things-in-themselves, or noumena.

Section III. Existence as a possible Predicate; and the application of this technique of exposition.

Kant began his discussion of the ontological proof by re-stating, as a context, the main points of earlier Sections of the Chapter on the Ideal of Pure Reason. *Simply because reason requires the Ideal [as a contribution to aprioristic knowledge of such predicates as unity and necessity], we must not assume an objective reality is known to exist corresponding to the Ideal¹³. As the Ideal is required for complete predication, a humanly unattainable goal, it is a limiting Ideal and does not serve to extend the understanding to a knowledge of new objects, but merely serves as a source for their possible predicates.^{14*}

*Such marks in the course of our discussion indicate, in a manner analogous to quotation marks, areas wherein Kant's views are summarized for the purpose of comment. They are used in this manner throughout.

We pause here only to note that the latter use of 'predicates' may be of help when trying to understand Kant's doctrine of synthetic predication, and the use of that doctrine in the present Chapter. Even predication, when what is predicated is a Category, is restricted by Kant to the conditions of sensibility for knowledge of the predication, since any employment of categories is so restricted for Kant. Thus in the above summary sentence is a sample of Kant's ordinary usage of the word, as restricting itself to empirical predication. One may further observe that beyond Kant's restrictive use of the Categories, or in addition to that restriction, a positive use has been added in the function of the transcendental Ideal, a use which represents the basic purpose of the category. This positive use is for theoretical predication, in that each category plays its part in theoretical knowledge. But the source of such predicates as are demanded by positive knowledge is the transcendental Ideal, the hypostatization of which into a real and knowable object is the dangerous illusion. We shall presently examine Kant's illusion as it applies to the positive predication of the category Existence.

Section IV. Existence as an analytic predicate.

Twice in the general discussion of the Ideal Kant had compared the ens realissimum (i.e. the inference from the transcendental Ideal to the most real Being) to a syllogism¹⁵, in respect of the necessity of each. In the first case¹⁶ Kant held that the Ideal of the sum-total of possible predicates is used in the determination of things in a procedure analogous with the procedure of reason in the disjunctive syllogism. By the second case we refer to the rejection of the material condition in the hypothetical syllogism as a model for the unconditioned as ens realissimum.¹⁷ In reading the two arguments one may wonder what Kant had in mind, for surely no syllogism's necessity would be mistaken for the absolute necessity of the ens realissimum as it traditionally was conceived.

One possibility is that Kant had in mind an architectonic completeness, since Kant in the introduction to the Dialectic gave the syllogistic logical employment of reason¹⁸ as an example of pure reason as the "Seat of Transcendental Illusion"¹⁹. Such completeness is not to be discounted as a thematic format for the Dialectic especially in so far as Kant used his discussion of logical argument-forms as a

means of reference for one part of the Dialectic to another. Kant's general or introductory exposition of the Ideal of Pure Reason (i.e. the divine Ideal) makes use of that format as it anticipates his discussion of the Ontological argument.

It is clear from the early part of the present Section [4] that Kant intended right along for us to realize the difficulty mentioned immediately above, that we ought not to mistake ontologically absolute necessity for logical necessity. That sort of mistake, Kant would have us realize, is the basis for an illusion presupposed by the Cartesian version of the ontological proof. His example here is the necessity of the Euclidian proposition,

(1) Every triangle has three angles,

which is assumed for the purpose of Kant's discussion as both an analytically necessary definition and as a theorem.

As the latter we notice that any triangle is a construct under the postulates of Euclid. Of course, under those postulates (1) is absolutely necessary in the sense that it is logically derived from those postulates and ordinary rules of formal logic. The necessity involved in this case is analytic, because the predicate belongs to the

subject as something covertly contained in the subject's concept. Hence, the connection between the predicate and subject is thought through identity²⁰.

*But judgments following from postulates, theorems and derivation rules, though they follow with unconditional necessity, have not the same absolute necessity as when we speak of the existence of a thing as absolutely necessary²¹. "The absolute necessity of the judgment is only the conditioned necessity of the thing, or of the predicate in the judgment...."²²

So our proposition (1) did not assume that at least one triangle is given as existing, and thus says nothing whatever about the existence of any thing, much less about the existence of three angles²³.* We may say the same of any truth, analytic or not, standing under (i.e. following from) any derivation schematism. Each theorem will be wholly subject to the truth of each of its predecessors, and be dependent on the correct use of derivation rules. In the cases of syllogistic inference Kant used in earlier sections of his Chapter, we may observe that the procedures of reason misled when taken as giving unconditionally necessary warrant that things are in existence as they are for logic. This is

not to say that some truths of logic cannot serve as truths of Metaphysics. The three so-called logical laws are often construed as ontological principles. Russell²⁴, for example, has construed those principles to serve in this way. But Kant simply aimed to clarify the distinction between ontology and pure logic, which, as is often said, never supplied its premisses. No example of a purely logical relationship serves to establish any thing's existence in any way whatsoever, but that establishment depends on the truth of the premisses in a deduction (or, in the case of an immediate inference, on the truth of the original).

To avoid this deluding influence²⁵ Kant wished us to examine the logic appropriate to any identical proposition,

(2) $A = A$.

Assume that that thing known as concept A is supposed to exist. By the principle of identity, the predicate nominative of proposition (2), for example either the predicate of

(3) Bachelors are unmarried males,

or the 'three angles' of (1), must also exist on this assumption of existential import for these three specified propositions.

Or, to put the matter another way, to deny the existence of any unmarried males is to deny the existence of any bachelors,

and conversely also, &c. But to reject the existence of both subject and predicate of (1), (2), or (3) is necessarily a possibility; and to accept, for example, (1) that a triangle exists without the existence of three angles would be an absurdity.

In this context, i.e. in generating the application of existential import to the identity principle, Kant reintroduced the concept of an absolutely necessary being as a topic under consideration. But that reintroduction is at least problematical. Kant's sentences,

The same holds true of the concept of an absolutely necessary being. If its existence is rejected, we reject the thing itself with all its predicates...²⁶

cause us to assume that Kant held all proper examples of the predication of attributes to 'God' are analytic predications, a view that may be at least troublesome to some.

It may be firstly noted that all previous examples, (1), (2), and (3), were what grammarians call predicate nominatives. Kant's new example²⁷,

(4) God is omnipotent,

seems to differ from the others in the respect that 'omnipotent' functions in (4) as a predicate adjective. Why

should we agree with Kant that (4) is similar in important respects with the other propositions we have enumerated and is, hence, a necessary judgment? Kant's example (4) would seem on Kant's own view of propositions and judgments to add an actually additional description of God, and in this case (4) may be nonanalytic since its predicate is not covertly contained in the concept of an absolutely necessary being as the latter was detailed in Kant's previous Sections. Without going further with our analysis, we may at least decide that if (4) is analytic, then no predication of God's attributes can be anything else. Now we may constructively determine some defining predicate about God, as we shall see Ewing do in our formal consideration of the ontological argument, in a way such that the first premiss of the argument might be acceptably analytic. But it is hard to accept that an infinite being per se is omnipotent, and certainly some writers have thought otherwise.²⁸ Kant would be better off if he had gone right to the heart of the matter, and discussed the issue most clearly raised by the version of the ontological argument he considered, namely whether 'God exists' is an analytic proposition. He clouded the issue in

our judgment by proposing (4) as an analytic example, even if there was a normative metaphysical tradition being followed in this matter. For, as we shall see, the ontological proof has less to do with the attributes of God than God's existence. At least Kant's discussion of (4) made clear that the subject of his consideration of the ontological proof is a proposition and not the Ideal as a concept by itself, since 'analytic' must be the description of some proposition. If a proposition is Kant's subject here, that would rule out the possibility that we may interpret Kant as handling the scholastic version of the ontological proof, as we shall soon see.

Under the assumption of the analytic necessity of (4), we proceed to a reprise of the application of the identity rule (supra) to the proposition Kant considered an identity, (4). *We cannot reject the omnipotence of God and maintain God's existence, and if we reject the existence of God we also reject, obviously, any predicate attributed to God and there is no contradiction in maintaining either of these propositions*²⁹. The conclusion Kant drew from the general discussion of identity, "...For I cannot form the least

concept of a thing which, should it be rejected with all its predicates, leaves behind a contradiction..." is itself valid only under the condition that its general subject is predication by identity. We shortly proceed to a particular identity, one Kant regarded as excluding existence from any concept whose mere possibility is still a topic for discussion. Existence shall not then be regarded for Kant as the same as omnipotence is with respect to God. Not only may Existence not be regarded as a proper predicate for any noumenon by the noumenalist principle for Kant, it cannot be regarded as an analytical predicate, Kant will hold, of a mere possibility³⁰. And that is the best sense we will be able to make of Kant's denial that being (Sein) may stand as a predicate³¹ and Kant's affirmation that existential propositions are synthetic³². On to the ontological argument and its expression as a proof.

Section V. Existence as a synthetic predicate.

Previously we noted that what Kant attempted was a critique of the Cartesian ontological proof. While it may be that Kant attempted a more general project, it is by no means clear that Kant was even familiar with St. Anselm's version of the proof in its formal detail, although Kant's

text shows his awareness that that argument was an "innovation of scholastic subtlety".³³ In this regard we briefly return to the subject of Plantinga's analysis of Anselm's argument. That analysis brings up the possibility that Kant failed partly because his procedure is directed to necessity of the peculiarly analytic sort, and thus is irrelevant to steps in Anselm's argument regarded by Anselm as necessary, but not necessarily analytic³⁴. Plantinga's point merely serves, however, as a reminder to the expositor that any exposition of this Section of Kant's Dialectic should be pointed in the direction of one as subtle as any scholastic in his thought, i.e. Descartes.

In this respect we may briefly review the discussion of identity as it motivated Descartes' formulation of the argument under consideration:

(5) "...[W]hen I imagine a triangle, it may be that no such figure exists anywhere outside my cogitationem, or has never existed; but there certainly exists its determinate nature (its essence, its form), which is unchangeable and eternal. This is no figment of mine..."³⁵

At the reading of Descartes' position one must recall Kant's attitude about the priority of epistemology over the doctrines and dogmas of metaphysicians ancient and modern. For Kant

ideas are mere abstract ideas, consistent with pure theoretical reason, and that Kant's epistemological idealism reversed Greek realism on the topic of ideas with respect to theory. For we must now understand that what were for Greek philosophy (e.g. neo-Platonism) known ultimately as the most real beings, God and eternal ideas, became under the Kantian theory of knowledge usurping Illusions and moral archetypes or analytic truths. All that Kant theoretically knew to be under the Category 'Reality' were actually appearances of unknowable things-in-themselves. Even though Kant will substantially reverse his position in his discussion of the ideas' relation to pure practical reason as evidence for their reality, in the phase we now study Kant's theory-articulation is a thorough-going attempt to show precisely why, under his principles of knowledge, the above Ideal is unknowable as to its possible reference. Whether these startling results of this phase present themselves as attractive or rather persuasive with respect to the first principles of Kant's epistemology is important if we wish to consider those results as that by which we may ourselves evaluate that epistemology. However it is nothing more than

an irrelevance to accept or reject these results or epistemology by judging by counting the numbers of nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers committed to some form of idealism or, more recently, to Kant's particularly negative results in this present phase of the Dialectic. Head-counting never informs as to the truth of a single sentence. Whether any members of the philosophical community yield(ed) to Kant's epistemology on the basis of its expression or have at least been influenced by that expression is no indication as to the truth of that epistemology. To understand Kant's expression of his epistemology as the attempt to persuade adoption of its principles is not to judge it on whether it succeeded in persuading large numbers. Rather we ask if the epistemology gives us reasons or evidence to accept it. We discuss some problems with its main principles in the concluding Chapter.

We may paraphrase (5) to say that for Descartes' philosophy the essence 'triangle' existed as an Eternal Idea. In this proposition for the triangle to have an essence was for it to exist as an essence, hence 'the essential triangle exists' is an analytical proposition for Descartes due to

his discovery of "...all the properties that I [Descartes] clearly and distinctly perceive the object to have..."³⁶ in his mere ability to elicit its idea, its concept.³⁷ On that foundation Descartes gave voice to a similar argument by which the existence of God might be proved³⁸:

(6) "I assuredly find in myself the idea of God--of a supremely perfect being..."

(7) "I clearly and distinctly understand that everlasting existence belongs to [H]is nature..."

Also, Descartes put the following in place to warrant (7):

(8) "...[O]n more careful consideration it becomes obvious that existence can no more be taken away from the divine essence than the magnitude of its three angles together... can be taken away from the essence of a triangle...."

These lead to the conclusion:

(9) "So...I ought to hold the existence of God with at least the same degree of certainty as I have so far held mathematical truths."

Kant's version of this argument, while not precisely the same, is similar³⁹:

(10) "...[T]he concept of the ens realissimum...possesses [by definition] all reality...and we are justified in assuming such a being is possible..."

(11) "...Now...'all reality' includes existence..."

(12) "...[E]xistence is therefore contained in the concept of a thing [ens realissimum] that is possible. If, then, this thing is rejected, the internal possibility of the thing is rejected--which is self-contradictory."

We find in the latter argument an obvious correspondence to the Cartesian argument. Proposition (12) corresponds to (9) taken in conjunction with (8); proposition (11) corresponds to (7); and (10) to (6).

To avoid many mistakes, the clearer procedure is to discuss and evaluate Kant's critique of the Cartesian argument for it is demonstrably that latter argument Kant had in mind for his discussion of the necessity of analytic (identity) propositions which we already examined in this and the previous sections. The correspondence demonstrated immediately above gives further reason to proceed in the manner indicated. Of course Kant was interested in analytic necessity, we reply to Plantinga, since the Cartesian argument he referred to was grounded in analytic necessity. It is merely a faulty view of history which contemns Kant's treatment of the ontological proof on the charge of irrelevance.

Kant wished his reader to examine carefully Descartes' second premiss, (7) above. That premiss has two distinct parts, 'the idea (nature, essence, concept) of God ('all reality')' and 'existence'. The second premiss may be

described as an existential proposition, since one of its elements is 'existence'. Now Kant's question is, Is (7) analytic or synthetic?

*We may attempt to answer this question in at least two ways. One way is to examine the subject of the proposition, to see if it meets the test of analyticity laid down⁴⁰, to see if the subject-concept covertly contains the predicate. But in order to accomplish this examination of the subject-concept we must decide what we mean by it. If on the one hand we mean [by the 'ideal of God' ('all reality')] to denote an actual being, then,

(13) 'the concept (idea of) "God" ("all reality") includes existence (or existence belongs to it)'

is a "miserable tautology"⁴¹. If on the other hand (10) "...we are justified in assuming such a being is possible"⁴², then, by the rule of identity-application established above, if we accept (11) or (7) we must accept that God's existence, or rather the existence of a being denoted by the concept 'God', is a mere possibility. But since we denote by that concept either an actual or a possible being, by the rule of identity God's existence is accorded only the same actuality or possibility as is accorded to his concept, and the proof has

proved nothing since (11) and (7) must be regarded merely as attempts to smuggle existence into the possibility of an Ideal whose existence is unknowable.

Another way to answer the question is to ask about all existential propositions if they should all be classified as analytic or synthetic. To say of such propositions that they are synthetic⁴³ is at the same moment to deny (7), (8), (11), and (13), for each named proposition either asserts an analytic necessity for including existence within a subject-concept, or warrants such an inclusion.

Perhaps we will better understand the arguments of Kant if we ask what he thought the ontological argument in its Cartesian formulation accomplished.. Kant thought that if 'God exists' were included in the concept 'God', then to hold that (9) God's existence is as certain as the proposition (1) 'every triangle has three angles' is to hold nothing important at all, since to posit God's existence as a premiss and to accept that premiss as a premiss in an argument designed to demonstrate itself as a sound conclusion is to do nothing but commit the fallacy of arguing in a circle. As such Kant regarded Descartes' ontological proof as an attempt to extend

empirico-mathematical theory beyond the theoretical use for which it was intended. We could not accept (7) and (11) as truths if at the same time we hold that (6) and (9) are naming a possible Ideal and not an actually knowable Ideal. For Kant there is no contradiction remaining if we deny a thing's existence so long as we deny the defining attributes found within the concept of that thing: just as there is no contradiction if we deny existence to the three angles and the triangle of (1), Kant's counter argument to (8) has it that there is no contradiction if we deny God's existence along with his attributes.

But there are important differences between denying the existence of a geometrical triangle and denying God's existence. Merely because Descartes construed (1) as essentially similar to (7) is no reason that we must do the same. Perhaps the two propositions may be similar in some respects, but they are by no means the same in form. (7) describes only one essence whereas (1) describes many possible instantiations of an essence, or, in Kant's language, idea. Even Kant held that the ideas are different from the Ideal. We should say that it was Anselm who first noticed the

difference between just any sort of concept and the concept 'God'. Obviously there is only one Being than which a greater could not be conceived, and to this concept Kant had no reply since he did not address himself to it. Descartes and Kant, if they were aware of Anselm's position, may both be held responsible for fogging over this important difference between the many concepts and the single, or in Kant's word, actual Ideal, the most real Being, of which there could by definition be only one.

Hence, Anselm's formulation of the Ideal as "that than which a greater cannot be conceived"⁴⁴ is by no means an analytic conception, since, as we mentioned above, only propositions may be analytic. While it is not open to us to debate in the present essay the necessity of Anselm's conception, it is fair at least to notice that a conception is not an analytic or any other proposition, and the possibility that to deny Anselm's conception is, as Anselm asserted, foolishness must rest on other considerations than those Kant adduced against Descartes' declarations.

However Kant related to Anselm, we are now in position for some general observations about existence in Kant's

theoretical philosophy.

Section VI. General observation.

Ewing's brief treatment⁴⁵ of Kant's version of the ontological proof helps us understand an interesting point about modern philosophy:

(14) "God, by definition = the sum of all positive attributes".

(15) "Existence is a positive attribute".

(16) "Therefore, God exists".

Ewing briefly indicated that Kant denied (15) and in so doing laid down a logical principle that is admitted by most modern logicians. The principle of which Ewing wrote is that of existential import of universal propositions, which asserts that by a universal proposition nothing is known about the existence, in that assertion, of any particular named in the subject-class of its first term. We do not know, thus, whether our proposition (1) names any thing that exists, just as the proposition,

(17) every unicorn has one horn,

may be known not to name any particular existing unicorns, though it be true by definition. Once again we must assert that the principle of existential import does not apply to

a concept such as Anselm's, but applies only to propositions such as Descartes' proposition (8). We may go further and assert that Ewing's formulation differs substantially from Descartes' formulation, as may be observed by comparison of the two. As shall be observed immediately below, Kant did certainly not deny that (15) existence is a positive attribute, and so Ewing failed to get at the root of Kant's complaint against (16) God exists.

Section VII. Second General Observation.

Kant wrote that 'being' is not a real predicate in the sense that it adds anything whatsoever to a concept⁴⁶. Thus, proposition (16) only suggests a relation between a concept and a thing corresponding to that concept, and is no predicate, Kant thought⁴⁷. We observed previously that for Kant all existential propositions are synthetic. If no existential proposition adds any thing to the concept, how can existential propositions be synthetic? Kant appears to have used the truth of 'all existential propositions are synthetic' to deny that existence may ever be given to the concept of the subject of an analytical proposition alone, but he affirmed it must be given to both subject and

predicate by the application of the rule of identity, or withheld from both by that same rule. In this way Kant denied, as we said, propositions (7), (8), (11) and (13). The problem is whether or not Kant contradicted himself in holding 'x exists' is both synthetic (adds something new to the concept 'x') and that 'exists' is only a formal predicate which could not add any thing to the concept 'x'.

Schaffer believed⁴⁸ that Kant did contradict himself at this point. The only possibility which may serve Kant would be to suppose that 'x exists' (where 'x' is a noumenon) is somehow outside the analytic/synthetic distinction altogether. We do not mean to deny that there are existential propositions. But we may want to review Kant's argument in Section V, above, as a form of destructive dilemma. If (11) or (7) is analytical, it must be rejected since, by the application of the rule of identity it would constitute an attempt to smuggle 'existence' into the subject-concept of (10). If (11) or (7) were synthetic or somehow construed as synthetic, then (8), (9) and (12) must be rejected since the conclusions they draw are only acceptable if (11) or (7) is an analytic proposition. Now no reasonable persons will

allow the smuggling of existence into the concept of mere possibility, and no reasonable persons will accept (8), (9) and (12) when (7) or (11) is taken to be synthetic. Hence, (11) or (7) is acceptable neither as synthetic or analytic, and existential propositions with noumenal subjects are never acceptable since they are nothing but logical (formal) predications and cannot determine any thing in any way whatsoever. The analytic/synthetic distinction applied only to "...all judgments in which the relation of a subject to a predicate is thought"⁴⁹. But if such a relation cannot be known, the distinction may not be applicable under this condition. If in some case existence may not be knowable as a predicate, then no such relation is known to exist.

But that attempt to save Kant's views on existence is limited in scope to the problem of possible noumenal existence, and is further limited to apply to Descartes' view that God's necessary existence is construed as analytic necessity. It is clear, however, from the following remarks that we must in the context of Kant's epistemology seek a reconciliation between the proposition that 'all existential propositions are synthetic' and the proposition that "'being"

is not a real predicate' before they will properly cohere. For if each is a general statement applicable to all predications, there is a genuine contradiction between them. Hence, we shall hold that the former applies only to propositions whose subjects are phenomenal and objective appearances, in Kant's terminology, and that we must abandon the general proposition that "'being" is not a real predicate' for the much more limited proposition that "'being" cannot be a real (i.e. knowable) predicate for noumenal concepts'. This demand of ours is not made in a vacuum, but in an interpretation of Kant's general epistemology and its limitation of the Categories to phenomena as a larger context and in the text of Kant's section as an immediate guide. For together these contextual sources demand that the reader not generalize these two apparently opposing principles beyond the systematic use Kant made of them, at least not in an essay devoted directly to an interpretation of that use.

Kant clearly believed that Existence is a category. In the Table of Categories it is a Modality. In Kantian language Schaffer's problem reduces to a contradiction between the doctrine that Existence (Dasein) may serve as a

transcendental determining predicate in the a priori knowledge of phenomenal things (i.e. appearances) and the general doctrine that being (Sein) is not a real predicate at all. Only the former doctrine is generally coherent with Kant's Analytic, and not the latter. We must, however, follow and appeal to Kant's actual language in our exposition.

The precise doctrine, and not the general one, that "'being" is not a real predicate' has been limited by Kant to the condition that we are thinking of existence through the pure category alone⁵⁰. For if we "...were dealing with an object of the senses, we could not confound the existence of the thing with the mere concept of it...."⁵¹ since in that case its existence is thought of as part of experience or, rather, our knowledge of experience. It is only in dealing with objects of pure thought that we have no way of knowing their existence⁵². The problem with the Cartesian argument lies much deeper than in a denial of the analytic necessity of (7). Rather the problem with the argument is the illusion caused by the confusion of improperly applying a Category of knowledge to what is mere logical possibility⁵³; and under

Kant's limitation of knowledge we are not permitted to know that (16) is true or that it is false. To adopt the afore-said limitation on the doctrine that "'being" is not a real predicate' does force us to abandon Kant's second example of that doctrine, the hundred possible dollars⁵⁴, since the concept of the hundred dollars is not a noumenal concept. But it is possible to tell that the entire discussion from the second paragraph of p. B626 to the end of Kant's Section is feasible only under the limitative assumption we have observed in relation to Kant's doctrine, since it is much easier to remove a single example than to toss out of Kant's philosophy the important doctrine that Existence is a category for contingent propositions and judgments. In this case we might revise Kant's example as though it were prefaced with the condition, "If we were talking about a phenomenal concept, such as a merchant and his cash accounts, it would only be acceptable for his books to show a hundred real dollars as added to those accounts, and not a hundred possible dollars....But 'God' is a noumenal concept..." But this plausible paraphrase is only another way of asking the reader that time-honored question if he would not rather have a real apple than a

possible one. The reader may in any case judge for himself the intuitive plausibility of Kant's proposition that, as we read it, 'all contingent existential propositions are synthetic'.

On our interpretation the specific illusion Kant saw involved the ontological argument in the misapplication of the category Existence to noumenal knowledge of the Ideal, and in this way its discovery reflected Kant's general purposes in the Dialectic. The reason Kant gave that he could not put an end to Descartes' ontological argument directly⁵⁵ was that its actual error was to go outside the analytic/synthetic distinction altogether by exceeding the Kantian limitation on sense-knowledge as the destructive dilemma (above) indicated it must. This conclusion invokes the general noumenalist technique evolved above in its application to attempted knowledge of an object reified in a pure Category, in this case Existence. If so, our interpretation of Kant's Section [4] is unified in principle with our interpretation of Kant's Dialectic: both interpretations seize on the noumenalist principle as the main Motive of Kant's negativity towards traditional metaphysical dogma. Section 4 is, thus,

a concrete example of Kant's limitative principle. Kant's conclusion is that (7) as well as (16) is impossible to know; we cannot know that the Ideal contains existence in its concept because the Ideal is a mere consistent possibility. So for a human knower to know that (7) is analytically necessary is to go beyond what any human may know and to comprehend the analytical necessity of the divine Ideal. But the Cartesian argument loses all force if (7) is synthetic. Hence, under Kant's paradigm for knowledge, (7) must be abandoned.

Both Ewing and Schaffer pin their interpretations on Kant's general doctrine that "'being" is not a real predicate'. While Ewing is correct⁵⁶ that Kant denied (15), Kant must have done so in the limited manner we suggested. For unless we interpret Kant as limiting synthetic existential propositions to phenomenal contingencies and as limiting "'being" is not a real predicate' to noumenal existence, a clear contradiction arises, as we said, in his philosophy; and in that respect we are in agreement with Schaffer. If the latter is a general truth, then Existence may not be employed as a synthetic a priori category. If the former were a general

truth, then Existence might be able to overstep its bounds and be noumenally knowable. As regards Schaffer's actual conclusion that Kant did contradict himself, his whole argument founders on his admitted failure to consider Kant's attack as an attack on the premisses of some version of the ontological proof. Schaffer's argument⁵⁷ missed the context of Kant's rejection of (15) and in this way found in Kant a much too obvious self-contradiction.

It may be objected that the interpretation put forward here is too readily persuaded by Kant's qualifications which limit his doctrine about 'being' being a real predicate. It is true, after all, that as it stands in Kant's text by itself, that doctrine is a general and not a particular or less general proposition. But we cannot ask Kant for our sakes as his readers to avoid every perplexity. A reader must demand for his understanding the context of so difficult a proposition as that under consideration, and must not be misled by his own purposes, as Schaffer was by his, to find single passages which, when torn from their contexts, yield apparent contradictions⁵⁸. As Kant himself said, a philosophical treatise cannot be armed at all points.

If our interpretation is correct then to reject the Cartesian ontological argument on Kantian grounds is mainly dependent on an acceptance of Kant's epistemology and its derivative principles. The phenomenal/noumenal distinction, the limitation Kant placed on Category application, the view that 'God' connotes a supersensible possibility, are all presuppositions of Kant's attack on the Cartesian ontological argument.

Before leaving the ontological argument we place one further limitation on Kant's discussion in light of the foregoing. For all those presuppositions all that we may gain is the destruction of a single version of that argument. Kant did not deny that a necessarily existent ens realissimum could be thought to exist; he only denied that under his presuppositions such a being could be known in the sense of the justification acceptable to Kant for any propositions in the field of sensibility⁵⁹. Such a Being is not impossible, hence it is possible. This point is not in least mitigated by the virtual disappearance of any sort of idealism from recent philosophy; since there are few if any philosophers who accept Kant's version of the idealist paradigm, the

entire question of the ontological argument must be taken up again (in some other essay than this), in order to consider Anselm's formulation, it would seem, and not be rejected wholesale on the ground that Kant refuted it.

In any case we must not extend the limits of our exposition to discuss the problem, in general, of What Existence Is. While Moore, Bennett, Heidegger, et al have all tried at this problem, the humble deference of Lewis Carroll seems rather more appropriate:

...[T]he difficulties of the "Five Liars" Problem... are "trifles, light as air" compared with the bewildering question "What is a Thing?"⁶⁰

Kant's twin doctrines about existence may most correctly be interpreted as an attempt to establish a general truth about the logic of existential propositions, as we have shown. But each doctrine must have been proposed as a limited one. For we must not accept that for Kant 'being' is generally not a real predicate lest we destroy that most basic principle of his philosophy, that percepts without synthetic concepts are blind. For Kant, Existence is also a pure concept and a constitutive category. Yet Kant sought in his Chapter to prohibit its theoretical extension to the noumenal.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Quotations referred to from this and others of Kant's works are paginated from the editions of Kant's opera published by the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: 1902 -) and the abbreviations for each work found in the Bibliography below. Hereafter the translator will be named along with the standard abbreviation of the particular volume's title only in the first mention of a particular work. Full documentation of the translator's publication is also included in that first mention. Italization for emphasis and punctuation will be mentioned only if they differ from that of the first-mentioned translator. With reference to the following, A precedes first edition and B precedes second edition pagination as is standard in scholarly references to that work. Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft (KrV), trans. by Norman Kemp Smith as Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), A567=B596.
2. KrV, A589=B617.
3. Alvin Plantinga, God and Other Minds (Ithaca: Cornell University Pr., 1967), Chapter 2, "The Ontological Argument (1)". Hereafter: Plantinga, God.
4. KrV, B630. In fairness to Plantinga, he construed Kant's effort as an attempt to "...find a general refutation that applies to every version of the argument...." [God, op. cit., p. 27]. But a reductio ad absurdum is distant from the discovery of God's existence within an analysis of His nature. Both Plantinga's arrangement and discussion place Kant in opposition to Anselm's version; perhaps that is why Plantinga's version of Anselm does not logically correspond to his interpretation of Kant. Since Kant may not have had acquaintance with Anselm's version it does not in any case seem fair to compare the two. Cf., infra., n. 34.

5. J. Bennett, Kant's Dialectic (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), p. 229
6. A. C. Ewing, A Short Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1938), p. 241. Hereafter: Ewing, Commentary. As Ewing outlines the argument it is far closer to Descartes' formulation than to Anselm's.
7. Norman Kemp Smith, A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (New York: Humanities Press, 1950), pp. 525, 529.
8. Ding, Dasein, Existenz are all translated "existence" in the section, with Dasein occurring with the greater frequency. For example, all three occur on B625 as "existence" in Smith's translation.
9. KrV, B146-48.
10. B146.
11. B147-48.
12. B148.
13. B620. Kant's explicit rejection of the correspondence theory of truth (B83: "the agreement of knowledge with its object") is relevant here. [In fact the whole debate about Kant's theory of truth between Brentano and Windleband is irrelevant, since for Kant's epistemology truth is category- or concept-dependent as it must be for any idealism].
14. B620.
15. B604-5 and B616.
16. B605.
17. B616.
18. B359-61. Bennett, op. cit., p. 258, pointed out that the attempt to found the architectonic on the forms of

inferential reasoning, "...is a clumsy attempt to rationalize a set of problems which reflect not the structure of reason but the preoccupations of German academic philosophers at the time Kant was writing. Where the theory has an effect, it is by tempting Kant into a brutal and insensitive forcing of his material into unnatural shapes and never by genuinely illuminating it."

19. KrV, B355.

20. B10.

21. B621.

22. B621-22.

23. B622.

24. Bertrand Russell, Problems of Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 72.

25. Kant's words: "...die Macht der Illusion [der logische Notwendigkeit]" (the power of [logical necessity's] illusion) are even stronger. B622.

26. B622-23. Kant assumption of the identity of divine predicates in their Notion (i.e. the Notion being the Ideal of Pure Reason) finds its origin in Kant's rationalist predecessors, and is the very foundation of the Cartesian argument, that existence is a predicate already in the divine Notion.

27. B623.

28. For example, J. S. Mill, Theism (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., Library of Liberal Arts, 1957), pp. 77-78; and P. Bertocci, Religion as Creative Insecurity (New York: Association Press, 1958), p. 110. Of course, the exact nature of analytic propositions is a much debated issue in its own right for recent philosophy. Our attitude is distinctly not in agreement with the notion that 'God' is a title the meaning of which is a matter of analytic convention; rather God's attributes are distinct and a matter for nonanalytic human knowledge to meditate over. Cf. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, I, I, V, 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1973), p. 371: "To say... that the divine attributes differ only in name, or in our conceptions, or in their effects, is to destroy all true knowledge of God."

29. B623. Next quotation is ibid.
30. B625.
31. B626. 32. Ibid. 33. B631.
34. Plantinga, God, op. cit., p. 31. J. C. C. Smart, in his lecture "The Existence of God" [Flew and MacIntyre, eds., New Essays in Philosophical Theology (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), 33], wrote: "As remarked earlier [the Ontological Argument] was originally put forward by Anselm, though I am sorry to say that to read Descartes you would never suspect that fact!".
35. E. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, trans. and eds., Descartes: Philosophical Writings (London: Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1969), Meditation V, p. 102. Hereafter: Descartes, Writings.
36. Ibid., 103.
37. This clearly reflects Kant's criterion for analyticity.
38. Descartes, Writings, op. cit., 103.
39. KrV, B624. 40. B10. 41. B625.
42. B624. 43. B626.
44. Cahn, ed., Classics of Western Philosophy (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1977), Anselm, Proslogion, Chap. IV, 267.
45. Ewing, Commentary, op. cit., 241.
46. KrV, B626. 47. B627.
48. Jerome Schaffer, "Existence, Predication and the Ontological Argument", reprinted in T. Penelhum and J. J. MacIntosh, eds., The First Critique (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., Inc., 1969), p. 125, from Mind (1962), pp. 307-25.
49. B10.

50. B629. 51. B628. 52. B629.
53. B626. 54. B627. 55. B626.
56. Ewing, Commentary, op. cit., 267.
57. Schaffer, op. cit., p. 124, admitted that he is uninterested in the controversies surrounding the acceptability of the ontological argument's premisses.
58. KrV, Bxliv.
59. B629.
60. W. W. Bartley, III, ed., Lewis Carroll's Symbolic Logic (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1977), pp. 55-56.

CHAPTER TWO

So long as reason, in its concepts, has in view simply the totality of conditions in the sensible world, and is considering what satisfaction in this regard it can obtain for them, our ideas are at once transcendental and cosmological. Immediately, however, the unconditioned...is posited in that which lies entirely outside the sensible world, and therefore outside all possible experience, the ideas become transcendent....detach[ing] themselves completely from experience, and mak[ing] for themselves objects for which experience supplies no material, and whose objective reality is not based on completion of the empirical series...Such transcendent ideas have a purely intelligible object; and this object may indeed be admitted as a transcendental object only if we likewise admit that...we have no knowledge in regard to it...

--Immanuel Kant

Section I. The Unconditioned.

That Kant was possessed of a special care to discern the truth about the so-called Cosmological argument is clear not only from the aforementioned hints as to its peculiar cogency¹ should circumstances dictate a need to decide,

but is also evident from Kant's oft-repeated concern for a systematic and absolute unity in the universe. Kant's latter concern becomes a deceptive Ideal, an Unconditioned which alone halts the infinite regress of the series of causal conditions, "...when we proceed to trace these conditions to their grounds...."²

Without approaching yet the more difficult issues raised by any consideration of the cosmological argument, we take a preliminary look at Kant's view of its main inference. The conditioned deceives us, Kant thought, in having us seek out in its contingency for the absolutely or unconditionally necessary in the sphere of pure reason³. From the outset the reader may anticipate that Kant's general approach to such a deception will be to attribute its extraordinary use of the concept Causality to the illegitimacy of the search for the Unconditioned in the Categories of Pure theoretical Reason. For the present case, the deceptive Categories are, then, Causality and, by extension, Necessity.

To infer from the conditioned what is described as the Unconditioned is a natural as well as an illegitimate

inference, Kant indicated. Seeking unity is an important element in Natural science. However, to discuss the difference between the unity sought by the sciences and the unity sought by the cosmological argument is beyond our scope at the present. In Kant's language the former is a legitimate part of the scientific enterprise, but the latter is a deceptive illusion. Let us examine why.

Just as the ontological argument Kant considered is of Cartesian origin, the cosmological argument he studied is Leibnizian. Leibniz' name is mentioned by Kant in connection with it⁴, and Kant's informal discussion of the tenets of the cosmological arguer in Section 3 (sixth para.⁵) bear a close correspondence with Leibniz' version in his Monadology, paragraphs numbered 36 through 39⁶.

Section II. Leibniz on Contingency.

Aside from the main issue Kant raised against the argument, that it ascribes causality to an Unconditioned outside the series of causes and is therefore unknown as a (supreme) condition, Kant raised two other objections to the argument, objections not so clearly dependent on Kant's epistemological

views. Since these may be of wider interest to nonKantian readers, we devote space to them here. And, as they bear on epistemological issues important in their own right, these problems bear, as we shall see, on Kant's epistemology. One problem shall take us into the deep and sometimes darkened waters of contingency, and is the problem, Is there genuine contingency for the cosmological arguer? A second problem is suggested by Kant's approach, namely whether or not the Unconditioned is to be further identified than merely as the Unconditioned. It is better, since the second problem introduces some informal considerations, first to consider Kant's problem with the formal argument in its Leibnizian cloth.

Kant's formal approach to the cosmological argument goes like this:

*(18) If anything exists, an absolutely necessary being must also exist.

(19) Now I, at least, exist.

Therefore,

(20) An absolutely necessary being exists.^{7*}

Premiss (19) is a debatable point, --for skeptics, and Mahayanas it is debatable, at least if the ego is

metaphysical and concrete unity, --but at present we shall assume that (19) is not at issue. It is, therefore, (18) which is at issue, since the argument itself is structurally valid. It is the proponents of the cosmological argument who need to provide an account of the sufficiency of the Unconditioned, as Bennett noted⁸.

Leibniz' defense of (18) is at once simple and problematic. The Monadology employed the language not of causality, but of conditionality, contingency, and necessity. The Metaphysics of monads held that monads are interiorly determined. To touch on a point important to Leibniz, the nature of each monad, if not its existence, is determined by the principle of sufficient reason to be what it is and not otherwise⁹ in the following way. While the opposite of a contingent truth about a monad is logically possible, each such truth is in principle discoverable in the notion of the monad's nature itself. That is, such a truth is analytic in Kant's sense, because it is covertly contained in the subject of its proposition. If men, with finite minds, cannot discover the truth in the notion of a particular monad, God can discover that truth by virtue of

His capability of infinite analysis. Furthermore, the reader of the Monadology finds a clue there of great consequence for the inference by the cosmological arguer to absolute necessity. Among the various logically possible choices (i.e. contingencies) that He may attribute to each monad, God in His creative essence always chooses the best contingency for that monad and for the entire system of monads. The possibles that are best demand existence¹⁰ by their fitness to exist together with the web of antecedent and determining sufficient reasons¹¹ to allow the well-known best of all possible worlds to achieve actuality.

If the reader will persist, it is a short step from the principles of sufficient reason and of the best to serious problems with the inference to absolute necessity. The demand of the best possibles to actuality among all possibles, along with the web of determining reasons "...determine [God] to select one [among an infinity of possible universes] rather than another."¹² Such a position poses two problems. God seems to have no choice but to obey the principle of the best. Thus, God may be something less than omnipotent for a system which shuts off all other

possibilities than the best, and a traditional attribute of God may be missing. Of greater relevance to the problem of contingency is the following.

If even God is not able to alter the determination of the world by the demand of the best for existence, can what was formerly supposed to be contingent be other than metaphysically necessary? For Leibniz, it appears as if the answer to this question is No, and thus there is no contingency in the system of monads. The problem may be stated as more directly relevant to the cosmological argument: each contingent truth is able to be analyzed by the divine Mind such that its necessity is evident to that Mind. The divine Mind is omniscient. Thus, each (apparently) contingent truth is, in actuality, analytically true, and therefore necessary in an absolute sense, ab aliter. Hence, even if we suppose that it is legitimate to attempt the identification of the "absolutely necessary being" (of proposition (20) of the present work), it should be evident that our only recourse in a system of absolutely necessary sufficient reasons is to come to understand that since no predicate can exist without its being necessarily derivable from

(for Leibniz) the Notion of its subject or (more generally) from the system of antecedent determinations, it is inevitable that we should equate the absolutely necessary Being with each determining sufficient reason, and the reference of (20) is to each existent as it fulfills its role in the determination of each other existent. In that way, (20) would not refer to God, but its validity as a mediate inference could be made acceptable.

But, some problems with this approach to the problem of contingency present themselves. To take them in order of importance--. Each sufficient determining reason is of an order or series. We may not, even in the Leibnizian system, remove one of these conditions and name it first or the Unconditioned, that is, we may not of any particular say that it is first in the series, or what the cosmological arguer is aiming at. However it is in this sense alone that the cosmological argument seeks to find its inference to the absolutely necessary; if the latter is to be equated with the Unconditioned, it will not do to identify just any one among the series--we must grasp at the first.

A contemporary cosmological arguer, Richard Taylor,

put forth the following argument from contingency, an argument which seems to allow for a genuine contingency and an uncaused Prime Mover. The sole way, that argument goes, to avoid an infinite regress of contingents is to discover the sufficient reason for the world as a whole in a Creator not subject to perishing or coming into being¹³. There is no difference in seeking a sufficient reason for a grain of sand or the whole universe, which may be thought of as dependent, logically speaking, on a Creator, as a certain light is dependent on a particular flame.

Taylor's argument may be compared or contrasted with Kant's in the following way. If we were to seek the sufficient reason of the universe, we would, according to Kant, but be able to find whatever point in the series of sufficient reasons represents the state "before the universe". We are simply not entitled to seek something outside of (i.e. transcendent of) the system to explain the causes and effects of the system, since it is only through the system that we are entitled to say we can become acquainted with the concept of sufficient reason in the first place. We have no basis for an inference outside the system of appearances;

the concept of causality is an unknown outside that by which we become acquainted with it. Leibniz' doctrines are an example of the strange and illusory beliefs fostered by the illegitimate inference to an Unconditioned cause--the Unconditioned, it turns out, is itself (somewhat inappropriately, we judge) determined or conditioned by the principle of the best. Returning to Taylor's argument, it furthermore becomes apparent that even if we were to suppose an unalterable Prime Mover as the First of a series of sufficient reasons for, say, the universe at 12:01 A.M. on a particular night, such a Prime Mover could not more be omnipotent (or at least known to be omnipotent) than was Leibniz' God, for the Mover would be determined by the unalterable truth that for any predicate P of that world W at that time T, P could not be shared by that world W with its opposite nonP. Either P, that is, or nonP would have been true of world W at time T. Such timeless truths as are produced by applications of the law of excluded middle are admitted by Taylor, but he did not seem to comprehend their significance for his argument. Their existence must, it would seem, forever determine the product of the sufficiency of the Prime Mover. These timeless

truths would seem to attain to a status of co-eternality with the Prime Mover. What would be logically prior to both would then be, not the truths themselves, but the principle of sufficient reason. Taylor himself writes of the theory he has devised that it represents an invincible fate; if the fate cannot be moved, then it cannot be moved by a Prime Mover--either the fate itself or its principle becomes the primary cause (similar to Leibnizian final causality, the principle of the best is a teleological principle), and the so-called Prime Mover a merely secondary cause or a primary cause obedient to some other, prior principle. Even the possibility that given there is the Prime Mover, cannot say ought of the character of that Prime Mover outside the system of metaphysically necessary sufficient reasons. Such a given merely presupposes some sort of Unconditioned and does nothing to enlighten us as to its (or his) Nature.

Furthermore, in such a situation as implied in Taylor's Metaphysics, if the principle of sufficiency or of excluded middle were the Unconditioned, and the Prime Mover in obedience to that principle, we may want to know who or what would be the upholder of that principle itself. This

problem gives rise to the classical objection, in that we would then embark on an unending search among an infinite regress of Upholders and principles, each speculatively and futilely seeking recognition as the true Unconditioned.

[One could further speculate as to the genuine character (whether merciful and just and personal, or impersonal or misanthropic and just, or whatever) of the Prime Mover which, with apparent design and at least indirect causal responsibility, allows for whatever end the horrible miseries visited upon so many. Such a speculative argument, in whatever direction advanced, simply exacerbates the mysterious or unknowable Nature of that Prime Mover, and in any case is more apropos to the physico-theological argument].

Thus, both Leibniz' and Taylor's arguments seem inextricably bound to the conclusion that they fail to produce a suitably Unconditioned creator. The illusion of knowledge yields in those arguments a view of a world of impassible or predetermined truths about that world's constituents by which that Prime Mover, supposed to be the Unconditioned, operates. While it may be that other arguments produce a suitably unchanging Unconditioned responsible to

no other principle than its own, and that these arguments also produce a genuine contingency without that genuine possibility of being otherwise in any way limiting the determining omnipotence of such an Unconditioned, it is clear that the sort of argument with which Kant was familiar was unsuccessful in its attempt to produce a suitable candidate for nomination.

Earlier we restricted our discussion of contingency viz. the determinations of sufficient reason and Leibniz' predicate-in-Notion principle to possible predicates. One way to attempt the saving of Leibniz' hypothesis is to suggest (as some interpreters have it) that contingency might be based on the varying factual or material possibility for the instantiation of a particular existent, as suggested by E. M. Curley¹⁴. Contingency would thus be rooted in God's choices between possible existents, and the infinite analyzability of monadic essences is not enough to justify their contingency (such a conclusion militates against the conclusion of Broad on the same subject). Such a position may have the merit of better distinguishing between the sort of natural necessity appropriate to the conditioned and the

superior status of the Unconditioned; it does not, regrettably, solve the problem of Contingency. For, taking into account the variation among possible individual existences, Leibniz still is committed by the well-known principle of the pre-established Harmony among existences to have God choose some individuals over others so that Harmony shall be preserved. Taylor's system is self-admittedly determined by the Fate of timeless truths, and in that way is still closed. Thus, it appears as if the so-called Unconditioned creator or god of the cosmological arguer cannot have its (his) own way in those matters and is, therefore, conditioned in a way inappropriate to the Omnipotent creator of all.

Section III. Identification as an objection.

What is more, to return to the exposition of Kant, the absolutely necessary being could never be identified as the God presumably desired by the cosmological arguer. Such a God, goes Kant's objection, should at a minimum (although this essence could hardly be a minimal essence) be proved to be the ens realissimum. But, if the ontological argument be rejected, Kant objected that no such identification could ever hope to be known by natural theology. In such a

case, if we cannot call the absolutely necessary being ens
realissimum, then the cosmological arguer's conclusion is
worthless because it is irrelevant. Kant's objection here
is even more general than his objection to the sort of
doctrine proposed by Leibniz and Taylor. In fact, it might
be insisted that it is just their problem that they are not
able to examine the nature of the Unconditioned, and so are
misled by their respective systems into thinking that the
Unconditioned is, likewise to other objects of those systems,
determined by the main principles of such systems when in
truth it is inappropriate to attempt to go further than the
modesty of Hume¹⁵--, i.e. the nature of the Unconditioned is
so mysterious as to be unfathomable by natural theology.
Such an objection as Kant's problem of identification, then,
goes to the heart of an exposition of Kant's division between
the appearances which we may know (along with their concepts
in connection with the concepts' function in such knowledge)
and the noumena behind the appearances, the existences of
which we may merely think without contradiction (about which
the truth, though it may appear ever so certain, must always
from the theoretical standpoint remain objectively unknown,

or unfounded speculation). On this point we should carefully distinguish between Hume's view and Kant's, the difference being that for Kant it is possible from a moral standpoint to think about and speak meaningfully of those noumenal entities which must always as regards their existence remain unknown from the theoretical standpoint, whereas for Hume that which is nonexperiential must remain a complete mystery for natural theology outside the possibility of divine revelation. Of the deeper epistemological differences between Hume and Kant it does not fall within our scope to discuss.

Aside from the general objection to Kant's limitation of knowledge set out in our concluding Chapter, we may urge against Kant's general problem of identification on the following grounds. The cogency which, as we have said, Kant attributed to the cosmological argument as a natural means of persuasion weighs heavily against any possible mistake about the Being of (20). The argument cannot both be cogent and, by the same token, exceptionable. May there exist genuine doubt about the identity of the Unconditioned? --even Hume's Philo had no problem accepting that there is a God¹⁶.

Hume's problem is simply that, without revelation, His nature is mysterious¹⁷. Such a problem does not preclude some understanding of the existence of an Unconditioned creator. It may seem therefore on first examination that Kant's problem of identification merely repeats his general criticism as to the theoretical unknowability of an existence corresponding to reified concepts.

Furthermore, the classical purveyors of the cosmological argument in various forms, as well as other theistic arguers, frequently argue in a context, such as theology, or a tone, such as prayer, in which the argument's purpose [and thus the identity of (20)] is unquestioned. Those contexts and tones suggest some other purposes and meanings, so our objector may continue, such as, for example, strengthening the beliefs of those who already are devotees of a particular belief system. From the view of our objector, it is only modern philosophy that treats theological proof as it does geometrical proof. Thus, it was only Kant and his predecessors who chose to present the argument stripped of such a context as may be appropriate and to examine the argument, as Kant did, independently of any religious

authority beyond the human intellect¹⁸. We may not demand of such an argument as a theistic one anything more than its original context warranted; learning from such an argument may not demand that we be able to develop the meaning appropriate to its terms ex nihilo, i.e. outside of any context. Kant's general approach is therefore limited by the appropriateness of formal examination of what way be less than an independently verifiable argument.

It is only under the formal conditions proposed that (20) needs identification at all. But, as Kant did not argue in a vacuum, he can hardly be faulted for replying to the argument as he found it. Under those conditions, then, the problem of identification may be somewhat justified, that is, as Kant shared the presuppositions of the Enlightenment in this respect.

It may be helpful at this point to examine the view of Bennett, since his view most closely resembles Kant's own on the objection that the cosmological arguer needs the a priori argument to establish the identity of the being described in (20). According to Bennett, Kant's position is more extreme than Bennett's own. Kant's position implied,

again according to Bennett's account, "...that the cosmological arguer gets from 'necessary being' to 'ens realissimum' by means of the ontological argument...."¹⁹ Bennett's more moderate position commits the cosmological arguer only to admitting the ontological argument's validity: if the latter is invalid, so is the cosmological proof²⁰.

Bennett believed that the moderate position has as a strength that it makes the existence of the ens realissimum a hypothetical possibility. Now, Bennett proposed, Kant's attack on the cosmological argument fails to deny that possibility; and this Kant is willing to allow.

But, Bennett himself comes to conceive for the latter argument what he thinks to be a more radical difficulty, that Leibniz' conclusion is "logically cankered" when it is made out that the Being named in (20) is one to whose essence belonged existence²¹. Of course, Bennett claims, this is the criticism for which Kant has been poised throughout the Chapter. But if it is the case that Bennett's criticism of Leibniz is in specific the same as Kant's, Bennett's witting empathy with Kant is less than helpful in examining how the cosmological argument depends on the ontological. Once again,

one may observe, problems in relation to the identification of the Being of (20) are serious if the argument is considered by itself; the ontological argument is not necessarily connected to the cosmological argument. If the cosmological argument is to be considered as a formal proof, then whatever problems it has may be shown on an internal basis for the examination of its premisses. It could hardly be established that the cosmological argument historically depends on the ontological-- although it should be admitted forthright that that argument is not adequate if it be considered without a context. Since Kant did not establish what is necessary to prove the connection (except as he found it in his predecessors), and since he chose not to establish a context for the argument, the more general lack of identification is a more appropriate criticism, given Kant's epistemological views.

Section IV. Kant's Dialectical Nest.

Nearly to conclude Kant's Section, one observes that Kant's general principle discovers a nest of dialectical assumptions behind the cosmological argument, the first in the nest being simply human inadequacy to identify the Unconditioned as a cause in the sense in which we ordinarily

use the word 'cause'. Since this assumption follows directly from Kant's limitation on knowledge, we press on to the second assumption in Kant's nest, although we pause to note that in this respect Kant's sentiments are frequently echoed by the empiricism of some of Kant's more recent epigoni.

Kant's discovery of a second dialectical assumption presupposes that version of the cosmological argument which argues for a first Cause, in opposition to an infinite regress of causes. The First Cause argument, it might be objected, proposes a primary Cause rather than a secondary cause of the world. However, at least one can see that the argument, formally examined, proposes that (20) must in seeking the Unconditioned entail the rejection of the principle that secondary causes are entirely responsible for the existence, not to mention the present character of the world. Such a rejection also seems to require of the cosmological arguer, as mentioned above, some account of the function of the Unconditioned with respect to the world--through final causality, or whatever. By Kant's limitation it would be impossible to furnish knowledge of any such function.

Yet a third dialectical assumption is to be found in

Kant's metaphorical nest. Any version of the cosmological argument which attempts to complete the concept of a series of contingencies, including the two versions in this Chapter, in nonnatural necessity must, on Kant's system of categories, give reason an "unjustified self-satisfaction".²² Such an attempt once again violates the limitation of knowledge categories, here Necessity, by a use strictly forbidden outside phenomena.

Kant's fourth dialectical assumption follows in line as an attempt by the cosmological arguer transcendently to assume he may know what is only a logically possible transcendental Ideal. It is quite clear that that assumption of the argument is only a dialectical and thus illegitimate assumption given Kant's limitation--and to get at the heart of the matter we must and shall discuss that limitation.

At this point in the discussion what is clear concerning Kant's position on the cosmological argument is that the objection most general is the most pertinent to the cosmological argument as a formal proof: the being described by (20) is unidentified without external help. However, that this general objection depends on Kant's

epistemology--in that it is Kant's limitation which questions the meaning of 'absolutely necessary being'--or on the presuppositions of Kant's predecessors--such as Leibniz--is also distinct from the considerations adduced in this Chapter. Kant has here grappled, if not always successfully, with some of the most difficult problems of Western philosophy, namely contingency, possibility, and necessity. He is not in any case to be blamed for any imposition on the reader of ambiguity or unclarity, which is more than may be said for many writers on these most difficult problems.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. KrV, A587=B615.
2. B612. Also refer to B637 and Bennett, Kant's Dialectic, op. cit., 246.
3. B613 and B614.
4. A604=B632.
5. A586=B614, end.
6. References to the Monadology are to the translation of that work by Philip P. Weiner in Walter Kaufmann, ed., Philosophic Classics, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1961). These para. are on p. 208. Hereafter: Leibniz, Monadology.
7. A604=B632.
8. Bennett, Kant's Dialectic, op. cit., p. 246.
9. Leibniz, Monadology, op. cit., para. 32, p. 208.
10. Ibid., para. 54-55, p. 210.
11. Ibid., para. 22, 206.
12. Ibid., 53, 210.
13. Taylor, Metaphysics (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1974, second ed.), pp. 110-12.
14. "The Root of Contingency" in Harry G. Frankfort, ed.,

Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., Anchor Book, 1972), pp. 69-97. First published in Theoria, vol. XV (1949). For Broad's position cf. in the same collection, "Leibniz's Predicate-in-Notion Principle", p. 18.

15. Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, rf. Philo's long speech near the end of Part II. Reprinted in Cahn, ed., Classics of Western Philosophy, op. cit., pp. 710-14.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid. Refer to the end of Hume's Enquiry: "...the best and most solid foundation [of Divinity or theology] is faith and divine revelation." Cahn, ed., p. 699.

18. In William Young's phrase, from Hegel's Dialectical Method (Nutley, N.J.: The Craig Press, 1972), p. 64.

19. J. Bennett, Kant's Dialectic, op. cit., 251, bases his interpretation on B635.

20. Ibid., 251-52.

21. Bennett quoted Leibniz on that point, ibid., 253.

22. B638.

CHAPTER THREE

In view of what has already been said, it is evident that we can count upon a quite easy and conclusive answer to this enquiry. For how can any experience ever be adequate to an idea? The peculiar nature of the latter consists just in the fact that no experience can ever be equal to it. The transcendental idea of a necessary and all-sufficient original being is so overwhelmingly great, so high above everything empirical, the latter being always conditioned, that it leaves us at a loss, partly because we can never find in experience material sufficient to satisfy such a concept, and partly because it is always in the sphere of the conditioned that we carry out our search, seeking there ever vainly for the unconditioned...

--Immanuel Kant

Section I. Physico-theological proof.

We treat in the present Chapter of a possible sufficient Cause of the world's peculiar character. It should be obvious, after considerations advanced above as to the effect of Kant's limitation on the use of epistemological Categories, that Kant's limitation was applied by him to the so-called argument

from design. Thus, Kant's limitation apparently includes the three traditional arguments for the existence of an Object corresponding to the Ideal of Pure Reason. And, just as in the previous cases of the cosmological (contingency) and ontological (existence) arguments, it may be that there are important problems raised by the physico-theological argument as well--problems deserving of consideration in their own right. However, as indicated above, it is not always possible to persevere in the tracking down of such problems in the context of a relatively short work such as the present. Hence, although it may be desirable to come to some understanding of the meaning of, say, contingency, we may have to content ourselves at present with the analysis of some historical examples of, say, the inference from the contingent to the Unconditioned.

One important problem raised throughout Kant's Chapter is his argument about other possible arguments for the existence of God. Kant's point is that, should the three traditional arguments fail, no other proof is a viable candidate to show the existence of a divine Object¹. It is possible that Kant meant that, given his limitation on the

proper use of the Categories, no proof could pass the test of a sound demonstration of knowledge of divine existence. Or, it may simply be meant that all proofs available to Kant's inspection are subject to his limitation. We may want to know if Kant thought that all proofs of natural theology resolved into the three he examined--one might be able to offer strong arguments in defense of such a belief. Whatever one might want to do, it is the case that in an exposition of Kant we may consider as a legitimate part of the discussion those arguments Kant considered. To do otherwise is to take the unwarranted risk of anachronism. Kant, for example, seems not to have considered the reductio argument of Anselm, as noted above. But, if all theistic arguments reduce to a consideration of those Kant considered, then it would be possible that Kant's arguments are inclusive of Anselm's argument. However, to solve the problem of the scope of Kant's Dialectic would require that each particular argument be examined, and such a project goes far beyond an exposition of Kant.

In this Chapter it is appropriate mainly to consider the inference from Design as Kant found it, rather than the

larger problem of what inference from Design may or may not yield more (in one direction or the other) than the epistemologically neutral status Kant came to with respect to all natural theology. In our next Chapter we shall have occasion to analyze the soundness of the latter in connection with its main warrant.

We began our discussion of the physico-theological proof with Kant's limitation just because that is how Kant began his. *Since no experience can determine the Ideal of Pure Reason, as it is a pure concept, no experience could possibly be adequate to know the existence of an Object corresponding to that Ideal². Though the physico-theological proof always deserves to be mentioned with respect, and Kant has no quarrel with its reasonableness or utility³, without any other support the argument's claims to apodeictic certainty cannot be approved*. Kant's assumption is here that we shall always be at a loss with respect to the concept of the nonexperiential.

Thus, Kant's argument goes, if 'God' names a 'super-sensible being, beyond our experience', then no experience could possibly serve to justify the inference from it to

such a being since that inference (as a formal inference considered by itself) seeks to build a bridge from common experience to the Ideal. Further, the argument from Design seeks to imply that God, as Designer, either stands at the beginning of the world as a direct cause of the nature of our world or that the principle of design represents some sort of final causality. With respect to these possible implications of the proof under consideration, Kant made the following rebuttal in the spirit of our previous Chapter. If God, as Designer, were some sort of Final Causality, then it would be evident that the argument stood convicted of the attempt to argue from experience to that which may not in principle be the subject of any experience--in which case the inference would be void of knowledge. If on the other hand the Designer had his hand directly in the web of causality, then we must, as Kant's discussion of the cosmological argument indicated, say that the Designer is bound (as were the Greek gods) by some higher principle, say, the principle of sufficient reason--hardly an impressive deity would that designer be.

Before expressing any opinions about sources of the

argument Kant considered, we should say something of the traditional view of the argument from design. That proof speaks more to the nature of any deity than to the existence of such a deity as it may describe. If the world is what it appears to be, i.e. of a subtle, beautiful and orderly design, whose attributes share a similarity to an object of human artifice (all of which Kant recognized and appreciated), the designer of that world may share attributes with the human designer such as intelligence and aesthetic sense. But, that is all. There is no hint of any creation more than the formation of the world according to a design out of pre-existent matter. There is no Creator ex nihilo. Kant attributed to such an architect⁴ the possibility of greatness, wisdom, and power⁵--but no apodeictic certainty about the existence⁶ of such an architect.

Just as with the cosmological argument there are hints⁷ that Kant feels more for the argument than his formal consideration may allow for it. But, by itself, the proof cannot demonstrate any certainty concerning an origin (arché) of the material of the world⁸.

Section II. Sources, and the discussion of Kant's position.

Little if anything is new in Kant's account of the argument. The argument itself may be found in Plato's Timaeus⁹. From that same source we discover the limitation of the argument¹⁰, that it shows at most an artificer rather than a Creator ex nihilo, and the following statement: "Now that which is created must, as we affirm, of necessity be created by a cause. But the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out, and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible...."¹¹ Kant has in no particular way added to or subtracted from Plato's treatment of the physico-theological argument, and Kant merely showed how that argument coheres with the limiting statements of his epistemological view. Our conclusion, thus, is that of Plato and most other users of the argument, that one ought not claim for it more than the argument itself allows. Not all evidence for God's existence is to be found in the argument, merely a piece of evidence. If one wished further to modify it, one may say that what the argument yields is in proportion to the evidence by which its inference is grounded a posteriori. One may not call such a

result 'knowledge' in even the weak sense of justified belief. Kant's limitation is here at its most reasonable--one may respect good evidence without arriving at apodeictic certainty. Such a conclusion need not demean the created world, which is of a genuine magnificence and grandeur. But in our experience of that world we may only find the sufficient reason for it in its design, and not the all-sufficient Origin of infinite character to which we may attribute that necessity proper to the sui generis supreme being. Such a conclusion does not, indeed, account for other, nonnatural data of the world, such as moral responsibility in conjunction with design. But by itself the physico-theological proof presents no more than good evidence for some sort of design.

Our expository sections have, thus far, examined three traditional arguments for God's existence in light of Kant limitative principle in connection with all such arguments. We now make some observations above the nearness of the arguments in their formal detail, to fill in a few gaps of an expository nature. First, it has not been considered how this part of Kant's Dialectic fits into its larger structure, except to make a brief comment on the

inadequacy of Kant's syllogistic outline. Kant's formal conclusion¹² to his Chapter on the Ideal of Pure Reason serves well enough given the structure of the present work. To seek for knowledge of the existence of God is beyond the capacity of theoretical epistemology. In truth we exceed that capacity when we seek such knowledge. However, by the same view, no one can claim to prove that he knows God does not exist. Such a claim would be as illegitimate as the claim of someone that he knows that God exists.

Second, as mentioned in the Introduction to Chapter One, above, we are not in the present work discussing what Kant learned from his moral philosophy about the existence and character of the Ideal. Nor are we interested here in the positive aspects of Kant's so-called regulative Ideal in connection with the Dialectic. The reader should be assured that the neglect of both of these important issues has more to do with the self-imposed boundaries of the present study than with a desire to ignore issues so relevant to Kant's topic. The reader may gain some hints of Kant's views within the context of his mostly negative discussion of the traditional arguments; furthermore, there

is much to be said for a study of the neglected Sections at the beginning of Kant's Chapter on the Ideal. Kant's moral philosophy also had much influence over his seminal discussion of method in the concluding part of the Critique of Pure Reason. One need go no farther than that Critique itself, in other words, to discover passages in direct contradiction to those who claim that Kant's views, on this interpretation, about the traditional arguments were wholly negative, and that his positive comments were a sop to the censors or to Kant's favored manservant (per Heine).

Third, and most important: as one may discover by a reading of Kant's general comments, Kant's limitation on knowledge is the price one must pay for accepting his views on the arguments. We shortly discern a specific problem with respect to that limitation. However, even granting the limitation, one must say that we have not either penetrated all arguments for God's existence or gone very far into an analysis of the main problems presented by those Kant did consider. Kant, despite assertions to the contrary, has not decided the problems of existence or of contingency. In this respect Kant's desire to present a unified system

may have robbed him of the opportunity to analyze the content¹³ of his concepts or categories to the same degree that he analyzed their relation to theoretical knowledge. For example, existence is much more than a perceptual category, although it may be a perceptual category. Nor, we may observe, did Kant come to grips with Anselm's argument, if he knew of its existence. Problems such a raised here may resist analysis. Hence, it should not be surprising if the reader may be disappointed at the outcome of Kant's discussion of the traditional arguments. If one does not want to pay the price of Kant's epistemological limitation, one may not have learned much about the arguments except the sticky nature of the intrinsic problems they present. What is called for in this case is the persistent attempt to resolve these problems by whatever techniques, whether analysis or some other means, may resolve them. It is hoped that some of the analyses offered above have begun some such projects as may be appropriate to the problems raised.

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. KrV, B648. Cf. the heading on A590=B618.
2. B649.
3. A623=B651 and A624=B652.
4. B655. 5. B657. 6. B652.
7. B651, B652. 8. B655.
9. Timaeus 28a-32a and 37d contain the heart of the argument.
10. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., Plato: The Collected Dialogues (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXI, 1961), Benjamin Jowett, trans., Timaeus 28c, pp. 1161-62.
11. Ibid.
12. B669.
13. Hegel, Logic (Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part One), trans. by William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1975), p. 65, sec. 41.

CHAPTER FOUR

To know an object I must be able to prove its possibility, either from its actuality as attested by experience or a priori by means of reason. But I can think whatever I please, provided only that I do not contradict myself, that is, provided that my concept is a possible thought. This suffices for the possibility of the concept, even though I may not be able to answer for there being, in the sum of all possibilities, an object corresponding to it. But something more is required before I can ascribe to such a concept objective validity, that is, real possibility; the former possibility is merely logical. This something more need not, however, be sought in the theoretical sources of knowledge; it may lie in those that are practical.

--Immanuel Kant

Section I. General Critical Discussion (I).

Kant's discussion of three theoretical arguments for God's existence taught us something about the structure of those arguments with respect to their dependence on the formal and foundational presuppositions of the early modern philosophies by which they received statement. However, Kant's discussion to an even greater extent relied on one

major presupposition of his own epistemology, the limitation of the Categories' application to sensible intuitions. Due to the latter reliance one is constrained to evaluate the epistemological limitation which is the source of Kant's treatment of the arguments. That is, it is Kant's epistemological principle which gave rise to his theoretical criticism of the arguments.

We first examine, briefly, the logical status of Kant's principle before examining the principle itself. The principle of limitation, as Kant conceived it, is Transcendental in the sense that it concerns knowledge of our mode of knowledge of objects "...insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori...."¹ Kant here proposed that epistemology is both a priori in its endeavor to know the workings of pure reason (i.e. in that epistemology does not consist in statements about natural objects) and a priori in that its rules cannot be empirically verified. In these senses Kant's use of Transcendental is very close to the current use of the word 'nonnaturalist' to designate certain recent varieties of metaethics and metaepistemology. Knowledge of our mode of knowledge of objects is, thus, dissimilar

to the knowledge it purports to describe. Yet it claims to be knowledge of some sort and not opinion, belief, or some variety of probability.

Analysis of the sort of knowledge-claims made for Kant's epistemology may not take us far into our study. We shall return to the theme at hand, however, in our particular examination of one such apparent knowledge-claim. At this stage it is worthwhile merely to reflect on the possibility that foundational rules or principles of a system are intended to find their justification in the system itself as a suggestion of the fruitfulness of those rules or principles. In this case it would not be expected that one prove the foundation; rather the foundation is served by its system as the latter persuades of the correctness of the former. Having given some preliminary account of the status of Kant's epistemological presuppositions in general, let us examine one such principle.

Can Kant justify his use of the principle that "...the categories, as yielding knowledge of things, have no kind of application, save only in regard to things which may be objects of possible experience..."² with regard to

the Ideal of pure reason? Mr Wittgenstein has given in a Preface a criterion of the drawing of such limits³:

Thus the aim of [the Tractatus] is to draw a limit to thought, or rather--not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

It is quite clear that Kant's principle, quoted above, attempted to draw such a limit for knowledge. Thus, we may transfer Wittgenstein's criterion to the drawing of a limit for knowledge, and apply that criterion to Kant's system. If the noumenal realm is unknowable, as Kant's doctrines dictate that it must be, since its objects are not apprehended by the Categories of knowledge, how does Kant know that his Categories may not be known to apply? unless he has some knowledge and not mere thought about that realm.

If we genuinely were not to know anything about things in themselves, we could never specify which rules do and which do not apply to them. There are four logical possibilities. Kant ruled out the first of these, that we do not know that we know nothing: for if this were the case, then he could not have advanced his principle of limitation in

the first place, since that principle purports, in its limitation, to know that we know nothing, since it is a transcendental principle in the sense discussed above. The second possibility, that we do not know that we know something, is also ruled out by Kant, since he claims to limit absolutely our theoretical knowledge to the range of applicability of the Categories, i.e. to objects of possible experience. Again, since any transcendental claim is a claim of knowledge of our mode of knowledge, this second possibility could in no way but fail as it is not transcendental. Also, as we have seen, Kant's assumption is that the object corresponding to the Ideal, if there is one, must be an unknowable noumenon. (This is so no matter how strange it seems, in agreement with Hegel, to be unable to know absolute reality). Hence, the second of these logical possibilities does not describe Kant's position. The third possibility, that we know that we do not know anything, seems best to represent Kant's principle, but is by Wittgenstein's criterion an impossibility.

How could we know that we know nothing? Kant's solution to this problem is hardly satisfactory. Let us now

examine it in detail. In the beginning of the Section from which the above principle was quoted, the Section devoted to the "deduction" of that principle (Transcendental Deduction [in B ed.] of the Categories, sec. 22) and in Kant's Preface to the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason (quoted at the head of the present Chapter), Kant distinguished between thought and knowledge⁴. Knowledge is a spontaneous⁵ activity requiring two elements: the concept and the [sensible] intuition⁶ of particulars. Kant's reason for this requirement is that if no intuition were given to a concept, then the concept would be empty of any thing, any object⁷. Obviously, Kant required a definition of 'object' at this point in his argument, in order to show that the latter reason is a good one. Kant's so-called definition, however, is circular, since he defined an object as "...that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united."⁸ Thus, the intuited object and the concept are referred for their meaning to one another in Kant's system. Kant also appealed to the "Aesthetic" to show that the only intuition possible to us is a sensible one⁹. But, of course: since the Aesthetic covers Kant's explanation of

space and time as forms of the intuition, it by definition must cover only the empirical. This however is no actual justification for Kant's requirement that we restrict knowledge to empirical phenomena. Kant's concluding principle, quoted above, is in no way a deduced conclusion. Rather it is an assumption, and by Wittgenstein's criterion, an impossible one. Kant's supposed limitation is therefore based on a circularity. Now the circularity of Kant's "deduction" of the limitation does not deny its appropriateness as an expression of Kant's epistemological division. What is more troubling about Kant's knowledge-limitation is, given its failure by impossibility, that Kant persisted in holding it. Kant's limitative principle knows what it professes not to know, that the category Limitation has an application outside objects of possible experience. If the noumenal as Kant's Absolute cannot be known but the phenomenal is the object of knowledge, we say with Hegel¹⁰ that such "...knowledge, which by being outside the Absolute, is certainly also outside truth, is nevertheless true--a position which, while calling itself fear of error, makes itself known rather as fear of the truth."

The fourth possibility, that we know that we know something about the noumenal realm, is, of course, irrelevant

to an exposition of Kant's philosophy, since it is not an expression of Kant's opinion on the matter. It is, however, not a trivial one, since it is a genuine possibility; one, of course, which some philosophers would deny. This possibility qua possibility but demonstrates what a deep chasm there is between those philosophers and others who accept this possibility as a genuine one.

Section II. General Critical Discussion (II).

Kant clearly demarcated a boundary between empirical theory--theoretical knowledge--and nonempirical things in themselves. To present a suitable criterion of demarcation¹¹ Kant resorted to the notion of transcendental ideas as regulative ideas, such as the idea of cosmological unity, as appropriate for theoretical employment. While we may use these ideas for the purpose of consistent theoretical inquiry, it would be wrong to assume that we may know the correspondence between regulative ideas and real objects. The same applies to the Ideal of Pure Reason. Thus, only regulative empirical employment is allowable for these ideas, according to Kant¹². But, how do we know this?

Clearly the statement, 'only regulative employment is allowable for transcendental ideas', is not itself empirical. Is it methodological? Probably Kant thought it is. If so, Kant's solution to (Popper's¹³) problem of drawing a demarcation between the empirical and the nonempirical is susceptible to the same criticism Popper applied¹⁴ to the criterion of verification: that the principle of verification is not itself verifiable as a criterion of the meaning of statements. For the proposition that 'only regulative employment is allowable for transcendental ideas' designates or refers to a rule the subject-matter of which is not empirical: in that sense it too is a regulative idea. Since the regulative Ideal¹⁵ (the concept 'God') is the result of our thinking through concepts (Categories) such as the necessity of systematic unity and a necessary cause for contingencies, and since Kant is satisfied if we only think Categories as rules and do not know them except as they are known in the act of bringing synthesis to the manifold of perception¹⁶, Kant clearly meant to hold that regulative ideas (insofar as the Categories also are regulative) are known only in their empirical and theoretical employment.

But this move only postpones the problem of demarcation. For in this case also we must yet ask how Kant decided that regulative ideas, in general, and the regulative Ideal, in particular, are knowable only in their theoretical employment. Kant deduced the Categories according to their function as pure concepts of the understanding; Kant deduced the Ideal as a set of transcendental theological predicates¹⁷ as it functions within the realm of empirical science as a necessary assumption of such science is to function adequately. In each case if sensibility is blind¹⁸ without reference to appropriate concepts of the understanding, those concepts themselves (whether characterized as 'understood' or 'known' makes no difference) must find some verification of reference somewhere, so to speak, outside sensibility if they are to be useable. That is, if our knowledge of regulative ideas cannot come from within empirical objects or be produced by sensibility, in the sense of our being able to explicate such rules or regulative ideas, it is legitimate to pose as a problem the source of Kant's knowledge of such rules or regulative ideas. No mere analysis of sensibility or its function in human understanding can produce a knowledge of

that which, by hypothesis, is above the sort of knowledge it characterizes. The problem, once again, resolves itself into a difficulty concerning the status of Kant's claim to know absolutely what is knowable only relatively in Kant's system.

This criticism assumes as its subject matter that to which the Categories and other regulative ideas (incl. the Ideal) are supposed to apply, whereas in Section I we focussed on that to which Kant claimed the Categories were unable to be applied. Both the latter rule of inapplicability of constitutive reference and former rule of correct Category application are claimed by Kant to arise out of (or be deduced from) the principle that concepts are but mere thoughts, and "...can become knowledge for us only in so far as the concept is related to objects of the senses..."¹⁹ But this last principle, a principle of the concept of knowledge, by no means arises from any objects of the senses: and by this principle Kant has failed to demarcate any knowable boundary between empirical and nonempirical, since the boundary itself is nonempirical and cannot, by Kant's own definition, be known.

Section III. Hypothetical Construction based on critical remarks.

If what is most important about some book is what is most influential in that book, then Kant's most important statement about the possibility of proving God's existence lies in his judgment that 'God exists' is epistemologically neutral. That is, even though the concept 'God' can become the subject of regulative transcendental predicates, "...its objective reality cannot indeed be proved, but also cannot be disproved, by merely speculative reason...."²⁰ Or, to put the matter another way, Kant made the problem of demarcation "the central problem of the theory of knowledge".²¹ What we have attempted in the present Chapter to understand, if not appreciate, is the nature of the limitation on speculative reason with respect to the objective reality of the transcendental Ideal, and the meaning of the boundary between the illegitimate and the proper use of Kant's regulative ideas.

Such a result as Kant's may prove a happy consequence for some who hold a vested interest in neutrality of this sort. Agnostics with respect to any ultimate Object of worship,

and also those who hold the search for truth in higher esteem than the truth itself, come immediately to mind. We have, however, attempted to show that Kant's division between knowledge and the Absolute is unsupported. Our criticism may or may not express anything important to those who find epistemology neutral in connection with the Absolute, but it is clear that the importance of the problem should not be denied. If we cannot know of any potential or actual relation between ourselves and the Absolute, then we may not be certain in an intelligible manner whether an Absolute exists or not. No matter how much you or I may dream of an Absolute, may wish for an Absolute (or against one), may remember an encounter with an Absolute or may believe in connection with morality that morality somehow demands an Absolute, for Kant the existence of an Absolute is not a theoretically decidable problem. One may decide that Kant's views on the theory of knowledge are compelling or persuasive enough to be adopted; if his views were adopted the consequences of doing so should by now be clear. It is an unfortunate but clearly mandated limitation that we cannot go further in the present work towards an examination of Kant's Analytic.

One might however want to make a remark about the sort of warrant Kant offers for his epistemological theory. The aforementioned circularity with respect to Kant's limit on knowledge--or neutrality of knowledge regarding constitutive objects relative to transcendental ideas--is not itself an objection to Kant's limitation, if one finds the results of Kant's functional analysis of theoretical understanding compelling or persuasive. The objection here is simply that such a limitation is made impossible by its own hypothesis. If we claim to know such a limitation as that which asks us to limit knowledge, we have violated that limit. If we do not claim to know it, what is the point of claiming that any truth at all inheres in the limitation? Our point is merely that any such limitation or demarcation of knowledge itself gives an account of epistemology which is logically cankered (to borrow Bennett's phrase) in the way suggested above. If the principle of limitation of knowledge is mistaken, then it is easy to see that Kant's discussion of the theoretical arguments for God's existence does but further involve the reader in waters already deep and muddied by confusion, and that we need to look elsewhere for a general principle of criticism for all such arguments.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. KrV, B25.
2. B147-8.
3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (London: Routledge and K. Paul, paper ed., 1974), p. 3. With respect to Kant's limitative principle, Hegel was probably the first to raise the criticism of that principle to the level of consciousness. Cf. The Phenomenology of Mind, J. B. Baillie, trans. (New York: Harper and Row Colophon Book, 1967), [Hegel's] Introduction, third para., p. 133.
4. B146 and Bxxvi, note.
5. B75
6. B146.
7. Ibid.
8. B137.
9. B146.
10. Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind, loc. cit.
11. Karl R. Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (New York: Harper and Row, Torchbook, 1965), p. 34. Hereafter: Popper, Logic.
12. B672. For a further exposition of the immanent use of transcendental ideas, see Kant's appendix to the Dialectic. Kant's statement is the obverse of the one given, i.e. "transcendental ideas never allow of any constitutive employment", if regulative employment is nonconstitutive.
13. Popper, Logic, loc. cit.

14. Ibid., 40.
15. Cf. B647.
16. B145.
17. B669-70.
18. B75.
19. B146.
20. B669.
21. Popper, Logic, op. cit., 34.

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*Parentheses after an entry give the abbreviation used in Notes.

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