

**T**he Philosophy of Religion is a slippery subject: there's almost a paradoxical hue that colours the whole discussion. Beliefs in spiritual matters is a *very* serious business; to analyze those beliefs in a philosophically coherent fashion is also a serious business. Somehow, this analytical attempt falls very short of the objective: to fully appreciate and understand the religious convictions and fervour that wells up within the human heart.

Those who are standing completely outside of the religious experience are only capable of describing what they *see*: they are a hundred miles away from the central essence of the religious experience: the inexplicable, internal connection with a Life or Activity that is beyond whatever description mere words could ever reveal. And if they are a hundred miles away from this central essence, surely, whatever they are merely *seeing* must somehow be terribly opaque. C.S. Lewis said: "What people see and hear depends a great deal on where they are standing; it also depends on what kind of people they are."

Karl Barth said that the "God" of the philosophers is *not* the God of religious faith. And two millennia before him, Aristophanes said, in his brilliant work "The Clouds", that philosophers are godless. It would seem evident that thinking hard—that's what philosophy comes down to—has a tendency to undermine the activity of faith. Either the Great Thinkers blatantly controvert spiritual activities and casuistically explain them away in sophisticated treatises—in this number we find men like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud; or they marginalise the rôle of the spiritual life and betray their own convictions—in this number we find men like Hume, Kant, and Hegel.

A few modern philosophers have admirably acclimated to the philosophical rules-of-play, and devised logically coherent arguments to counter the most adamant Logical Positivists. Men like Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne have taken to task such Verificationists like Andrew Carnap and A.J. Ayer.

The "spiritually-inclined" philosopher will only be able to go so far before he begins to argue from Internalist convictions—and such internalism is anathema to the Logical Positivists.

Ever since Anselm, there's been the perennial ontological argument for God's existence, pointing to such logical modus ponens as: the mind is capable of conceiving that there is a Being that no greater Being can be thought of. And since this "in intellectu" premises has been established, it's only a short step to the "in re" conclusion that whatever is *conceived* as being *that* which no greater being can be thought of, surely that Being is greater than *only* residing in the mind. Thus, according to Anselm, God exists in reality as the Omnipotent, Omniscient Being the God-fearing men claim Him to be.

And, of course, the ontological argument has its many detractors—those who lean towards the cosmological argument and try to explain God's existence through teleological methods. Natural Theology has many desideratums that seem to give it the upper-hand in the proving-that-God-exists debate.

Leibniz was a pioneer with the clever angle of modal arguments. His "possibillia" tactics were effectively employed to show how our universe, when contrasted with other possible worlds, can be readily seen as a world that has God's Hand writ large everywhere upon it. Plantinga has developed this modal methodology in a new and refreshing way, as he argues that we can conceive of a Maximally Great Being that could *possibly* exist in some possible world. And if, as his argument progresses, this Maximally Great Being *is in fact* Maximally Great, it would exist in *every* possible world—including the actual world that we inhabit. "Possible Worlds" are nothing more than an intellectual tool to conceive of a contrast or perspective that will lend itself to the inductive or deductive conclusion that is being sought.

From Aristotle to Aquinas to Ayer, the cosmological argument has stood up to the fiercest of the antagonists. But, at bottom, the "God" of the philosophers is not the God of religious faith. No amount of intellectual assent will equal the least amount of faith—a faith that can "move mountains" and be the connecting factor to the Creator of the Universe in intimate spiritual fellowship.

The title "Philosophy of Religion" is almost an oxymoron: earthly wisdom will *never* seriously mount a convincing argument *for or against* what a Religious Man knows in his heart to be the Ultimate Truth.

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