

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

"In outline the argument from existence is: Temporal existence implies everlasting (not timeless) existence; everlasting existence can belong to but one individual, which can only be conceived as God. Everlasting or 'eternal' existence is not the negation of temporal existence, but its perfection. It is the negation of existence having a beginning or an end in time, the negation of birth or death, not necessarily of change" (MWG, pp. 255 f.).

"It is clear that no subject or subjects of change are sufficient unless at least one of them is eternal, that is, ungenerated and undying. For a generated subject can appear as a new state only of a subject not at that moment generated, and if this pre-existent subject were itself generated earlier, then it could itself only constitute a state of a still earlier subject, which must still endure, and thus there must always be at least one subject to whom no beginning or end can be assigned. This is not the usual argument against a regress of causes. For the subject of change must endure through all the changes of which it is the subject" (Ibid., pp. 257 f.).

"The upshot of the argument so far is then: if anything exists in time and space, God exists as the eternal and omnipresent unity of space-time, without which that unity is not positively conceivable. By God is here meant an eternal, omnipresent being, 'flexible' enough to possess the infinity of qualities which the whole of process up to now has brought forth, this 'whole' being simply the life of God in which we, the speakers, now share. Only mind as love makes the flexibility in question identifiable as a positive characteristic" (Ibid., pp. 273 f.).

"The argument from 'existence' is only a slight variant upon the

argument from space and time. It can be made concrete to the reader if he asks himself what can be meant by the fact that he is a part of reality. . . . The world is a collection of items, membership in which entirely constitutes the items, measures all the difference between them and nothing. If the items are all of an accidental character, the situation is surely nonsensical. Evidently there is something, relationship to which is the universal measure of reality, and which itself is real by its own measure, is self-existent" (Ibid., pp. 276 f.).

"God is thus more or less self-evidently contained in the mere idea of one's own existence, the degree of self-evidence depending upon the degree of clarity attained by the latter idea. God is contained in our existence, not merely as cause of our 'coming to be' but as constitutive of the very meaning of 'coming to be.' . . . Thus all being is God in that only God participates adequately in all lives, and in that without this participation 'being' would have no definite or public character, and 'I am' (or 'there is a man of a certain type') would have meaning only for the speaker, that is, no meaning. . . . We 'give' God his passive being in the sense that, by definition, this being, which is social, can receive determinate form, aesthetic realization, only in partial dependence upon others. But it really is his being we give him, since we do not 'act' in a public sense (in the sense in which reality is not a solipsistic concept), that is, we do not really act, except as we act upon God, no matter what else we act upon. It is his response to us that makes our act real, in the sense in which we can call the acts of others also real, and that is the sense of 'reality.' . . . We have self-reliance because we rely secretly upon one mind that is utterly

reliable, that is, one mind that is always passive to the full measure of our potential activity, one mind that will listen no matter what we say, and thus lift our utterance above the merely private (which, as the positivists rightly say, is meaningless, is nothing) and make it relevant to other finite minds who also share in the same atmosphere of all-appreciation that is, of 'being.' To look at a fly, or at a crystal, and say, 'That too exists,' is to refer to 'existence' as neither oneself nor the fly though common to both, and such that without it neither oneself nor the fly would be anything at all. What is that something? What could it be but God?" (Ibid., pp. 279, 282, 283, 284).

"Contingent substances furnish relative identities through limited changes (though even this identity must be measured by the alone fully effective and public self-identity of the necessary substance), but the changes of the coming to be or ceasing of these substances requires a subject of change which always changes, and which is therefore not contingent" (Ibid., p. 297).

"The reason God is not a detail, whose existence would be one of two equally conceivable alternatives, is that he is really the content of 'existence,' the generic factor of the universe. To conceive God is not to conceive what might exist, but what 'existence' itself must be--if the idea of God is not meaningless. Either God is nothing at all, or else all that exists exists in and through him, and therefore contingently, and he himself exists (in his essence, though not in his accidents) solely in and through himself, that is, necessarily" (Ibid., p. 305).

"All meaning implicitly asserts God, because all meaning is nothing less than a reference to one or other of the two aspects of the cosmic

reality, what it has done or what it could do--that is to the consequent or primordial natures of God" (Ibid., p. 306).

". . . contingency is not a relation of existence to a thing, but of a thing to existence. To say a thing might not exist is not to say there might be the thing without existence. It is rather to say there might be existence without the thing. . . . It is the world (in its generic features) which does not imply its contingent inhabitants, not the inhabitants which do not imply the world with themselves as its existing parts. They do imply it. Without it they, as individuals, would not be, even as possible" (Ibid., p. 308).

"If all individuals are contingent, then the whole of existence is contingent, and it might be that nothing existed, or it might be true (though nonsensical) that there was nothing of which any proposition would be true. Furthermore, what could constitute the identity of existence as such, if not an eternal and necessary individual manifested in all individuals? We human beings tend to carry our own personality with us in all our hypotheses, in so far as we say to ourselves, Suppose I were to experience so and so. This gives an aspect of identity by which we might try to define existence as such. But the definition would be solipsistic. Hence there must be some further aspect of identity, like ourselves in being a concrete existent, but unlike us in being able to constitute the unity, the all-embracing register of existence itself, without limitation upon conceivable variety and independence. This is what God is, the all embracing register of existence, perfect in his flexible and tolerant ('merciful') sensitivity to all experiences, who can see things as they see themselves, also as other things see them,

causes are always logically arbitrary or contingent in their very existence. If there is nothing but the sum of such contingent causes, then that anything at all exists is sheer accident. Yet this cannot be, for 'it might be that nothing exists' is an absurdity, since there would 'be' at least the fact of the non-being of everything. Though all details of being are contingent (and, as Peirce showed, a non-contingent detail would be a contradiction in terms), it cannot be contingent that there are details of being, some details or other. But what is the being which must receive some details or other, what is the ground of alternatives such that not all of them can be unrealized? The being which will be there no matter what else is there is the universal being, the first cause. The ground of alternatives which makes it impossible that none be realized is not itself a member of an alternative, but rather the being to whose existence there can be no alternative, the necessary or self-existent being which requires that there shall be some non-necessary actualities or other. Thus the first cause is not in every sense independent of other causes, but rather in its essence it depends upon (in the sense of necessitating or omnipotently requiring) the class of contingent beings as such, while in its accidents the necessary being (necessary only in essence and as to having some accidents or other) depends upon just which contingent beings in fact exist."

"The traditional procedure of inferring a necessary being from contingent beings held to be in no way involved in the necessary being which was supposed to explain them was self-contradictory and a chief cause of skepticism and atheism. The absurdity of denying a first cause lies precisely in the implication that contingent predicates inhere only in

contingent subjects, that accidents happen only to the accidental. The absurdity is avoided only by regarding accidents as contingent phases of the life of a Being as in essential reality not accidental but the necessary recipient of all accidents, the non-alternative medium of all open alternatives. To make the contingent being merely contingent, and the necessary being merely necessary, is to evade the essential question: how are they together one reality? 'The contingent-and-the-necessary' must form some sort of whole (all reality, all that is what it is whether human beings know what it is or not) and this whole cannot be exclusively contingent or exclusively necessary. Nor can it be less than God, the supreme cause, but, for that very reason, also the supreme effect; the one being who (in his essence) has always been and always will be involved in all causation, and equally the one being who (in his accidents) always has been and always will be enriched by every effect, garnered without loss in his loving omniscience" ("Cause," An Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Vergilius Ferm, pp. 134 f.).

". . . dollars, for example, are accidents in the world, not only because there was a time when there were none, but because it is in some sense the same world or the same 'existence,' which now contains and once did not contain dollars, and therefore the self-identity of existence or of the world-as-such is independent of dollars . . . Contingency is that union of diversity and identity which is involved in the very idea of change or of succession.

"Now the above analysis also explains what necessary existence may be. The ultimate identity of existence, which contingently includes all things within itself, does not in this fashion include itself, the

identity, as a contingent item. This identity is, and it 'is' in another fashion than ordinary things, for it alone is not contingent,--if contingency is what we have above supposed. Now you may assume that there is contingency in some entirely different sense back of the identity of existence, but what faintest reason is there for this verbal leap in the dark?" ("The Formal Validity and Real Significance of the Ontological Argument," pp. 239 f.).