

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Preface</i> | 7 |
| <i>Preface to the Paperback Edition</i> | 9 |
| 1. Introduction: How Is Atheism to Be Characterized? | 47 |
| 2. The Making of an Atheist | 71 |
| 3. Does God Exist?: Reflections on Disbelief | 79 |
| 4. Agnosticism | 93 |
| 5. In Defense of Atheism | 115 |
| 6. Religion and Commitment | 145 |
| 7. The Burden of Proof and <i>The Presumption of Atheism</i> | 167 |
| 8. The Primacy of Philosophical Theology | 183 |
| 9. Religious Ethics Versus Humanistic Ethics | 197 |
| 10. Religion and Rationality | 227 |
| 11. The Embeddedness of Atheism | 249 |

Introduction

How Is Atheism to Be Characterized?

I

Many, perhaps most, educated twentieth-century believers and non-believers alike are perplexed about the concept of God and other central religious notions of the Jewish-Christian-Islamic faiths. Key concepts of such religions—God, heaven, hell, sin, the Last Judgment, a human being's chief end, being resurrected, and coming to be a new man with a new body—are all to one degree or another problematic. Indeed, their very intelligibility or rational acceptability are not beyond reasonable doubt. These concepts form a system. Indeed, a religious faith or a religion should be seen as a system of salvation and we should recognize that we cannot properly understand these concepts in isolation or apart from understanding the rationale of the form of life of which they are an integral part. But in the various cultures of the West, if our socialization has been even remotely normal, we know how to play Jewish or Christian language-games and in varying degrees, we even have some understanding of those forms of life. Yet what I said initially still remains true: many of us—believers and nonbelievers alike—remain perplexed by the fundamental concepts of the dominant religion in our culture. We know how to use these terms perfectly well and we have a reasonable understanding of why they have remained in circulation, for we acknowledge many of the aspirations that religion answers to. Yet we remain thoroughly perplexed over whether these terms in their religious employments answer to anything real or even to anything we can coherently conceive.

I shall in this collection of essays probe why this is so, and in the course of this probing I shall define, explicate, and defend atheism as a form of skepticism concerning religion. Perhaps "atheism" is a crude

word, gesturing too overtly at something that many people, touched deeply by modern sensibilities about science and philosophy and more broadly by contemporary intellectual culture, instinctively feel, but will not affirm so flatly or so unequivocally as I do. Their reasons vary; some of them are aesthetic, including a wish (surely well grounded) not to be caught up in yet another “orthodoxy” or some “smelly little ideology.” While sharing their desire to stay utterly clear of a kind of “church outside any church,” I shall seek, without dogmatism and hopefully in tune with sophisticated developments in philosophy, to defend a form of atheism. (Part of the task will be to make clear what atheism comes to.)

In the first two essays collected here, “The Making of an Atheist” and “Does God Exist?: Reflections on Disbelief,” I try in an elementary way to show something of my road to this atheism and something of its rationale. In the middle essays, starting with “Agnosticism” and ending with “The Burden of Proof and *The Presumption of Atheism*,” I both explicate and probe the core of my defense of atheism and show, as well, in the first of these essays, something of its historical roots.

“The Primacy of Philosophical Theology” turns to an examination of a claim, central to powerful strands of Protestant theology, which would set forth an appeal to revelation and faith as a block to skeptical critiques of religion. I argue that problems of relativity and arguments about the coherence of God-talk serve to undermine such apologetic moves. Karl Barth or no Karl Barth, we cannot in this way escape the critique of religion. (Barth, who is arguably the most important Protestant theologian of the twentieth century, thought, much like Luther, that the rationalistic arguments of philosophy and natural theology could only lead to unbelief. Our acceptance of the claim of Christianity must rest solely on revelation.)

In “Religious Ethics Versus Humanistic Ethics,” I return to themes pursued in my *Ethics Without God* and elsewhere.¹ I criticize both Divine Command and Natural Law conceptions of ethics and attempt to show the bankruptcy of the popular apologetic move that if God is dead nothing matters.

Finally, in “Religion and Rationality” and “The Embeddedness of Atheism,” I return to underlying philosophical topics—topics that cut to the heart of the matter—discussed in “In Defense of Atheism” and in my previous books: *Contemporary Critiques of Religion*, *Skepticism* and *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. I try in these last two essays to probe what the elusive appeal to religion comes to in the broader context of exploring the underlying philosophical questions about the rationality of religious belief.

II

In the remainder of this introduction, I shall seek perspicuously to characterize atheism and to contrast it with agnosticism and with religious belief-systems. What it is to be an atheist is not as unproblematic as it is frequently thought to be. I shall move from common but less adequate characterizations to what I take to be the proper delineation of what it is to be an atheist. With that characterization before us, I shall in the first instance try to show some of the attractions of this position and then close this introductory essay by criticizing a brisk way of dismissing my whole project.

A central common core of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is the affirmation of the reality of one and only one God. Adherents to these religions believe that there is a God who created the universe out of nothing and who is taken to have absolute sovereignty over all His creation, including, of course, human beings—beings who are not only utterly dependent on this creative power but who are also sinful and who, according to the faithful, can only make adequate sense of their lives by accepting without question God's ordinances for them. The varieties of atheism are quite numerous but all atheists are united in rejecting such a set of beliefs, which are central to the religious systems of Western cultures.

However, atheism casts a wider net and rejects all belief in "spiritual beings," and to the extent that belief in spiritual beings is definitive of what it is for a belief-system to be religious, atheism rejects religion. Thus, it is not only a rejection of the central conceptions of Judeo-Christianity; it is, as well, a rejection of the religious beliefs of such African religions as those of the Dinka and the Nuer, the anthropomorphic gods of classical Greece and Rome, and the transcendental conceptions of Hinduism and Buddhism.² Sometimes atheism is viewed simplistically as a denial of "God" or of "the gods" and, if religion is to be defined in terms of the belief in "spiritual beings," then atheism is the rejection of all religious belief.

However, if any tolerably adequate understanding of atheism is to be achieved, it is necessary to give a careful reading to "rejection of religious belief" and to realize how frightfully inadequate it is to characterize atheism as the denial of God (or the gods) or of all spiritual beings.

To say that atheism is the denial of God (or the gods) and that it is the opposite of theism, a system of belief which affirms the reality of God and seeks to demonstrate His existence, is inadequate in several ways. First, not all theologians who regard themselves as defenders of the Christian faith or of Judaism or Islam regard themselves as defenders of theism. The influential twentieth-century Protestant theo-

logian Paul Tillich, for example, regards the God of theism as an idol and refuses to construe God as a being, even a supreme being, among beings or as an infinite being above finite beings.³ God, for him, is being-itself, the ground of being and meaning. The particulars of Tillich's view are in certain ways idiosyncratic as well as obscure and problematic; but they have had a considerable impact on our cultural life, and his rejection of theism while retaining a belief in God is not eccentric in contemporary theology, though it may very well be an affront to the plain believer.

Secondly, and more importantly, it is not the case that all theists seek to demonstrate or even in any way rationally to establish the existence of God. Many theists regard such a demonstration as impossible, and fideistic believers (e.g., Georg Hamann and Søren Kierkegaard) believe such a demonstration to be undesirable even if it were possible, for, in their view, it would undermine faith. If we could prove, i.e., come to know for certain, that God exists, then we would not be in a position to accept Him on faith as our Sovereign Lord with all the risks that faith entails. There are theologians who have argued that for genuine faith to be possible God must necessarily be a hidden God, the mysterious ultimate reality, whose existence and authority we must accept simply on faith. This fideistic view has not, of course, gone without challenge from inside these major faiths. But it is of sufficient importance to raise serious questions about the adequacy of the above theism.

It should also be noted that not all denials of God come to the same thing. Sometimes believers deny God while not being at all in a state of doubt that God exists. Many willfully reject what they take to be His authority by not acting in accordance with what they take to be His will, while others simply live their lives as if God did not exist. In this important way, they deny Him in practice while in a sense remaining believers. But neither of the above deniers are atheists (unless we wish, misleadingly, to call them "practical atheists"). They are not even agnostics. They would never question the existence of God, even though they deny Him in other ways.

To be atheists we need to deny the *existence* of God. It is frequently, but I shall argue mistakenly, thought that this entails that we need to believe that it is false that God exists or, alternatively, that we must believe that God's existence is a speculative hypothesis of an extremely low order of probability.⁴ Such a characterization, I shall argue, is defective in a number of ways. For one it is too narrow. There are atheists (including this atheist) who believe that the very concept of God, at least in developed and less anthropomorphic forms of Judeo-Christianity, is so incoherent that certain central religious claims, such as "God is my creator to whom everything is owed," are

not genuine truth-claims. That is to say, as claims they are neither true nor false. Yet, believers do indeed take such religious propositions to be true, and *some* atheists, unlike this atheist, believe they are false; and there are agnostics who cannot make up their minds whether the propositions (putative propositions) are true *or* false. (The latter consider religious claims to be one or the other but believe that we cannot determine which.) It will be the underlying burden of my argument to show that all three stances are mistaken, for such putative truth-claims are not sufficiently intelligible to be genuine truth-claims that are either true or false. In reality there is nothing here to be believed or disbelieved, though, for the believer, there remains a powerful and humanly comforting illusion that there is.

While the above considerations about atheism and intelligibility will, if well-taken, show that the second characterization of atheism is too narrow, it would also be accurate to say that, in a way, the characterization is too broad. There are fideistic believers who quite unequivocally believe it to be the case that, when looked at objectively, propositions about God's existence have a very low probability weight. They do not believe in God because it is probable that He exists—they think it is more probable that He doesn't—but because such a belief is thought by them to be necessary to make sense of human life. The short of it is that such a characterization of atheism would not distinguish a fideistic believer (e.g., Blaise Pascal or Søren Kierkegaard) or an agnostic (e.g., T. H. Huxley or Leslie Stephen) from an atheist such as Baron Holbach or Thomas Paine. They all believe that propositions of the form "There is a God" and "God protects humankind," however emotionally important they may be, are, when viewed objectively, nothing more than speculative hypotheses of an extremely low order of probability. But this, since it does not distinguish believers from nonbelievers, and does not distinguish agnostics from atheists, cannot be an adequate characterization of atheism.

It may be retorted that if *a prioriism* and dogmatic atheism are to be avoided we must regard the existence of God as a hypothesis. There are no ontological (purely *a priori*) proofs or *disproofs* of God's existence. Without such a proof or disproof it is not reasonable (or at least ill-advised) to rule in advance that to say "God exists" makes no sense. It has often been argued—and not unreasonably—that all the atheist can reasonably claim is that there is no evidence that there is a God and that without such evidence he is justified in asserting that there is no God. Some opponents of this view have insisted that it is simply dogmatic for an atheist to assert that no possible evidence could ever provide grounds for a belief in God. Instead, it is argued, atheists should justify their unbelief by supporting (if they can) the **assertion** that no evidence currently warrants a belief in God. If

atheism is justified, the advocate will have shown that in fact there is no evidence that God exists. But, the argument goes, it should not be part of his task to try to show that there couldn't be *any* evidence for the existence of God. If the atheist could somehow survive the death of his present body (assuming for the nonce that such talk makes sense) and came, much to his surprise, to stand in the presence of God, his answer should be "Oh! Lord you didn't give me enough evidence!" His belief that there is no God would have turned out to have been mistaken all along and now he realizes that he had believed something to be false that in fact was true. Given what he had come to experience in this transformed state, he now sees that he was mistaken in his judgment that there is no God. Still, he was not unjustified, in the light of the evidence available to him during his "earthly life," in believing that God did not exist. That judgment, given what he knew at the time, is not rendered unreasonable in the light of evidence that only could become available to him later. The reasonableness of our judgments should be assessed in the light of the evidence available to us at a given time. Not having any such post-mortem experiences of the presence of God (assuming for the occasion that he could have them), as things stand, and in the face of the evidence he actually has, and is likely to be able to get, he should say that it is false that God exists. When we legitimately assert that a proposition is false we need not be certain that it is false. "Knowing with certainty" is not a pleonasm. The claim is that this tentative posture is the reasonable position for the atheist to take.

An atheist who argues in this manner may also make a distinctive burden-of-proof argument. Given that God (if there is one) is by definition a very *recherché* reality, a reality that must be transcendent to the world, the burden of proof is not on the atheist to give grounds for believing that there is no reality of that order. Rather, the burden of proof is on the believer to give us evidence for God's existence, i.e., something to show that there is such a reality. Given what God must be, if there is a God, the believer needs to present the evidence for such a very strange reality. He needs to show that there is more in the world than is disclosed by our common experience. The scientific method, broadly conceived as a resolutely empirical method, and the scientific method alone, such an atheist asserts, affords a reliable method for establishing what is in fact the case. The believer will in turn assert that in addition to the varieties of empirical facts there are also "spiritual facts" or "transcendent facts," i.e., the fact that there is a supernatural, self-existent eternal power. To this the atheist can, and should, retort that such "facts" have not been shown to us. The believer has done nothing to deliver the goods here. No such facts have been presented. Atheists of the "we-don't-have-enough-evidence" va-

riety will argue, against what they take to be dogmatic *a prioristic* atheists, that the atheist should be a fallibilist and remain open-minded about what the future may bring. After all, they argue, there may be such "transcendent facts," such *recherché* metaphysical realities.

It is not that such a fallibilistic atheist is really an agnostic who believes that he is not justified in either asserting that God exists or denying that He exists, and that to be maximally reasonable over this issue, what he must do is suspend belief. On the contrary, such an atheist believes he has very good grounds indeed, as things stand, for denying the existence of God. But what he will not deny is that things could be otherwise and, if they were, that he would not be justified in asserting that it is false that there is a God. Using reliable empirical techniques—proven methods for establishing matters of fact—he has found nothing in the universe that would make a belief in God's existence justifiable or even, everything considered, the most rational of the available options. He therefore draws the atheistic conclusion (also keeping in mind his burden-of-proof argument) that God does not exist. But his denial of God's existence is not set forth dogmatically in a high *a priori* fashion. The atheist remains a thorough and consistent fallibilist.

III

Such a form of atheism (the atheism of those pragmatists who are also naturalistic humanists) is not adequate. This can be seen if we take careful note of the concept of God in our forms of life. Unlike Zeus or Wotan, in developed forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God is not, like Zeus or Wotan, construed in a relatively plain anthropomorphic way.⁵ Nothing that could count as "God" in such religions could possibly be observed, literally encountered, or detected in the universe. God, on such a conception, is transcendent to the world; He is conceived of as "pure spirit," an infinite individual who created the universe out of nothing and who is distinct from it, though, for Christians, God, in the form of Christ, is said to have walked the earth. Thus, somehow, for Christians—and only for Christians—God is said to be both transcendent and immanent. He is "pure spirit" *and* a person with a material embodiment. God is said to be an eternal transcendent reality but he is also said to be immanent. This appears at least to be incoherent, but, incoherent or not, Christians whose beliefs are at all close to established orthodoxy will not abandon their claim that God is transcendent to the world. Such a "transcendent reality"—a reality understood to be an ultimate mystery—can not be identified in the same way that objects or processes in the

universe are identified. There can be no pointing at God, no ostensive teaching of "God," to show what "God" means. The word "God" can only be taught intra-linguistically. Someone who does not understand what the word "God" means can be taught by using descriptions such as "the maker of the universe," "the eternal, utterly independent being upon whom all other beings depend," "the first cause," "the sole ultimate reality," "a self-caused being," and the like. For someone who does not understand such descriptions (putative descriptions), there can be no understanding of the concept of God. Yet there is a very good reason for saying that we do not understand such "descriptions": they do not give us an empirical foundation for *what* we are talking about when we speak of God. The key terms employed in these "descriptions" are themselves no more capable of ostensive definition (i.e., capable of having their referents pointed out) than is "God." Unlike the referent for the term "Zeus," what is allegedly referred to by the term "God" is not construed anthropomorphically. (That does not mean that anyone has actually pointed to Zeus or observed Zeus but it does mean that we know roughly what it would be like to do so. We know, that is, roughly what would constitute pointing to Zeus.)

In coming to understand what is meant by "God," in such religious discourses, we must come to understand that God, whatever else He is, is a being that could not possibly be observed in any way. He could not be anything that is empirically detectable (again a pleonasm). Moreover, God is said by believers to be an intractable, ultimate mystery. A nonmysterious God would not be the God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The relevance of the preceding to our second characterization of atheism is that, if "God" is taken to be a transcendent mystery, we should then come to see that it is a mistake to claim that His existence can rightly be treated as a hypothesis and that it is also a mistake to claim that we, by the use of the experimental method or some determinate empirical method, can come to confirm or disconfirm God's existence as we could if He were an empirical reality. Such a proposed way of coming to know, or failing to come to know, God makes no sense for anyone who understands what kind of reality God is supposed to be. Anything whose existence could be so verified would not be the God of developed Judeo-Christianity. God could not be a reality whose presence is even faintly adumbrated in experience, for anything that could count as the God of Judeo-Christianity must be transcendent to the world. Anything that could actually be encountered or experienced could not be an eternal transcendent reality. This is indeed a conceptual argument, but it is an argument that has been made, and should be made, as indeed any argument should be made, in a thoroughly fallibilistic spirit. It is a putatively *a priori* claim, but whether it

is a valid claim, whether it is genuinely *a priori* (analytically true or in some weaker way conceptually true) as its defenders claim, is in turn a thoroughly fallible belief. There need be, and indeed should be, nothing dogmatic about such a defense of atheism.

So at the very heart of a religion such as Christianity there is a cosmological belief—a thoroughly metaphysical belief—in a reality that is alleged to transcend the “empirical world.” It is the metaphysical belief that there is an eternal, ever-present creative source and sustainer of the universe. The problem is how we could come to know or reasonably believe that such a strange reality exists or come to understand what such talk is about.

It is not that God is like a theoretical entity, such as a proton or neutrino in physics. Such theoretical entities, where they are construed as realities rather than as heuristically useful conceptual fictions, are thought to be part of the actual furniture of the universe. They are not said to be transcendent to the universe. Rather, they are invisible entities logically on a par with specks of dust and grains of sand only *much much smaller*. Theoretical entities are not a different kind of reality; it is only the case that they, as a matter of fact, cannot be seen. Indeed, we have no understanding of what it would be like to see a proton or a neutrino—in *that way* they are like God—and no provision is made in physical theory for seeing them. Still, there is no *logical* ban on our seeing them as there is on seeing God. We cannot correctly say that it is *logically* impossible that they could be seen.

Though invisible, theoretical entities are among the things in the universe and thus they can be postulated as causes of the things we do see. Since this is so, it becomes at least logically possible indirectly to verify by empirical methods the existence of such realities. It is also the case that there is no *logical* ban on establishing what is necessary to ascertain a causal connection, namely a constant conjunction of two discrete empirical realities. However, for the nonanthropomorphic conceptions of God of developed forms of Judeo-Christianity, no such constant conjunction can be established or even intelligibly asserted between God and the universe; thus the existence of God is not even indirectly confirmable or disconfirmable. God is not a discrete empirical thing or being and the universe is not some gigantic thing or process over and above the various particular things and processes in the universe of which it makes sense to say it has or had a cause. A particular thing in the universe could cause another particular thing. It is one discrete thing making another discrete thing happen. It is between things of this type that we can establish a constant conjunction. But neither “God” nor “the universe” are words standing for realities of which we have any idea at all what it would be like for them to stand in constant conjunction. Indeed, such talk has no intel-

ligible home here. We have no basis for saying one is the cause of the other. But then there is no way, directly or indirectly, that we could empirically establish even the probability that there is a God since we have already disposed of the claim that God could be directly observed.

IV

There is the gnostic reply that God's existence can be established or made probable in some nonempirical way. There are, that is (or so the claim goes), truths about the nature of the cosmos that are neither capable of nor standing in need of verification. There is, gnostics claim against empiricists, knowledge of the world that transcends experience and comprehends the sorry scheme of things entire.

Since the thorough probings of such epistemological foundations by David Hume and Immanuel Kant, skepticism about how, and indeed even that, such knowledge is possible has become very strong indeed.⁶ With respect to knowledge of God in particular both Hume and Kant provide powerful critiques of the various traditional attempts to prove in any way His existence. (Kant set forth such an analysis of prevailing doctrine even though he remained a steadfast Christian.) While some of the *details* of their arguments have been rejected and refinements rooted in their argumentative procedures have been developed, there remains a very considerable consensus among contemporary philosophers and theologians that arguments like those developed by Hume and Kant show that no proof (*a priori* or empirical) of God's existence is possible.⁷ And, alternatively, to speak of "intuitive knowledge" (an intuitive grasp of being, or of an intuition of the reality of the divine being) as gnostics do is to appeal to something that lacks sufficient clarity to be of any value in establishing or even understanding anything.

There is another turn that should be considered in this initial laying out of the problems with which I shall wrestle. Prior to the rise of anthropology and the scientific study of religion, an appeal to revelation and authority as a substitute for knowledge or warranted belief might have been thought to possess considerable force. But with a knowledge of other religions and their associated appeals to "Revealed Truth," such arguments are without probative force. Claimed (alleged) revelations are numerous, diverse, and not infrequently conflicting; we cannot claim by simply appealing to a given putative revelation, at least not without going in a very small and vicious circle, that it is the "true revelation" or the "genuine revelation" and that other so-called revelations are actually mistaken or, where non-

conflicting, they are mere approximations of the truth. Similar things need to be said for religious authority. Moreover, it is at best problematic whether faith could sanction our speaking of testing the genuineness of revelation or of the acceptability of religious authority. Indeed, if something is a “genuine revelation,” we cannot use our reason to assess it. But our predicament is that, as a matter of anthropological fact, we have this diverse and sometimes conflicting field of alleged revelations with no way of deciding or even having a reasonable hunch which, if any, of the candidate revelations is the genuine article. But even if we allow for the necessity of some tests for the genuineness of revelation, we still have a claim that clearly will not do, for such a procedure would make an appeal to revelation or authority supererogatory. Where such tests are allowed, it is not revelation or authority that can warrant the most fundamental religious truths on which the rest depend. It is something else, namely, that which establishes the genuineness of the revelation or authority. It is that which guarantees these religious truths (if such there be) including the proposition that God exists. But then the question surfaces again as to what that fundamental guarantee is or could be. Perhaps such a belief is nothing more than a cultural myth? There is, as we have seen, neither empirical knowledge nor *a priori* knowledge of God, and talk of “intuitive knowledge” is without logical force.⁸

If the above considerations are near to the mark, it is unclear what it would mean to say, as some agnostics and even some atheists have, that they are “skeptical God-seekers” who simply have not found, after a careful examination, enough evidence to make belief in God warranted or even reasonable. That is so because it is very unclear what it would be like to have or, for that matter, to fail to have evidence for the existence of God. It isn’t that the “God-seeker” has to be able to give the evidence, for if that were so no search would be necessary; but he, or at least somebody, must at least be able to conceive what *would count* as evidence if he had it so that he, and we, would have some idea of what to look for. We need at least to have some idea of what evidence would look like here. But it appears that it is just this that we do not have.⁹

The response might be given that it is enough for the God-seeker not to accept any *logical* ban on the possibility of there being evidence. He need not understand what it would be like to have evidence in this domain. I would, in turn, retort that when we consider what kind of transcendent reality God is said to be, it appears at least, as I remarked earlier, that there is an implicit *logical* ban on the presence of empirical evidence (a pleonasm) for His existence.

Someone seeking to resist this conclusion might try to give empirical anchorage to talk of God by utilizing the following fanciful

hypothetical case. It is important not to forget, however, that things even remotely like what I shall now describe do not happen. The fanciful case is this: Suppose thousands of us were standing out under the starry skies and we all saw a set of stars rearrange themselves to spell out "God." We would be utterly astonished and indeed rightly think we had gone mad. Even if we could somehow assure ourselves that this was not some form of mass hallucination, though how we could do this is not evident, such an experience would still not constitute evidence for the existence of God, for we still would be without a clue as to what could be *meant* by speaking of an infinite individual transcendent to the world. Such an observation (i.e., the stars rearranging themselves), no matter how well confirmed, would not ostensibly fix the reference range of "God." Talk of such an infinite individual would still remain incomprehensible and it would also have the same appearance of being incoherent. We do not know what we are talking about in speaking of such a transcendent reality. All we would know is that something very strange indeed had happened—something we would not know what to make of.¹⁰

The doubt arises (or at least it should arise) as to whether believers or indeed anyone else, in terms acceptable to believers, can give an intelligible account of the concept of God or of what belief in God comes to once the concept is thoroughly de-anthropomorphized. It is completely unclear how we could give such a term any empirical foundation. We do not know what it would be like to specify the denotation (the referent) of a nonanthropomorphic God.

V

Reflection on the above cluster of claims should lead us to a more adequate statement of what atheism is and indeed as well to what an agnostic or religious response to atheism should be. Instead of saying that an atheist is someone who believes that it is false or probably false that there is a God, a more adequate characterization of atheism consists in the more complex claim that an atheist is someone who rejects belief in God for at least one of the following reasons (the specific reason will likely depend on how God is being conceived): (1) if an anthropomorphic God is proposed, the atheist rejects belief in God because it is false or probably false that there is such a God; (2) if it be a nonanthropomorphic God (i.e., the God of Luther and Calvin, Aquinas and Maimonides), he rejects belief in God because the concept of such a God is either meaningless, unintelligible, contradictory, incomprehensible, or incoherent; (3) the atheist rejects belief in God (here we speak of the God portrayed by some modern or contemporary theo-

logians or philosophers) because the concept of God in question is such that it merely masks an atheistic substance, e.g., "God" is just another name for love or simply a symbolic term for moral ideals.¹¹

Such a ramified conception of atheism, as well as its more reflective opposition, is much more complex than the simpler conceptions of atheism we initially considered. From what has been said about the concept of God in developed forms of Judeo-Christianity, it should be evident that the more crucial form of atheist rejection is not the one asserting that it is false that there is a God but instead the form of atheism that rejects belief in God based on the contention that the concept of God does not make sense: it is in some important sense incoherent or unintelligible. (Note: I do not say that it is unintelligible or meaningless full stop. It is very important to keep this in mind, particularly when reading the essay entitled "In Defense of Atheism.")

Such a broader conception of atheism, of course, includes everyone who is an atheist in the narrower sense, i.e., the sense in which atheism is identified with the claim that "God exists" is false; but the converse plainly does not obtain. Moreover, this broad conception of atheism does not have to say that religious claims are in all aspects meaningless. The more typical, less paradoxical, and less tendentious claim is that utterances such as "There is an infinite, eternal creator of the universe" are incoherent and the conception of God reflected therein is in a crucial respect unintelligible and, because of that, in an important sense inconceivable and incredible: incapable of being a rational object of belief for a philosophically and scientifically sophisticated person touched by modernity.¹² This is a central belief of many contemporary atheists. And it is just such an atheism that I shall defend in this volume. I shall argue that there (a) are good *empirical* grounds for believing that there are no Zeus-like spiritual beings and (b) that there are also sound grounds for believing that the non-anthropomorphic or at least radically less anthropomorphic conceptions of God are incoherent or unintelligible. (Remember that both of these conceptions admit of degree.) If these two claims can be justified, the atheist, to understate it, has very strong grounds for rejecting belief in God.

Atheism, as we have seen, is a critique and a denial of the central metaphysical belief-systems of salvation involving a belief in God or spiritual beings; however, a sophisticated atheist will not simply contend that all such cosmological claims are false but will take it that some are so problematic that, while purporting to be factual, they actually do not succeed in making coherent factual claims. In an important respect they do not make sense, and while believers are under the illusion that something intelligible is there in which to

believe, in reality this is not the case. These seemingly grand cosmological claims are in reality best understood as myths or ideological claims reflecting a humanly understandable confusion on the part of the people who make them.¹³

It is not a well-taken rejoinder to atheistic critiques to say, as some contemporary Protestant and Jewish theologians have, that belief in God is the worst form of atheism and idolatry, for the language of Christian and Jewish belief, including such sentences as "God exists" and "God created the world," is not to be taken literally but rather as symbol or metaphor. Christianity, as Reinhold Niebuhr (a theologian who defends such views) once put it, is "true myth." On such an account, the claims of religion are not to be understood as metaphysical claims trying to convey some extraordinary facts but as metaphorical and analogical claims that are not understandable in any other terms. But this claim is incoherent: if something is a metaphor, it must at least in principle be possible to say what it is a metaphor of.¹⁴ Thus metaphors cannot be understandable *only* in metaphorical terms. All metaphors and symbolic expressions must be capable of paraphrase, though, what is something else again, a user of such expressions may not be able on demand to supply that paraphrase. Moreover, and more simply and less controversially, if the language of religion becomes little more than the language of myth and religious beliefs are viewed simply as powerful and often humanly compelling myths, then we have conceptions that actually possess an atheistic substance.¹⁵ The believer is making no cosmological claim; he is making no claim that the atheist should feel obliged to deny. It is just that the believer's talk, including his unelucidated talk of "true myths," is language that has a more powerful emotive force for many people. But if the believer follows these theologians or Christian philosophers down this path, he will have abandoned his effort to make truth claims that are different from those made by the atheist.

VI

Many skeptics would prefer to think of themselves as agnostics rather than atheists because it seems less dogmatic. In my essay on "Agnosticism," I shall examine in some detail what is involved here; but initially, and in a preliminary way, I want now to show something of what is at stake.

Agnosticism has a parallel development to that of atheism. An agnostic, like an atheist, asserts that we can neither know nor have sound reasons for believing that God exists; but, unlike the atheist, the agnostic does not think we are justified in saying that God does

not exist or, stronger still, that God cannot exist. Similarly, while some contemporary atheists will say that the concept of God in developed theism does not make sense and thus Jewish, Christian, and Islamic beliefs must be rejected, many contemporary agnostics will believe that, though the concept of God is radically problematic, we are not in a position to be able rationally to decide whether, on the one hand, the terms and concepts of such religions are so problematic that such religious beliefs do not make sense or whether, on the other, they still have just enough coherence to make a belief in an ultimate mystery a live option for a reflective and informed human being, even though the talk of such belief is indeed radically paradoxical and in many ways incomprehensible.

Such an agnostic recognizes that our puzzles about God cut deeper than perplexities concerning whether it is possible to attain adequate evidence for God's existence. Rather, he sees clearly the need to exhibit an adequate nonanthropomorphic, extra-linguistic referent for "God." (This need not commit him to the belief that there is any theory-independent acquisition of data.) Believers think that even though God is a mystery such a referent has been secured, though what it is still remains obscure. Atheists, by contrast, believe, as we have seen, that it has not been secured, and indeed some of them believe that it cannot be secured. To speak of mystery here, they maintain, is just an evasive way of talking about what we do not understand. Instead of being candid about their total incomprehension, believers use the evasive language of mystery. Contemporary agnostics (those agnostics who parallel the atheists characterized above) remain in doubt about whether our talk of God in this halting fashion just barely secures such reference or whether it fails after all and "God" refers to nothing religiously acceptable.

Intense religious commitment, as the history of fideism makes evident, has sometimes combined with deep skepticism concerning man's capacity to know God. It is agreed by almost all parties to the dispute between belief and unbelief that religious claims are paradoxical, and if there is a God, He is indeed a very mysterious reality. Furthermore, criteria for what is or is not meaningless and what is or is not intelligible are deeply contested; at least there seem to be no generally accepted criteria here.

Keeping these diverse considerations in mind, in the arguments between belief, agnosticism, and atheism, it is crucial to ask whether we have any good reason at all to believe that there is a personal creative reality that exists beyond the bounds of space and time and that transcends the world. Do we even have a sufficient understanding of such talk so that the reality to which it refers can be the object of religious commitment? We cannot have faith in or accept on faith that

which we do not at all understand. We must at least in some way understand what it is we are to have faith in if we are actually to have faith in it. If someone asks me to trust *Irglig*, I cannot do so no matter how strongly I want to take that something-I-know-not-what simply on trust.¹⁶

What appears at least to be the case is that it is just a brute fact that there is that indefinitely immense collection of finite and contingent masses or conglomerations of things and processes we use the phrase "the universe" to refer to. There is no logical or rational necessity that there are any of these things or anything at all. It just manifestly is so. That we can in certain moods come to feel wonder, awe, and puzzlement that there is a world at all does not license the claim that there is a noncontingent reality on which the world (the sorry collection of such things entire) depends. It is not even clear that such a sense of contingency gives us an understanding of what a "noncontingent thing" could be. Some atheists (including this atheist) think that the reference range of "God" is so indeterminate and the concept so problematic that it is impossible for someone to be fully aware of this fact and, if the person is being nonevasive, to believe in God. Believers, by contrast, think that neither the reference range of "God" is so indeterminate nor the concept of God so problematic as to make belief in God irrational or incoherent.¹⁷ We do know, they claim, that talk of God is problematic, but we do not know, and we cannot know, whether it is so problematic as to be without a religiously appropriate sense. After all, God is supposed to be an ultimate mystery. Agnostics, in turn, say that there is no reasonable decision procedure here that would enable us to resolve the issue. We do not know and cannot ascertain whether "God" secures a religiously adequate referent. In reflecting on this issue, we should strive to ascertain whether (1) a "contingent thing" is a pleonasm, (2) an "infinite individual" is without sense and (3) whether when we go beyond anthropomorphism (or try to go beyond it), we have a sufficient understanding of *what* is referred to by "God" to make faith a coherent possibility. I shall argue that "a contingent thing" is pleonastic, that "infinite individual" is without sense, and that the last question should be answered in the negative. The agnostic, by contrast, is not led to faith, but he does believe that such questions cannot be answered.

In "Religious Ethics Versus Humanistic Ethics," I argue that it will not do to take a Pascalian or Dostoyevskian turn and claim that, intellectual absurdity or not, religious belief is, humanly speaking, necessary, for without belief in God, morality does not make sense and life is meaningless.¹⁸ That claim is false; for even if there is no God and no purpose *to* life there are purposes *in* life.¹⁹ There are things we care about and want to do that can remain perfectly intact

even in a Godless world. God or no God, immortality or no immortality, it is vile to torture people just for the fun of it; and friendship, solidarity, love, and the attainment of self-respect are human goods even in an utterly Godless world. There are intellectual puzzles about how we know these things are good but that is doubly true for the distinctive claims of a religious ethic. With them, we have the standard perplexities concerning how we can know some things to be good and other things to be bad, as well as the additional perplexities concerning how we can come to understand, let alone assess, the truth of the distinctively religious claims embedded in these systems of belief. But that latter perplexity is one that the atheist can put to the side. However, with the moral beliefs just mentioned, the point is that these things are acknowledged to be desirable by believer and non-believer alike. How we can know they are desirable provides a philosophical puzzle for both believer and skeptic. But whether these things are desirable or not has nothing to do with whether God exists. When we reflect carefully on the fact that certain purposes remain intact even in a Godless world, we will, as a corollary, come to see that life can have a point even in a world without God.

VII

The kind of religious response I shall primarily be concerned with and will attempt to criticize, with what I hope is sensitivity and understanding, is a tortured religiosity that is well aware of the problematic nature of religious concepts and the questionable coherence of religious beliefs, yet still seeks to make sense of these beliefs and continues the attempt to bring to the fore their vital human import in the teeth of their paradoxical nature and their apparent incoherence. Such Jews, Moslems, and Christians seem to me to have taken to heart the problems posed by modernity.

There is, however, a growing movement in popular religion, with some representation in intellectual circles as well, that seeks to turn its back on these problems with what seems to be an obtuseness that is both peculiar and disheartening. Religious discourse does not seem to them paradoxical, and religious concepts, including the concept of God, do not seem to them problematic. "We know well enough what we are talking about when we talk about or to God," so they tell us. Christian revelation, they aver, is perfectly intact and the moral vision of that religion, viewed along orthodox lines, provides a firm and evident foundation for the moral life. There is no reason to follow a Kierkegaard, to say nothing of a Nietzsche, regarding any of these things. We can be quite confident of the coherence of God-talk and of

the integrity of the Christian faith. The central philosophical task, such traditional Christian philosophers believe, is to provide a sound proof for the existence of God. Of course, they also aver, even without proof, we still have the certainty of revelation; but with proof as well, we have a philosophical basis for a foundationalist account in philosophical theology that would rationalize belief.

This view is the counterpart of both the simpler view of atheism, which regards the key theistic beliefs as simply false, and of a simple agnosticism, which believes that we understand the beliefs well enough but just do not have enough evidence to make a responsible judgment about their truth. Such an agnostic believes that theistic beliefs are plainly either true or false, but whether they are true or false is something he believes cannot be established. By contrast, as the previous sections of this chapter have brought to the fore, my atheism and its parallels in religious belief and agnosticism, is principally taken up, in reflecting on religious belief, with the logically prior questions of the coherence of God-talk. Our concern is with whether we have anything sufficiently unproblematic in the religious discourse of developed Judeo-Christianity such that something could really count there as religious truth. Such a view is very distant from Neo-Conservative Christianity.

Alvin Plantinga, a representative (indeed a well-known philosophical representative) of this fundamentalist Christian faith, has tried in short order to set aside those philosophical perplexities as unreal pseudo-problems.²⁰ In bringing this introductory chapter to a close, I want to note his line of argumentation—a line that is common enough in some circles—and succinctly to set out my response.

What is common ground between us is that we both take “God” to be some sort of referring expression. My skeptical questions, in light of this, can be put in the following terms. Where “God” is not employed purely anthropomorphically to refer to a kind of cosmic mickey-mouse, to whom or to what does “God” refer? Is it a proper name, an abbreviated definite description, a special kind of descriptive predictable, or what? How could we be acquainted with, or otherwise come to know, what “God” stands for or characterizes? How do we—or do we—identify or individuate God? What are we talking about when we speak of God? What or who is this God we pray to, love, make sense of our lives in terms of, and the like?

We know, since we know how to use God-talk, that in talking about God, we are talking about a being of infinite love, mercy, power, and understanding. But such talk does not relieve our puzzlement. What literally are we talking about when we speak of this being? Of what kind of reality, if indeed it is of any kind of reality at all, do we speak when we use such awesome words? Do we really understand

what we are talking about here? There is a challenge here to faith that has bothered many a believer and nonbeliever alike. It is a challenge that can perhaps be met, but it is puzzling and, to some, a disturbing challenge all the same.²¹

Plantinga remarks to the question "Who or what is God?" that the "question is the sort to which a definite description provides the appropriate answer."²² The appropriate definite descriptions, Plantinga confidently remarks, are "the creator of the Universe," "the omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good person," "the Father of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." There is no more problem with "Who or what is God?," he incautiously proclaims, than there is with the definite descriptions supplied by way of an answer to the question "Who is Sylvia?," namely, such things as "the first person to climb the North Ridge of Mount Blanc" or "the local news announcer."

It is very difficult not to believe that Plantinga is being thoroughly disingenuous here. He knows full well that there are puzzles about the very understanding of the alleged definite descriptions answering to "God" in a way that there is no puzzle about the definite descriptions specifying for us who Sylvia is. He insinuates that it is as silly to be perplexed about who is God as it is, after some straightforward definite descriptions have been given, to be perplexed about who is Sylvia. But he *must* know that there are perplexities about "creator of the universe," "omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good person," or "Our Savior Jesus Christ" that are just as considerable as our perplexities about "God." As Ronald Hepburn pointed out years ago, Jesus Christ in Christian theology is taken to be the Son of God, and if we are puzzled about what we are talking about in speaking of God, we are going to be no less puzzled about what we are talking about in speaking of "the Son of God." And the phrases "the creator of the universe" or "the omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good person" are, as the history of their discussion makes evident, thoroughly puzzling phrases. Many theologians (sincere and believing Christians), troubled by what, if any, appropriate sense could be given to them, have, as we have remarked, sought analogical or symbolic readings of these phrases. Plantinga writes with what at least appears to be an arrogant unconcern for years and years of our intellectual history. When he remarks that these definite descriptions are entirely appropriate "since God is a person—a living being who believes and knows, speaks and acts, approves and disapproves," he is either being evasively disingenuous or almost unbelievably naive. For people who do not construe God as a kind of cosmic Mickey Mouse, it has been a key task to demythologize such talk so that it can be seen to be something that a nonsuperstitious person might possibly accept. There can be no taking it as unproblematical in the way Plantinga attempts to.²⁴

This is an extreme case of what I call "being bloody minded about God." It is a blind and stubborn refusal to face up to problems where there are indeed problems or where at least there certainly appear to be problems for religious belief and understanding. Perhaps, just perhaps, some subtle Wittgensteinian technique could show us that there are, after all, no problems here, or perhaps we can find a way to meet these problems, but the kind of footstamping that Plantinga engages in is not even a beginning. It is a kind of misplaced Mooreanism, buttressed by some jargon taken from modal logic, where no such appeal to common sense is possible. What we need to recognize is that the concept of God is very problematic indeed. What is crucially at issue is to ascertain, if we can, whether sufficient sense can be made of religious conceptions to make faith a live option for a reflective and concerned human being possessing a reasonable scientific and philosophical understanding of the world he lives in, or whether some form of atheism or agnosticism is the most nonevasive option for such a person. It is with some of the many facets of this issue that I shall wrestle in the pages to follow.

NOTES

1. Kai Nielsen, *Ethics Without God* (Prometheus Books: Buffalo, New York, 1973); Kai Nielsen, "Linguistic Philosophy and 'the Meaning of Life,'" in E. D. Klemke (ed.) *The Meaning of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 177-204; Kai Nielsen, "An Examination of the Thomistic Theory of Natural Law," *Natural Law Forum*, 4 (1959); and Kai Nielsen, "The Myth of Natural Law," in Sidney Hook (ed.) *Law and Philosophy* (New York University Press: New York, 1964).

2. For a clear statement of what anthropomorphism is see John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 65.

3. Paul Tillich's massive *Systematic Theology* is very hard going indeed. The writing is cumbersome and obscure beyond any rational excuse. However, in his more popular writings, what he wants to say, at least on a superficial level, attains some measure of clarity. His *The Courage To Be*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) in most places has this quality, but most clearly and most revealingly of all a scattered group of his popular essays captures, I believe, what made Tillich important to a number of people touched deeply by modernity who were not philosophers or theologians. He spoke to people who had a need to believe but could not swallow the old supernaturalistic framework. Braithwaite and Hare also tried to answer to such needs but their gruel was too thin for people with such religious aspirations. But Tillich and his popularizing disciple Bishop Robinson filled the bill. See the following short essays, all by Tillich: "Religion," *Perspectives* 15 (Spring, 1956): 43-48; "The God above God," *The Listener* (August 3, 1961); "The Lost Dimension in Religion" in *Adventures of the Mind*, Richard Thruelson and John Kebler

(eds.), (New York: Vintage Books, 1960); "The Idea of God as Affected by Modern Knowledge" in *In Search of God and Immortality*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), no editor; "The Relationship Today Between Science and Religion" in *The Student Seeks An Answer* (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1960), pp. 297-306. For important critiques of Tillich see the essays on Tillich in Sidney Hook (ed.), *Religious Experience and Truth* (New York: New York University Press, 1961); Paul Edwards, "Professor Tillich's Confusions," *Mind* 74 (1965); and Alistair M. MacLeod, *Tillich* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973). For more sympathetic elucidations and examinations of Tillich (examinations that attend to some of the above criticisms of Tillich), see Malcolm L. Diamond, *Contemporary Philosophy and Religious Thought* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), pp. 301-389; and William L. Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).

4. In the sorting out of this issue the exchange between Sidney Hook and myself is, I believe, instructive. See Kai Nielsen, "Religion and Naturalistic Humanism: Some Remarks on Hook's Critique of Religion" in Paul Kurtz (ed.) *Sidney Hook and the Contemporary World* (New York: John Day Company, 1968), pp. 257-279; Kai Nielsen, "Secularism and Theology: Remarks on a Form of Naturalistic Humanism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XIII (Spring, 1975): 109-126; Sidney Hook, "For An Open-Minded Naturalism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XIII (Spring, 1975): 127-136; and his *The Quest For Being* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), particularly pp. 115-135, 145-195.

5. John Skorupski gives us a good sense of such an anthropomorphism in the following passage: "A very common feature of traditional religious cosmologies is the belief that there are procedures which, if followed, will give a man the ability to see the spirits around him. Or people often believe that there are certain places such as streams or glades in which gods may be encountered—not simply in the sense that their presence is felt but in the sense that one might get a glimpse of them." John Skorupski, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

6. This can survive a very thorough rejection of the methodological and epistemological programmes of both Hume and Kant and the traditions they have spawned in contemporary philosophy. This is shown clearly in the work of Richard Rorty, whose *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979) is one such rejection—indeed a very persuasive rejection. Yet, for all his historicism, Rorty remarks, without any ambivalence at all, "that the preservation of the values of the Enlightenment is our best hope," pp. 335-6. And, for all his distance from positivism, Rorty also declares "the positivists were absolutely right in thinking it imperative to extirpate metaphysics, when 'metaphysics' means the attempt to give knowledge of what science cannot know," p. 384.

7. There has, of course, been some dissent, principally from neo-scholastic philosophers and, as well, from two modal-logic-with-God philosophers, Charles Hartshorne and Alvin Plantinga. But these are backward looking, rear-guard operations of little cultural or intellectual significance.

8. There is often an attempt at such a point to make an appeal to faith. In addition to "The Primacy of Philosophical Theology," reprinted here, I

have tried critically to examine such moves in my "Can Faith Validate God-talk?" *Theology Today* XX (July, 1963); "Faith and Authority," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 3 (Winter, 1965); and "Religious Perplexity and Faith," *Crane Review* VIII (Fall, 1965).

9. This is one of the central things at issue in my exchange with Sidney Hook. See the references in footnote 4.

10. I have tried to defend this in my "On the Rationality of Radical Theological Neo-Naturalism," *Religious Studies* (1978): 193-204; in my "Radical Theological Non-Naturalism," *Sophia* XVIII (July, 1978): 1-6; and in my essays reprinted in *The Logic of God: Theology and Verification*, Malcolm L. Diamond and Thomas V. Litzenburg (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1975).

11. Richard B. Braithwaite, "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief" in *The Logic of God*, pp. 127-149 and R. M. Hare, "The Simple Believer" in *Religion and Morality*, Gene Outka and John Reeder, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 393-427.

12. See my penultimate essay in this volume, my "Principles of Rationality," *Philosophical Papers* III (October, 1974): 55-89 and my "Christian Empiricism," *The Journal of Religion* 61 (April, 1981): 146-167. The latter contains a critique of Braithwaite's and Hare's "Christian empiricism."

13. This claim is most extensively developed in my "On Speaking of God," *Theoria* XXVII (1962): 110-137. This essay is reprinted, together with a number of my other essays, in *Analytical Philosophy of Religion in Canada*, Mostafa Foghfowry (ed.), (Ottawa, ON: The University of Ottawa Press, 1982).

14. See here William P. Alston, "Tillich's Conception of a Religious Symbol" in *Religious Experience and Truth*, pp. 12-26 and chapter 7 of Paul Henle (ed.), *Language, Thought and Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1958).

15. Sidney Hook, "The Atheism of Paul Tillich," in *Religious Experience and Truth*, pp. 59-63 and his *The Quest For Being*, pp. 145-171.

16. For the argument for this, see my "Can Faith Validate God-talk?" *Theology Today* XX (July, 1963).

17. Kai Nielsen, "On Fixing the Reference Range of 'God,'" in *The Logic of God*, pp. 330-340.

18. See Kurt Baier's essay and my essay in E. D. Klemke's (ed.) *The Meaning of Life*, pp. 81-117 and 177-204 and my *Ethics Without God*, pp. 48-64.

19. See Baier's essay cited above.

20. The citations in the text come from Plantinga's response to my "Religion and Groundless Believing," Frederick Crosson (ed.) *The Autonomy of Religious Belief* (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). The exchange took place at the conference on "Religion and Forms of Life" at the University of Notre Dame in 1979. See, as well, Plantinga's "Analytic Philosophy and Christianity," *Christianity Today* (October 25, 1963): 75-78 and his "Verificationism" in *The Logic of God*, pp. 446-455, and my response to it in my *Contemporary Critiques of Religion* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 55-71.

21. The challenge is powerfully put from the side of religious belief by Michael Durrant, *The Logical Status of 'God'* (New York: Macmillan, 1973)

and his *Theology and Intelligibility* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

22. In his response to my "Religion and Groundless Believing."

23. Ronald Hepburn, *Christianity and Paradox* (London: Watts, 1958), chapter 5. But also see, to tease the matter out a little more, John Hick's response in his "A Philosopher Criticizes Theology," *The Modern Quarterly* 31 (1962): 103-110.

24. Plantinga, *op. cit.*