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God's Existence

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and are to be expected given a widely held view of divine agency in the miraculous. Moreover, Van Till's characterization of narrow naturalism either is question-begging or represents a misunderstanding of divine action in the areas of investigation listed throughout this chapter (for example, the origin of first life). It is question-begging because advocates of theistic science do not view the origin of life, various kinds of life and so forth as involving solely natural capacities and physical interactions, and they see no sufficient evidence to change their minds. Alternatively, it is a misunderstanding because Van Till incorrectly locates a main intellectual drive toward theistic science in the conflation between two sorts of naturalism and not, as we have seen, where it should be. It is up to him to show clear examples of how this confusion on the part of advocates of theistic science figures essentially into their position.

In this chapter I have not had the space to defend libertarian agency for human or divine (primary causal) action, though I obviously think such a defense is possible. Instead I have tried to show that the claim that miracles are in principle outside the bounds of science is one that is embedded in an attitude that includes a complementarian, methodological naturalist view of science and reality, along with a compatibilist view of human and divine action in the natural world (outside salvation history). This, in turn, has led many to reject the presence of gaps requiring theistic explanation because, among other things, the back-drop just mentioned denies that such gaps exist. By contrast, while I would not limit the use of theistic science to the employment of direct, primary causal acts of God, it seems to me that if such acts have occurred in certain cases, and if libertarian agency is a good model for characterizing such acts, then there will, in fact, be gaps in the causal fabric that are irreducibly nonnatural and must be recognized as such within scientific practice. Whether or not miracles are outside the bounds of science, then, turns in part on our model of divine agency, which in turn can be understood on the basis of an analogy with human action. Complementarians may reject libertarian agency, but even if they do it should be clear why some of us who accept the libertarian model believe that the recognition of miracles can be part of *scientific* practice.

NINE

GOD'S EXISTENCE

W. DAVID BECK

THE PROBLEM OF MIRACLES IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE QUESTION of God's existence. Miracles have even been used to argue for the existence of God. As Douglas Geivett explains in chapter eleven, one type of argument for miracles depends in part on first developing a successful argument for God's existence. This chapter presents an approach to arguing for the existence of God in a way that sets the stage for arguing that miracles are possible, perhaps even probable. What is needed is an argument powerful enough not only to justify belief in the existence of God but also to establish at least three things about the nature of God:

1. God is a being powerful enough to produce events in space/time.
2. God is an intelligence with a capacity to frame the convergence of events in space/time.
3. God is a personality with the moral concern to act in history.

As it happens, these three propositions are the conclusions of three traditional arguments, often used independently to justify belief in the reality of God. The cosmological argument concludes that there is a being that is the cause of all existence in space/time, the teleological (or design) argument that there is an intelligent designer of the universe, and the moral argument that objective moral judgments are supported

by the will of a transcendent and authoritative moral personality. Since these three arguments differ with respect to the precise formulation of the conclusion reached, they can in combination exhibit the rationality of believing in the existence of a moral personality with sufficient power, intelligence and motive to act miraculously within the world, which owes its existence to that same personality.

Often these arguments are construed along lines that fit the pattern of inference to the best explanation:

1. Identify some prominent feature of reality that is puzzling and requires explanation.
2. Illustrate the inadequacy of available naturalistic explanations for this feature.
3. Infer the existence and activity of a supernatural being as the best explanation.

Arguments that follow this pattern do not “prove” the existence of God in the sense that the conclusion follows necessarily from obviously true premises. But nothing that ambitious is really needed. If a theistic hypothesis is the best explanation for a sufficiently wide range of puzzling phenomena, then it will be most reasonable to accept that hypothesis.¹

The Cosmological Argument

There is no single argument that might be designated *the* cosmological argument. Rather, there are numerous categories of cosmological arguments, with individual versions of each.² Many cosmological arguments have in common, however, the inference to an ultimate cause from the contingency or dependency of things. I will present one version of the argument and then respond to common objections. I conclude that this type of argument is able to withstand attacks and that we are entitled to hold that there is a Being with the capacity to cause events in space/time, thus providing the *first component* of a theistic basis for affirming the reality of miracles.

Premise 1: Every physical object we observe to exist is contingent. This argument begins with a simple observation concerning the things³ we see and know about in the physical world around us. It is not a statement about everything in the universe, let alone every possible entity, but only about those things we actually observe (or sense perceive either directly or indirectly). The key element in this first premise is the notion of “contingency.” Just what is that? Possibly Paul implies a form of this argument in Romans 1:19-20: “What may be known about God is plain

to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (NIV). In this passage the phrase “since the creation” has not only a temporal but a causative sense that reinforces the “what has been made” clause. The point here is that everyone can see that certain things owe their existence to other things. Nothing we know of exists without being caused by something else in the universe; and these causes are themselves effects of other causes.

Patterson Brown has described this characteristic of some causal relations as transitivity,⁴ that is, A is caused by B, but only as B is caused by C. Electrons and galaxies only pass on or transfer whatever they have received as effects of other causes. Every physical object we know of possesses this sort of contingency: it exists and functions only as it is caused by other objects in the chain and, if Einstein is right, by every other factor in the whole cosmic network of these causal chains.

Premise 2: The sequence of causally related contingent objects cannot be infinite. The first premise describes the universe as a system or network of causal chains. The point of the second premise is to indicate that this system, regardless of how complex and interconnected, and regardless of how extensive it may be, is nevertheless finite. In support of this conclusion, most cosmological arguments involve an appeal to analogies. For example, Thomas Aquinas uses the picture of a hand moving a stick moving a ball. But perhaps most frequently used and discussed is the train analogy.

Imagine that you are introducing some alien from Alpha Centauri to the marvels of planet Earth. In a forest clearing in front of you is a boxcar moving on the tracks. Baffled, your alien buddy asks you why it is moving. You reply that it is pulled by a boxcar in front of it but hidden by the trees. “And how does that boxcar move?” the alien asks. “It is pulled by another boxcar,” you say. And so on.

This story invites us to imagine analogies for the various naturalistic scenarios that describe how it is that things exist in the real world. “The cosmos is a great circle of being,” proposes the naturalist. But, returning to our story, stringing boxcars all the way around the earth until the last one hooks up to the first cannot explain the motion of the first boxcar. The naturalist persists: “The cosmos is an intricately evolved ecosystem in which everything is related causally to everything else.” So boxcars clutter the world in an unimaginably complex system of railroading

enterprise such that in some way every other boxcar is pulling the first one. We still have no accounting, however, for the motion of that first one.

It is tempting to settle the problem of ultimate causal explanation by noting that each boxcar is being pulled by the one in front of it. But this is where transitivity becomes crucial. It may well be true that boxcar A is pulled by boxcar B. But B can pull A only because B is being pulled by C. The pulling action of B is transitive. It occurs only because B is, in turn, pulled by C. And so it is also true that A is being pulled by C. And C, and therefore A, is pulled by D, and so on.

The naturalist may imagine yet another alternative. Suppose there are infinitely many boxcars. Or, speaking of the universe, suppose the naturalist says, "The causal explanation of objects in the universe is absorbed in infinite complexity." But now something important becomes obvious. An infinity of boxcars will still leave unsolved the problem of explaining why the first boxcar is moving and hence why any are. The problem is not with the arrangement of boxcars, nor is it a matter of the number of boxcars. The problem is that no boxcar in the chain has the capacity to generate or initiate its own motion. It can pass on the pulling, but it does not initiate it.

Likewise, the problem with everything we know of in the universe is its contingency. The supposition that the causal nexus is constituted by infinitely many contingent objects fails to be an ultimate explanation for the existence of any individual object in the nexus. There has been no full accounting for the existence of even the first item of the sequence currently under observation. As Thomas Aquinas summarizes: "But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an effect nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false."⁵

Conclusion: There must be a first cause of the system of contingent objects in causal sequence. Where does this argument lead? The appropriate conclusion may be inferred without effort. If the causal sequence is finite, as it must be, then there is a first cause. If there are finitely many boxcars in motion, then there is a first (or last depending on which way you look at it). Perhaps it is not obvious that the first cause must be God. The apostle Paul, however, observes that we know both the "eternal power" and the "divine nature" of God. Thomas Aquinas simply concludes that "it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause to which everyone gives the name of God."⁶ But can we conclude that the first cause is God?

The concept of "first cause" has two implications. To say that it is the *first* cause is to say that it neither requires nor has a cause itself. First is first! Thus it is fundamentally different from every other cause *inside* the system: it is not contingent. It depends on, is limited by or exists because of absolutely nothing else. This first cause does not merely pass on causality in a transitive relation; rather, it literally initiates the causality. The apostle's phrase "divine nature" is literally "God-ness," which conveys the idea of nondependence.

To say of the conclusion that it is the first *cause* is to define its relation to everything else in the sequence, namely, that it is their cause. It is the cause of all things in the sequence in that it initiates all of the causal activity in the sequence, without forbidding that each cause is, in fact, the cause of the next one in the sequence. The only explanation for the imagined moving line of boxcars is that somewhere there is a locomotive powerful enough to pull the whole train, an engine that does not itself need to be pulled. This seems to be included in Paul's notion of eternal (all-there-ever-is) power. And so the concept of a first cause is richer than it might at first appear. It is the actual cause of the existence of everything in the universe, and it itself exists without any cause or dependency whatsoever. This we may indeed call "God."

Objections Considered

We can clarify the conclusion just reached by dealing with some major objections to this argument. One of the most frequent is that the conclusion of the argument still does not look much like God. Certainly it is not the triune God of the Bible, who seeks our relationship and worship. Walter Kaufmann, for example, concludes his discussion of Thomas Aquinas's arguments by remarking, "Clearly, the God of Aquinas' theology is not the God of Job, Moses, or Jesus."⁷ How are we to derive God's personhood, love, holiness, uniqueness or otherness from the meager conclusion of the above argument? "God" appears in the cosmological argument merely as a nondescript causal power behind the universe.

Arguably, the cosmological argument does not yield a full concept of God. But the argument is sufficient to show that the naturalist judgment that the physical universe is all there is is clearly wrong.⁸ There is at least one thing in the causal network that is not another contingent object and on which everything else depends. We should also note that the cosmological argument has sometimes been extended by drawing out

the implications of the idea of an uncaused cause.⁹ I have not attempted this here since my project is to elucidate a concept of God sufficient for establishing the possibility, perhaps even the probability, of miracles. This project begins with a cosmological argument that shows that there is a nonnatural agency *capable* of producing events in space/time.

Another criticism simply rejects all arguments against an infinite sequence by noting that an infinite mathematical series is logically possible. "One wonders why, if there can be infinite sequences in mathematics, there could not be one in causality," says Michael Martin.¹⁰ But Martin's inference is unfounded. First, supposing the actual existence of infinitely many numbers does not affect the above argument for a necessarily finite causal nexus, for, presumably, the relation between elements in the number series is not causal. Furthermore, we should not confuse logical possibilities with actual realities. While it is perhaps conceivable that there are infinitely many causes in the chain of objects constituting the physical universe, the mere conceivability of this does nothing to recommend it to us for belief. Not everything that can be conceived should be believed, otherwise one would be obliged to believe two contradictory propositions just so long as both are conceivable. When faced with the choice of believing one or another of two contradictory propositions, both of which are conceivable, one should believe the proposition with the greater explanatory power.

Paul Edwards, another atheist, argues that what we encounter in the real world are complete causes such that there is no reason for thinking that the system of causes must be finite. That is, knowing that A is caused by B is enough to explain A, and we are not required to ask questions about C. The real world is more like a string of locomotives, he thinks.¹¹ Here there is a failure to appreciate the real nature of contingency and how this relates to causality in the actual world. No physical object we know of is like a locomotive; that is, nothing explains its own existence. This is the point of calling each individual physical object we observe "contingent." Nothing fully explains the existence of anything else by itself. Our universe is less like a sequence of locomotives than a sequence of boxcars.¹²

In his highly acclaimed book *A Brief History of Time*, Stephen W. Hawking suggests that space/time may be closed, "self-contained, having no boundary or edge," and that this would eliminate any need for a creator.¹³ But this is just to assert that a circle of boxcars could explain the motion of any one of them. Robin Le Poidevin points out

that whether linear or circular, the system cannot account for itself.¹⁴ The problem, again, is the contingency of every object in the system, not the specific arrangement of the contingent causes.

Other criticisms are directed at the principle of causality, a principle common to all cosmological arguments. The complaint is that the argument either explicitly or tacitly *assumes* the principle that existence needs an explanation. But the force of the term *needs* has been variously understood. In some forms of the cosmological argument (Leibniz's is the famous example), the principle is construed as logically necessary. But it has often been argued that no such principle can or could be established as a point of logic.¹⁵ The principle is at the very least, however, an empirical, scientific generalization about the facts of the physical world, a principle whose unexceptionable character we rely on in the practice of science. While the success of the principle in scientific practice provides a weaker basis for accepting the principle than would be the case if it was an a priori deliverance of reason, this principle does effectively govern rational decision-making. It would be a form of special pleading, then, to prohibit appeal to the principle of causality in our cosmological argument for the existence of God.

There are other lesser objections to this argument that do not, as far as I can tell, endanger it. Here, then, is a strong argument for the conclusion that there is a first cause of objects constitutive of the physical universe. This is the first point needed in affirming the action of God in history by means of a miracle.

The Teleological Argument

This argument is probably the oldest, simplest, shortest and easiest to understand of all the theistic arguments. It is based on the common perception that the universe, taken either as a whole or as some part of it, has features that are too complex to have occurred by chance. They must, therefore, have an intelligent source. Richard Swinburne points out that there is no question about the validity of the logic of this argument.¹⁶ It is based on an analogy between the natural universe and machines. The most famous example of this type of analogy comes from William Paley's classic work *Natural Theology*.¹⁷ Suppose, walking along, we discover a shiny object on the ground. We observe first the precise and regular motion of the hands and then discover inside the object an incredible array of gears, springs and levers, all working together to tell the exact time of day.

What should we conclude? Should we be amazed at what the elements can produce by chance? Surely not. We infer that a device with such intricate design, which carries out such precise means to an end, cannot simply have occurred without the aid of a designer. Paley draws a parallel between the watch example and the universe: "Every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature, with the difference on the side of nature being greater and more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation."¹⁸ The teleological or design argument notes the intelligent design of tools and machines evident in their purposiveness and functionality and infers a similar intelligent design to explain similarity of purposiveness and functioning in the natural order.

Premise 1: The universe has features that exhibit functional and purposive structure. It is a simple observation that the natural universe includes elements that in their complex structure are means to an end. These complexities often lend themselves very nicely to a quantitative approach. In particular, the probability of these complexities may be measured statistically, and this avoids the pitfall of circularity.

The formulation of the design argument sketched here avoids certain problems associated with arguments about the universe as a whole. There are two problems here, both pointed out long ago by David Hume,¹⁹ and both of which, though they can be overcome, only invite unnecessary difficulty. One problem is that we know too little about the universe as a whole to make any comparisons between it and machines. Moreover, since we know of only one universe, our basis for comparison is too small. The other problem is that the universe is full of examples of evil, chaos, disorder and apparently useless things (like the panda's thumb) that would also have to be explained as part of a universal analogy. We will return to these concerns shortly.

Premise 2: Features of the universe exhibiting functional and purposive structure cannot be explained by chance. Since we can calculate the probability of an event's occurrence, we can attach specific values to natural phenomena to indicate whether they might occur as a result of the normal randomness permitted by the laws of physics, that is, by chance. A few examples of the kinds of probabilities involved are needed here to indicate just how strong this argument is.

Fine-tuning. A great deal has been learned in recent years about the adaptedness of the universe to human life. Despite the innumerable possibilities of getting it wrong and the incalculable complexities of

systems needed to make human life work, the cosmos got everything right. Hugh Ross, in a recent collection of evidence relevant to the teleological argument, lists fifty-seven examples of such "fine-tuning," each of which by themselves would be enough to suggest intelligent design. The probability of their accidentally occurring together is infinitesimally small. Here are a few examples of conditions that had to be met in order for life to arise on our planet.²⁰

1. Mass density of the universe

If larger: too much deuterium from big bang, hence stars burn too rapidly

If smaller: insufficient helium from big bang, hence too few heavy elements forming

2. Polarity of the water molecule

If greater: heat of fusion and vaporization would be too great for life to exist

If smaller: heat of fusion and vaporization would be too small for life's existence; liquid water would become too inferior a solvent for life chemistry to proceed; ice would not float, leading to a runaway freeze-up

3. Oxygen quantity in atmosphere

If greater: plants and hydrocarbons would burn up too easily

If less: advanced animals would have too little to breathe

We must stress that these precise conditions themselves do not exist in isolation. They are all related to one another and dependent on the laws of physics in general. Not only did the universe get everything right when the slightest deviation at innumerable points would have eliminated the possibility of life, but the universe appears to have been preadapted for life.

DNA. The investigation of DNA is another rich source of evidence of design. Physicists Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, commenting on just one phase of the development of DNA, concluded in 1981:

The trouble is that there are about two thousand enzymes, and the chance of obtaining them all in a random trial is only one part in $(10^{20})^{2000} = 10^{40,000}$, an outrageously small probability that could not be faced even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup. If one is not prejudiced . . . that life originated on the Earth, this simple calculation wipes the idea entirely out of court.²¹

The crucial thing about DNA is that it has to exist before there are

intelligent creatures, and yet it has the character of encoded information which can only be produced by an intelligence.²² Thus, it too demands that there be an intelligence external to any developing system.

Conclusion: There is an intelligent source of the functional and purposive structures in the universe. Let us be clear about the conclusion. Again, it must be obvious that our conclusion falls short of the God of the Bible. Many of David Hume's criticisms of the design argument make this very point. The argument does not entail that there is only one God, let alone that God is unqualifiedly good or unlimited. It is best to acknowledge these limitations of the argument and assimilate the argument into a total cumulative case for the existence of God. All that really follows from the design argument sketched here is that certain features of the universe could not have been produced by chance processes internal to the universe and that the actual source must have an intelligence beyond anything we can imitate or even imagine. That is all that we need in order to satisfy the second point required as a rational basis for affirming the reality of miracles. And the argument from design to this somewhat modest conclusion is further strengthened by the background evidence for the existence of the first cause referred to in the cosmological argument.

Objections considered. Analogical arguments can be perfectly good arguments; we use them all the time, many times a day. My choice of each word on this page as I write involves comparing contexts and situations in the past with my present needs, and this involves the making of analogies. Some of these choices will be better than others. Some will be just right, but some will be inappropriate, based on bad or insufficient evidence. This suggests the two fundamental ways that analogies may be weakened or discredited as inductive inferences. They may rest either on biased, selective or partial evidence, or else on inconclusive or insufficient data. The objections addressed below fit these two categories.

Some objections to the design argument stem from the presence of evil in the world alongside features of "design." This is not the place for a full-scale response to the notorious "problem of evil." Notice, however, that the presence of evil in the universe is irrelevant to the specific conclusion drawn in the above use of the design argument. The argument says nothing about the goodness of God; it only infers an intelligent source of design in the universe. Even if there were only one thing in the universe that manifested a high degree of complexity, and everything else was chaotic, meaningless, even evil, then there would still be enough

evidence to support our conclusion that there is an intelligent designer.

Another frequent objection is that no matter how great the complexity of the structure may be, a finite number of microchanges may be all that is needed to yield that complexity; thus a completely random process of evolution remains an option. Richard Swinburne, however, has argued cogently that a series of small evolutionary changes only *describes* how the simple became complex; it does not *explain* it. In fact, he argues, evolution only intensifies the need for God. For it would take even more intelligence to produce a universe that develops in intricate patterns into functional complexity than it would simply to create a complex universe outright. An evolved universe would require the design of both means and ends, and not of ends alone.²³

A common current objection appeals to the multiple-worlds hypothesis. John Leslie, for example, acknowledges the evidence for fine-tuning, but then argues that developments in quantum theory imply the existence of innumerable distinct universes of immense size within the larger universe. There are, as it were, enough "experiments" at universe production to have simultaneously produced any universe, even this very complex, finely tuned one, so that this is just one among many universes.²⁴

Hugh Ross has done an excellent job of showing that the multiple-worlds hypothesis, in its various current forms, is not supported by physics.²⁵ Still, since the existence of many worlds is a logical possibility, the objection deserves a fuller response.

The hypothesis is really just a fancy form of the old given-enough-time-anything-can-happen argument. Leslie, for example, actually resorts to the analogy of a typing monkey that will eventually produce a transcript of a bit of Shakespearean literature if there is no limit to the opportunities to do so. But if the improbability of an event is so high that it cannot reasonably be expected to occur apart from outside input by an intelligent agent, then we should infer the existence of an outside intelligence to explain the occurrence of that event, regardless of how much time is available. If the monkey at the typewriter is not an agent with some intelligence, then there is nothing about an indefinite length of time at the typewriter that ensures that eventually the monkey would produce a Shakespearean sonnet. This is true even if it is *possible* that such monkeying around would reproduce one of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the monkey would recognize the excellence of its own artifact. So there is the added difficulty of account-

ing for the existence of intelligences within this world of physical complexity, not merely the physical complexity itself.

Leslie's argument commits a form of the "gambler's fallacy." The gambler acts as if the odds of getting double sixes get better with each role of two dice. But, of course, the odds are one in thirty-six every time the gambler rolls the dice, regardless of how often they are thrown or what has come up during previous throws, or, analogous to the state of affairs described by Leslie, how many pairs are thrown at the same time. We are left, then, with the plausible conclusion that there is an intelligent source of design in the universe, an agent with the ability to direct means to an end. This is the second requirement in providing a basis for miracles as set out at the beginning of this chapter.

The Moral Argument

Of all of the arguments for God's existence, this one has received the least attention in the twentieth century, due primarily to the first premise. The argument begins by observing that there are objective moral absolutes, an idea that has been thoroughly controverted in contemporary philosophy. Nevertheless, C. S. Lewis's moral argument²⁶ offers a unique analysis of moral behavior from an empirical, observational standpoint that is, I am convinced, essentially correct. The version outlined here draws heavily on it.

Premise 1: Morality is an objective feature of our universe. Certainly, this point is difficult to prove. Lewis's argument is based on the character of human moral language. It is simply impossible, he reasons, for the larger context of social discourse to occur without making statements about what is right or wrong or without assuming that they are true or false. I agree with J. L. Mackie, an atheist, that our basis for this premise is observational.²⁷ Hence, it is logically possible that we are misled about all this even though it seems undeniably true. What I mean is that we simply must affirm objective moral values in order to make sense of our lives. That Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin were not really morally wrong, that we cannot judge a society to be truly guilty if it practices genocide or if it causes needless environmental damage are such repugnant proposals that we find it impossible to believe that they could be true.

Are the moral judgments we make every day about ourselves and about others emotive outbursts or conditioned patterns of behavior?²⁸ While we often hear this judgment expressed, it is doubtful that reason-

able people really believe it. That the brutal slaughter of children is revolting, horrifying and antisocial but not immoral or wrong is nonsense. To assert that those who pass judgment on the slaughter of the innocent are just being intolerant is ridiculous. The claim is even self-defeating, for tolerance is itself assumed to be an objective, unexceptionable moral value.

Premise 2: Naturalistic "explanations" of the objectivity of morality are inadequate. This point is not especially controversial. Most naturalists concede it. Since any form of naturalistic evolution denies human freedom, it must deny responsibility, and hence it cannot be that my actions have any value.²⁹ For B. F. Skinner, all that remains is a "technology of behavior." Our values are arbitrary judgments. They are decisions that we make. Only persons who have the freedom to select views and actions can have the requisite insight to make moral choice possible and to actually decide on moral values or actions for themselves.

Social explanations of moral objectivity do not account for moral value. While it is often asserted that values derive from our society, culture, religion, parents, school and friends, at least two arguments show this to be wrong. First, we often think it plausible to make evaluative moral judgments about our own peers, as well as other societies. We could not, for example, evaluate Hitler's Germany if this were not so. Second, the fact that as free persons we are all equal makes it impossible for any one finite person to determine value for any other person. No other human person has the moral authority to make decisions about right or wrong for me.³⁰ This, however, leads to a dilemma. Only persons can be the source of values, yet no finite and socially conditioned person is in a position to determine authoritatively the values appropriate for other persons. So, if there really are objective values, there must be some "ultimate" person who has the moral authority to set the standards of right and wrong. We are thus driven to the following conclusion.

Conclusion: There must be a universal personal authority that is the source of morality. What is crucial about this argument is its implication that the source of this feature of the universe is a personality, at least in the sense required by the capacity to understand value and make free moral judgments. There is, of course, more to the concept of "person," but this is enough to show that there is a transcendent agent capable of moral concerns, decisions and actions that is the third component in providing a basis for miracles as indicated above.

Objections Considered

I have dealt with standard objections to the moral argument in the process of spelling it out. We can summarize them by saying that the current naturalistic orientation to philosophy, and our culture in general, makes it difficult to deal adequately with any of the principal concepts: value, person, freedom, choice, even right and wrong. All are alien to a naturalistic worldview. In the end, however, this says more about the poverty of this worldview than it does about the soundness of the moral argument. It is highly unlikely that our experience that lies behind these concepts is empty. Thus the moral argument seems quite secure.

Conclusion

We are, then, entitled to assurance that God exists and in particular that there is a God who can act intelligently and with moral concern within human history. The design argument and the moral argument each adds to our understanding of the nature of God, as given in the cosmological argument. If God is the cause of *all* contingent existence, then God is the cause of all properties of contingent objects as well. Thus we have a cumulative case for God's existence and a methodology for filling out our understanding of God's nature.³¹

Of course, the argument developed here does not give us a complete concept of God. But if God is infinite, then no argument or combination of arguments could give us a full concept. As William Alston observes, "It is the common teaching of all the higher religions that God is of a radically different order of being from finite substances and, therefore, that we cannot expect to attain the grasp of His nature and His doings that we have of worldly objects."³² Nevertheless, we do have a concept of God sufficiently rich to meet the three requirements established at the beginning of this chapter.

The piece that is still missing, however, is knowing that God has in fact entered space/time and thus has acted in human history. How this is to be understood, as well as how such miracles have occurred, is discussed in ensuing chapters.

TEN GOD'S ACTIONS

STEPHEN T. DAVIS

ONE OF THE CENTRAL CLAIMS OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IS THAT GOD acts in history. At least some of the events that occur in history—particularly (but not exclusively) miraculous events—occur because God brings them about. God, then, is an agent in human history and in human lives. God is a God who acts. Thus the God of Christianity is not the God of deism. Deism was a loosely defined philosophical and religious movement that thrived in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and in America in the eighteenth. For the deists, religion was limited to a few rationally demonstrable truths about God, the creation and morality. These truths included the existence of God, who created the universe, along with its immutable natural laws. But one crucial point where the deists differed from traditional Christian thought is that they rejected all robust notions of divine agency in the world. Indeed, they denied as superstitious all claims of direct interaction between God and the created world. Miracles, revelations, epiphanies and incarnations were all ruled out. Later deists suggested that God is like someone who winds a clock and then lets it run on its own without interference.

Here are three traditional Christian propositions about God:

1. God is immaterial.