

Necessarily implied by my analysis of the existential question as a single question distinct from both properly metaphysical and properly moral questions, but having two aspects that in turn relate it respectively to both of these other types of questions, is that the procedures for verifying any assertion answering it are distinct from, even while also related to, the procedures for verifying assertions answering properly moral and metaphysical questions respectively. In other words, there are distinct procedures appropriate for verifying existential assertions in essentially the same way in which there are such distinct procedures for verifying both metaphysical and moral assertions

Even so, in some, if hardly all, of my discussions of the procedures for verifying existential assertions, I have asserted or implied—at any rate, clearly given the impression—that the only such procedures are those for verifying properly metaphysical and properly moral assertions respectively. Thus, for example, I say in *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?*, "Broadly speaking we may say that a specific answer [*sc.* to the existential question] is true insofar as it so responds to the question as to solve the problem that all religions exist to solve—the problem, namely, of making sense somehow of our basic faith in the meaning of life, given the facts of life as we actually experience it. But whether, or to what extent, a specific religious answer is capable of doing this can be determined only by verifying its necessary implications, ethical [*sc.* moral] as well as metaphysical. If it is true, its implications also must be true; and unless they can be verified by procedures appropriate to ethical and metaphysical claims respectively, it cannot be verified, either" (18 f.). The sentence, "But whether, or to what extent, a specific religious answer is capable of doing this can be determined only [*sic!*] by verifying its necessary implications, ethical as well as metaphysical" clearly gives the impression, not simply that the necessary implications of religious answers must *also* be verifiable metaphysically and morally, but also that the *only* procedures for verifying properly existential assertions themselves are the procedures appropriate for verifying properly moral and properly metaphysical assertions respectively.

But if this were true, there would be no reason to allow that properly existential questions and assertions are distinct from as well as related to

properly metaphysical and properly moral questions and assertions respectively. Conversely, if they really are distinct from as well as related to these other types of assertions, there must be at least some correspondingly distinct procedures for verifying them. And this is so even if it is also true that no assertion could be verified existentially, or religiously, unless its necessary implications, both metaphysical and moral, could also be verified metaphysically and morally.—Needless to say, everything said here about "existential," or "religious" assertions would also hold good of any properly "philosophical" assertions insofar as they, too, are addressed to the same existential question.

I in effect recognize this in my discussion, in "Concerning Belief in God," of religious inquiry and of properly religious arguments for the reality of God, as distinct from both metaphysical and moral types of inquiry and the arguments for God's reality respectively proper to them (*Doing Theology Today*: 105). All properly religious arguments for God's reality, I say, are really only different ways of developing one such argument—"to the effect, namely, that we exist humanly at all only because of our at least implicit belief in God and that as a consequence, this belief must also be affirmed explicitly if our explicit understanding of ourselves is to be both complete and consistent." But, then, in the very same essay, the only reason I give for saying that "belief in God is also the proper object of philosophical as well as of metaphysical and moral inquiry" is that "while philosophy . . . is more than metaphysics and morals taken simply as such, it essentially includes both of them and thus comprises within its own distinctive kind of inquiry the inquiries respectively distinctive of them" (106). Here, again, I clearly give the impression that existential assertions—in this case, philosophical rather than religious assertions—are, after all, not really distinct from properly metaphysical and properly moral assertions.

The conclusion seems obvious that I have not thought these matters through as thoroughly as I should have. Among the issues I still need to clarify are the following:

Is there, as I have assumed, a logical type of existential assertions common to religion and philosophy alike that are distinct from both

metaphysical and moral assertions, and yet related to them by mutual implication—existential assertions necessarily implying certain metaphysical and moral assertions, and metaphysical and moral assertions necessarily implying certain existential assertions? If there is, then there would appear to be no difficulty in redeeming the claim that the existential question is a type of question distinct from as well as closely related to the logically different types of question properly distinguished as metaphysical and moral. If, on the other hand, "existential assertions" should turn out to be a misleading way of referring to what I mean, viz., not a logically distinct type of assertions, properly so called, but rather another distinct use of language that is itself nonassertive, even though it is logically dependent on both metaphysical and moral assertions, even as they, in turn, validate it, or, at least, the possibility of it—in that case, the existential "question" would be distinct, not because answers to it take the form of a distinct type of assertions, but because answers to it are not properly "assertions" at all.

But, as I say, I have to think all this through far more carefully than I have as yet managed to do.

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