Philosophical Themes from C.S. Lewis

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Summary of Thesis
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C. S. LEWIS WAS PERHAPS the most popular and influential Christian apologist of the 20th Century, and his work is full of philosophical themes and arguments. Despite this, the main body of Lewis' work has received only scant attention from academic philosophers.

Although countless books and articles have been written about C.S. Lewis and his writings, we are without a balanced and sustained evaluation of the philosophical themes and arguments to be found in his works. This is unfortunate for, in the words of James Patrick, the philosophical aspects of Lewis' work "constitute the very texture of his apologetic". It is hoped that this dissertation goes some way towards changing the situation.

The dissertation contains five main chapters, addressing four issues in the philosophy of religion through the writings of C.S. Lewis. Those issues are: the Euthyphro dilemma, the philosophical status of miracles, the Freudian critique of religious belief, and an argument from Lewis that has been dubbed 'the argument from desire'. While disagreeing with Lewis in some of the details, the dissertation defends a broadly Lewisian (and therefore broadly Christian) approach to each of these issues. Indeed, these Lewisian positions are defended with refurbished versions of Lewis' own arguments.

In addition to a summary of some of the philosophical themes and arguments from C.S. Lewis that are not addressed in this dissertation, the work also includes two appendices. Appendix A is a short biography of C.S. Lewis. Appendix B offers a few thoughts on Lewis' general stance on the relation between faith and reason.

Acknowledgements

O LORD my God. I will give you thanks forever. (Ps. 30v12b)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

[Lewis had] read Greats, he'd taught philosophy for a while, he was well acquainted with the philosophical classics, he had the sort of mind which, had he addressed himself to the questions that engrossed philosophers of the time, would have made him into a good philosopher by professional standards. ... [He] produced some good searching arguments and clearly had a feeling for what was philosophically interesting and what wasn't.

(Basil Mitchell in Walker 1990: 14)

C. S. L E W I S   W A S   P E R H A P S the most popular and influential Christian apologist of the 20th Century, and his work is full of philosophical themes and arguments. Despite this, the main body of Lewis' work has received only scant attention from academic philosophers. James Patrick writes:

> While several critical studies ... have been written, the philosophic presuppositions of [Lewis'] arguments ... have remained unexamined. ... Lewis is usually considered an apologist and his relation to philosophy ignored ... [this interpretation robs] Lewis of the philosophic insights that constitute the very texture of his apologetic. (1985: 165)

Although Lewis' thought remains largely unexamined by academic philosophers, he has not gone entirely unnoticed. Victor Reppert (1989a) notes "Selections from *Miracles*, *The Problem of Pain*, *Mere Christianity*, *The Abolition of Man*, as well as essays like 'The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment,' have all found their way into introductory philosophical anthologies." I suggest that Lewis' works have been anthologised because they are clearly written and therefore suited to the beginner in philosophy. It is more difficult to explain why Lewis' work remains largely unexamined. Fortunately, such explanation is not my task.

Of the books and articles that do examine Lewis' work, the majority seem to be utterly uncritical; they swallow nearly everything whole. A notable exception is John Beversluis' *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (1985). This book errs in the opposite direction. Thomas V. Morris, himself no partisan of Lewis, has this to say:

> My main overall philosophical criticism of this book is that Beversluis seldom comes anywhere near digging deep enough to really appreciate a line of thought suggested by Lewis. All too often he gives a facile, fairly superficial reconstruction of a line of argument, and after subjecting it to some critical questioning, declares it bankrupt and moves on. What is so disappointing to the reader who is trained in philosophy is that in most such instances a few minutes of reflective thought suffice to see that there are very interesting considerations to be marshalled in the direction Lewis was heading, considerations altogether neglected by [Beversluis]. (Quoted in Purtill 1990: 41)

The publication of Beversluis' book initially provoked a handful of replies from a small number of academic philosophers. However, Beversluis' book and the articles written in response have left the situation largely unchanged. We are still without a balanced and sustained philosophical evaluation of the philosophical themes and arguments found in the works of C.S. Lewis. It is hoped that this dissertation goes some way towards changing the situation.

Note how restricted this aim is. I shall not be addressing *all* the philosophical themes to be found in Lewis' work – there are far too many for that to be possible – and even on the issues that this dissertation does address, I do not pretend to have said the final word. We begin, then, by outlining a few of the philosophical themes that are *not* addressed in depth here.

Philosophical Themes from Lewis that *are not* Addressed in this Dissertation

A theme that runs through much of Lewis' work is his rejection of moral (and conceptual) relativism. His most sophisticated writings on this topic appear in *The Abolition of Man* (1943a). Similar arguments appear in *Mere Christianity* (1952b) and in various individual essays, notably "The Poison of Subjectivism" (1943b), "*De Futilitate*" (1967a) and "On Ethics" (1967b). I would go so far as to suggest that few have presented the case against such relativisms more clearly than Lewis does in *The Abolition of Man*. That book, based on his Riddell Memorial Lectures, also contains warnings about the hazards of setting the (human) sciences free from all ethical considerations.[1] Part of Lewis' defence of traditional morality was his rejection of ethical egoism. In a throw away comment that anticipates the strategy of Thomas Nagel's *The Possibility of Altruism* (1970), Lewis wrote, "To prefer my own happiness to my neighbour's was like thinking that the nearest telegraph post was really the largest" (1955b: 180).[2]

Connected with this is Lewis' endorsement of the moral argument for the existence of God. Lewis' statement of the moral argument is one of the clearest available in contemporary literature. It has appeared in several anthologies.[3] Another related issue is his discussion of the "Three Parts of Morality" (1952b). He contends that ethics (or at least ancient ethics) is concerned with three basic issues: Firstly, it is concerned with the interaction between individuals. This is social ethics. Secondly, ethics is concerned with virtues and vices, with the kind of character traits that an individual is developing. This is individual or virtue ethics. Thirdly, ethics is concerned with "the general

purpose of human life as a whole: with what [if anything] man was made for" (1952b: 67). This is what has been called essential ethics. Lewis compares Humanity to a fleet of ships, and the three parts of morality to the three elements essential to a successful voyage.

> The voyage will be a success only, in the first place, if the ships do not collide and get in one another's way; and, secondly, [only] if each ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order ... But there is one thing we have not yet taken into account. We have not asked where the fleet is trying to get to ... however well the fleet sailed, its voyage would be a failure if it were meant to reach New York and actually arrived at Calcutta.
>
> (1952b: 67)

It is interesting to compare this with Alasdair MacIntyre's vision of ethics as presented in *After Virtue* (1981). MacIntyre also claims that ancient ethics dealt with three issues: man as he is; man as he would be if he attained his true end (his telos); and ethics, which is the science of getting from the first situation to the second. MacIntyre argues that the modern atheistic worldview has jettisoned the second of these elements and that without it, morality has ceased to make sense. Drawing on Lewis' discussion of the three parts of morality, prominent Lewis commentator Peter Kreeft (1989c: 17-8) has made much the same point.[4]

Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* (1940a) addresses the age-old problem of evil. His approach, which draws on both the Augustinian (free will) and Irenean (soul-making) theodicies, has been compared with the more recent work of Alvin Plantinga and of John Hick.[5] The problem of evil is posed in the following simple argument: if God were good, He would want to prevent or remove all suffering and evil, if He were omnipotent He would be able to do what He wanted, so if there is a God at all, He cannot be both good and omnipotent. In response, Lewis seeks to clarify our concepts of the omnipotence and goodness of God. Despite His omnipotence, God cannot *guarantee* that His creatures will *freely* make the right choices. We can attribute miracles to God, but not nonsense. A meaningless series of words will not acquire meaning simply by prefacing them with 'God can'. The outworking of this is that if the choices of God's creatures are to be genuinely free, then God *cannot* 'fix' what those choices will be in advance. This is simply the Augustinian approach combined with some basic, but brilliantly clear, thinking about omnipotence. Lewis makes room for Irenean thinking through his clarification of God's goodness and of goodness in general. Moral goodness and the high forms of love are sharply distinguished from mere kindliness: "Kindness, merely as such, cares not whether its object becomes good

or bad, provided only that it escapes suffering" (1940a: 33). Goodness is considerably more austere than kindness. Lewis illustrates the difference by contrasting the goodness of a father with the kindness of a grandfather. It is the role of the father (or mother) to discipline a child, but the grandfather (or grandmother) can be pleased so long as the child is happy.

> What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, "What does it matter so long as they are contented?" We want, in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven – a senile benevolence who, as they say, "liked to see young people enjoying themselves" and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might truly be said at the end of each day, "a good time was had by all". Not many people, I admit, would formulate a theology in precisely those terms: but a conception not very different lurks at the back of many minds. (1940a: 32)

Here we have Lewis bringing his understanding of the divine attributes of omnipotence and goodness to bear on the problem of evil. Elsewhere, Lewis explains his view of God's omniscience and eternity. Here he shared the view of Boethius, though Lewis expresses it with greater clarity. According to Lewis, God exists 'outside of time'. To say that God is eternal is not to say that His history extends into the past without beginning and into the future without end. It is rather to say that God exists *beyond* time. Lewis compares God's relation to time with an author's relation to the 'time' within his novel.

> Suppose I am writing a novel. I write 'Mary laid down her work; next moment came a knock at the door!' For Mary who has to live in the imaginary time of my story there is no interval between putting down the work and hearing the knock. But I, who am Mary's maker, do not live in that imaginary time at all. Between writing the first half of the sentence and the second, I might sit down for three hours and think steadily about Mary. I could think about Mary as if she were the only character in the book and for as long as I pleased, and the hours I spent in doing so would not appear in Mary's time (the time inside the story) at all. ... God is not hurried along in the Time-stream of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel.
> (1952b: 143)

The illustration is imperfect, but helpful nevertheless. Lewis uses it as a tool to help us think about God having enough 'time' to hear (and answer) a potentially infinite number of prayers being prayed simultaneously. Lewis also uses this understanding of God's timelessness to explain how His omniscience (particularly His knowledge of the future) can be compatible with human freedom. According to Lewis, it is misleading to call God's knowledge of the future '*fore*knowledge'. It is senseless to say that the author knows the how the story will end *before* his characters do, for the author does not inhabit the same time-stream as his characters. God knows our future in the same

way as He knows the present because, being outside or beyond time, all times are equally 'present' to Him.

> He does not 'foresee' you doing things tomorrow; He simply sees you doing them: because, though to-morrow is not yet there for you, it is for Him. You never supposed that your actions at this moment were any less free because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your to-morrow's actions in just the same way – because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you. In a sense, He does not know your action till you have done it: but then the moment at which you have done it is already 'Now' for Him. (1952b: 145-6)

In a fascinating essay entitled "On Obstinacy in Belief" (1955a), Lewis addresses the nature of faith. His claim was that religious belief is governed by different norms from, say, scientific belief. The former are governed by "the logic of personal relations," the latter by "the logic of speculative thought."

> [The existence of God] is a speculative question as long as it is a question at all. But once it has been answered in the affirmative, you get quite a new situation. ... You are no longer faced with an argument which demands your assent, but with a Person who demands your confidence. (1955a: 213-4)

If I find myself with doubts over the status of Big Bang theory, I might attempt to resolve these doubts by reading what the scientists have to say about the matter. If I find myself with doubts about my wife's fidelity, I might attempt to resolve these doubts by doing a little detective work (or by hiring a detective). In the first case, the investigative approach seems right; but in the second case, it seems wrong. Lewis' contention is that religious belief is more like my having faith in my wife than my accepting a scientific theory. If I find myself with doubts about, say, the goodness of God's dealings with me, the right response is not (at least not usually) to attempt to resolve my doubts by doing some natural theology.

Sticking with philosophical theology, Lewis also offers his readers some interesting thoughts on the Trinity (1952b). These thoughts draw on one of Lewis' favourite books: Edwin Abbot Abbot's *Flatland* (1884). Lewis suggests that perhaps our difficulties in conceiving of the Trinity are similar to the difficulties that a creature inhabiting a two dimensional world would have in imagining a cube. If told that a cube consists of six squares combined in such a way as to create a single regular geometrical figure, a flatlander would tend to imagine these squares in one of two ways. The squares would be imagined either laid out next to one another – so failing to capture the cube's essential unity – or laid on top of one another – so failing to capture the distinct nature of the cube's six faces. In neither case has the flatlander succeeded in

imagining a regular geometrical figure constructed from six squares. If this does not do the trick, then the reader should try imagining a tesseract, best described as a regular four-dimensional figure constructed from eight cubes. The natural way to understand Lewis here, is as suggesting that our difficulty in comprehending the Trinity, as with the flatlanders' difficulty in conceiving of three-dimensional geometrical figures (and our own with four-dimensional geometrical figures), is not that such notions *violate* our categories and concepts but that they *transcend* them. The distinction is a difficult one that deserves attention from philosophers.

Another distinction to be found in Lewis is that between *looking at* and *looking along*, which he introduces in his essay "Meditation in a Toolshed" (1945e). He imagines standing in his toolshed and seeing, looking *at*, a beam of light as it creeps though the crack in the door. He then imagines moving into the beam of light, and looking *along* it, out of the shed and at the sun. To look at the beam is one thing, along it quite another. The same distinction appears in much, if not all, of our experience. It is one thing to enjoy a meal, it is another to examine and analyse the enjoyment of the meal. The philosopher coming to this distinction will immediately see that western philosophy and science has given precedence to *looking at*, seeing that kind of experience as 'more objective'. The problem with this, however, is that whatever we look *at*, we are always looking *along* something else. How can we avoid looking along our 'eyes'? It seems to me that this distinction could be of much use in contemporary philosophy. It yields a quick route to Thomas Nagel's conclusion that humans are incapable of a "view from nowhere" (Nagel 1986), and may offer a useful new tool in the debate over Qualia. After all "what it is like" to look along something is very different from "what it is like" to look at it.

One of Lewis' better-known arguments is his argument against naturalism. This is the argument whose cogency Lewis debated with Elizabeth Anscombe at the Oxford Socratic Club, of which Lewis was then the president. Lewis presented various formulations of this argument, but they each hinge on the distinction between two different *because* relations: the *cause-effect because* and the *ground-consequent because*. If naturalism is true, then all our beliefs are, at bottom, neurological happenings or states inside our heads, which can be entirely accounted for in terms of their antecedent causes. This is where the *cause-effect because* comes in. But if our beliefs are to count as rational, the *ground-consequent because* must also be in play:

for a belief to count as rational there must not merely be grounds for holding that belief, the belief must be *held on those grounds*. Now Lewis asks,

> But even if grounds do exist, what exactly have they got to do with the actual occurrence of the belief as a psychological event? If it is an event it must be caused. It must in fact be simply one link in a causal chain which stretches back to the beginning and forward to the end of time. How could such a trifle as lack of logical grounds prevent the belief's occurrence or how could the existence of grounds promote it? (1960b: 20)

If naturalism is incapable of answering this question, then it will turn out that naturalism is self-defeating. If naturalism cannot accommodate the thought that our beliefs can be held *for* reasons then either naturalism is false, or the belief in naturalism cannot be held for reasons and so cannot be reasonable. Various other ways of formulating the argument are suggested by Lewis' work. One alternative formulation questions the ability of naturalism to account for the 'aboutness' of human thinking. Another asks whether naturalism is capable of explaining a widespread and reliable coincidence between the cause-effect system and the ground-consequent system. In offering his argument(s) against naturalism, Lewis may be seen as anticipating our current puzzlement concerning such philosophical conundrums as intentionality and mental causation.[6]

Few seem to have commented on Lewis' reflections on the philosophy of science as they appear in the epilogue to his *The Discarded Image* (1964a). Those reflections bear notable similarities to Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Lewis observes that by "endless tinkering" any scientific model can be made to accommodate the available data but that "the human mind will not endure such ever-increasing complications if once it is seen that some simpler conception can 'save the appearances'" (1964a: 219-20). This sounds as if Lewis thinks the progress of science a fully rational process. But so far, we only have Lewis' views on the comparison of existing theories relative to existing data. On the origin of *new* theories, and the acquisition of *new* data, Lewis writes

> We are all, very properly, familiar with the idea that in every age the human mind is deeply influenced by the accepted Model of the universe. But there is a two-way traffic; the Model is also influenced by the prevailing temper of mind. ... [A] new Model will not be set up without evidence, but the evidence will turn up when the inner need for it becomes sufficiently great. It will be true evidence. But nature gives most of her evidence in answer to the questions we ask her. Here, as in the courts, the character of the evidence depends on the shape of the examination, and a good cross-examiner can do wonders. He will not elicit falsehoods from an honest witness. But, in relation to the total truth in the witness's mind, the structure of the examination is like a stencil. It determines how much of that total truth will appear and what pattern it will suggest. (1964a: 222-3)

Kuhn and other philosophers of science may express their positions with greater sophistication, but once again, the strength of Lewis' presentation is his clarity. The novice in philosophy of science will find few better places to begin his reflections.

Although it is not strictly philosophical, Lewis also has another argument that deserves mention here. His 'Trilemma' contends that one of the common responses to the claims of Jesus is quite out of court and that the Christian response is superior to any other. In perhaps the most frequently quoted passage of his entire works, Lewis writes

> I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to ... We are faced, then, with a frightening alternative. This man we are talking about either was (and is) just what He said or else a lunatic, or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God. (1952b: 52-3)

A similar approach would be to point out that all humans fall into one of four categories: (i) those who have never claimed to be God and are not sages, (ii) those who have not claimed to be God and are sages, (iii) those who have claimed to be God and are not sages, and (iv) those who have claimed to be God and are sages. The vast majority of us fall into the first category. Many of the great philosophers, religious teachers and (perhaps) moral reformers fall into the second category. Lunatics people the third category. But what of the fourth category? Plausibly, it contains just one person: Jesus of Nazareth.[7]

The argument is a very persuasive one and leads most to either the Christian conclusion or the alternative conclusion that Jesus never really made these claims. Given that the New Testament (NT) texts clearly attribute such claims to Jesus, there have been two basic ways of articulating this alternative conclusion. The first is to say that the NT is incorrect in attributing these claims to Jesus. The second is to say that Jesus' claims should not have been interpreted literally, and were no claim to divinity in the Christian sense, but only in some other – normally pantheistic – sense.[8]

The first of these alternatives will clearly run into arguments for the substantial historicity of the NT documents, as it requires that the NT texts are legend or myth.[9] Another problem is that unless Jesus made these claims it is difficult to understand why the Jewish authorities were so opposed to Him, and why they so encouraged the Romans to crucify Him. It also makes a mystery of how belief in Jesus' deity arose, especially in a culture so committed to strict monotheistic Judaism.

Our second alternative struggles to make sense of the way in which Jesus' followers understood His claims. If Jesus really was a good teacher, He would surely have managed to communicate His true meaning to His followers; something that, if this alternative is correct, He emphatically failed to do. Further, while this hypothesis may fit Jesus' claims to divinity, it will not fit the essential Jewish-ness (and thus *non-pantheistic* nature) of so much of His other teaching.[10] This expands Lewis' three alternatives (mad, bad, God) into five (mad, bad, God, guru, myth).

As G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis point out in the following passages, of the five basic options about who (or what) Jesus was, there is at least *some* reason to think that the Christian option coheres best with what we know about Him.

> For he combined exactly the two things that lie at the two extremes of human variation [i.e. wisdom and the claim to deity] ... [But] I really do not see how these two characteristics could be convincingly combined, except in the astonishing way in which the creed combines them. (Chesterton 1925: 203-4)

> The historical difficulty of giving for the life of Jesus any explanation that is not harder than the Christian explanation, is very great. The discrepancy between the depth and sanity and (let me add) *shrewdness* of His moral teaching and [whatever psychological state must] lie behind His theological teaching unless He is indeed God, has never been satisfactorily got over. (Lewis 1960b: 113)

There is much more to say here, but Lewis has clearly put his finger on an important issue. Indeed, he may well have uncovered one of the prime motivations behind the modern rejection of the Gospels as accurate history.[11]

In addition to all this, Lewis' also has much to say about religious language, petitionary prayer, the justification of punishment, and other philosophical topics besides.[12]

Philosophical Themes that *are* addressed in this Dissertation

Having outlined some of the important philosophical themes from C.S. Lewis that are not addressed in this dissertation it is now time to outline those that are. The dissertation has five main chapters.

Given his interest in ethics and the philosophy of religion, it is not surprising to find Lewis writing on the relationship between morality and religion and in particular on the Euthyphro dilemma. That dilemma has been the basis of a popular argument against those who hold that morality is in some way dependent upon God. Proponents of this argument contend that if ethics really is dependent upon God, then ethics is in some way objectionably arbitrary and it becomes impossible to give any content to the goodness of God. In Chapter 2, I claim that a broadly Lewisian variety of theistic ethics, motivated by broadly Lewisian considerations, is invulnerable to such arguments.

Lewis had much to say about the philosophical status of miracles, and two chapters of this dissertation – Chapters 3 and 4 – examine this work. Slightly modifying Lewis' own definition of *miracle*, the first argues that there is a coherent concept of the miraculous. In the process of arguing for these conclusions, we also explore the topic of 'The Laws of Nature' (another topic about which Lewis has a lot to say). After drawing from the analysis of laws of nature the conclusion that science cannot (via its laws) explain the existence of the universe, Lewis offers a little noticed (and indeed rather tentative) cosmological-type argument for the inadequacy of a materialistic world-view.

The second chapter on miracles addresses David Hume's argument against the miraculous. That argument contends that there could never (in principle) be enough evidence to justify belief in a miracle. Lewis offers a response to Hume's argument. I argue that this response is, at best, incomplete, but that this incompleteness can be remedied, in part by appeal to the work of G.K. Chesterton, one of Lewis' biggest influences.

Lewis was well aware of the Freudian critique of religion, and implicit and explicit in Lewis' work are several responses to that critique. The Freudian critique contends that religious belief results from the desire for the protection of a cosmic father figure. This (alleged) fact is claimed to make such belief somehow irrational. It has commonly been contended that such Freudian reasoning commits the genetic fallacy. But it is far from clear what this fallacy is or whether it is indeed a fallacy. In Chapter 5, I formulate criteria to determine when a 'genetic argument' is a good one, and then argue that the Freudian critique does not meet these criteria and therefore fails to undermine the rationality of religious belief. If, as Augustine claimed, God has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Him, then it would

seem that the desire for God might be a legitimate basis for belief in Him. Other Lewisian responses to the Freudian critique are also examined.

Taking up the aforementioned claim from Augustine, Lewis produced an argument that has been dubbed "The Argument from Desire." The argument's first premise is similar to the basic premise of Freud's reasoning and yet the conclusion is diametrically opposed. In rough outline this argument runs: We have a natural desire for God, the world is such that every natural desire can be satisfied, but this desire cannot be satisfied unless God exists, therefore ... Something similar to this argument can be found in Pascal, among others, but I have nowhere found it so clearly stated as in Lewis. While the argument is probably not so convincing as Lewis seemed to think, it is at least as persuasive as many of the more traditional arguments for the existence of God and deserves more attention than it has, hitherto, received. In Chapter 6, I offer a careful formulation of the argument and consider several objections.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, attempts to draw all these strands together by showing how the topics addressed in this dissertation relate to each other and to Lewis' work more generally. The dissertation also includes two appendices. Appendix A is a short biography of C.S. Lewis. Appendix B offers a few thoughts on Lewis' general stance on the relation between faith and reason.

Chapter 2

C.S. Lewis and the Euthyphro Dilemma: The Possibility of a Theistic Ethic

[U]nconditional allegiance to [the fundamental imperatives of morality] is the duty of man. So is absolute allegiance to God. And these two allegiances must, somehow, be the same. But how is the relation between God and the moral law to be represented?

(C.S. Lewis 1943b: 255)

THE AIM OF THIS CHAPTER is to rebut various objections to meta-ethical theories that essentially involve reference to God. I shall not be attempting to argue that any such theory is true, but only to rebut the main objections to such theories, the most important of these objections being the Euthyphro dilemma. I contend that there is a theistic ethical theory that is not undermined by this objection, or by any of the related objections that are explained below.

I begin by outlining and offering a rationale for the theory that the Euthyphro dilemma takes as its target: Divine Command Theory (DCT). I then state the Euthyphro dilemma both in its traditional form and in the (more epistemological) form recently advanced by Kai Nielsen (among others). According to the traditional version of the dilemma, either morality is independent of God's will or morality is arbitrary and the proposition *God is good* is devoid of all content. Since the advocate of DCT must reject the first option, she is pushed to accept the second, but to do so – her opponent claims – is unreasonable.

I consider ways in which DCT could be defended against this charge, but finally reject the traditional formulation of this theory in favour of a modified version that I call Divine Nature Theory (DNT). According to DNT, morality is rooted in God's necessary and immutable nature. Various objections to this position are considered in the final sections.

En route, the discussion will make use of various passages from C.S. Lewis. I will contend that there is good reason to reject Lewis' own response to the Euthyphro dilemma. This is not to say, however, that he has nothing to contribute to our thinking on this matter. Indeed, the considerations he offers in favour of his own position are very largely those that motivate DNT.

The Target: Divine Command Theory

Before I move to discuss and respond to the Euthyphro dilemma, it will be worth briefly considering the theory that the dilemma is intended to refute. The position has been defended in various forms, but there is a common component to each. That common element is displayed in (DCT).

> (DCT) For any x, x has moral status M, if and only if, and because, x stands in relation R to God.

Depending upon how M, R, and the range of x are delineated, different versions of DCT can be developed.[1] Various candidates for M suggest themselves. We might offer our theory to account for deontological moral categories such as 'morally obligatory', 'morally wrong', and 'morally permitted'. Alternatively, we might focus upon the axiological categories of 'morally good', 'morally bad' and 'morally indifferent'. Since R has standardly been filled out with reference to divine commands, one obvious way to build upon (DCT) would be with the following three theses.

> (DCTa) An action is morally obligatory for a particular agent at a particular time, if and only if, and because, God commands that agent to perform that action at that time.
>
> (DCTb) An action is morally wrong for a particular agent at a particular time, if and only if, and because, God commands that agent to refrain from that action at that time.
>
> (DCTc) An action is morally permitted for a particular agent at a particular time, if and only if, and because, God neither commands that agent to perform that action at that time, nor commands that agent to refrain from that action at that time.[2]

Another popular route is to formulate the theory in terms of God's will rather than His commands, the result being extremely similar. Our attention will focus upon theories, which hold that *all* moral categories should be explicated along the lines of (DCT). It should be obvious why theists have been attracted to such theories. They seem to capture the import of the 'Thou Shalt's of the Bible, and are in keeping with the general stress on God's sovereignty: the moral realm is made dependent upon God in much the same way as the physical realm.

This last point suggests a response to an initial worry voiced by atheist Michael Martin (2000), among others. He claims that advocates of this theory ought to endorse the Karamazov Thesis.

> (KT) If God does not exist, then everything is permissible.[3]

I am not entirely sure why Martin finds commitment to (KT) so objectionable. I can understand why, as an atheist, he thinks (KT) false, but I am not sure why he should think less of theists who endorse (KT). In any case, I claim that while an advocate of a DCT may endorse (KT), he need not. Remembering that both the physical and moral realms are thought to be dependent upon God, we might note that although the theist endorses such claims as (GC) we would surely be mistaken to think the theist is committed to (NG).

(GC) God created everything other than Himself.
(NG) If God does not exist, then neither does anything else.

We must distinguish (NG) from (NG*) and (KT) from (KT*).

(NG*) If God did not exist, then neither would anything else.
(KT*) If God did not exist, then everything would be permitted.

It seems plausible to suggest that the theist and the advocate of DCT are committed to these last two propositions, but I submit that neither would (or should) cause offence to Martin in the same manner as (NG) or (KT).

The Euthyphro Dilemma

The Euthyphro dilemma is its classical form stems from one of Plato's dialogues in which he presents a debate between Socrates and Euthyphro, from whom the dialogue and the dilemma receive their names. According to the dialogue, Euthyphro espoused the DCT of his day, and Socrates was attempting to show that his theory was false. The central element of the Socratic strategy was this simple question: "is what is pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved?"[4] Translating into the modern equivalent and with an eye upon DCT as formulated above, the question becomes:

(ED) Are actions morally obligatory because God commands them, or does God command those actions because they are morally obligatory?[5]

This asks the advocate of DCT to choose between the following two propositions.

(ED1) Actions are morally obligatory because God commands them.
(ED2) God commands actions because they are morally obligatory.

Both statements are clearly compatible with the assertion that all and only those actions that God commands are morally obligatory. The question asks which way the explanation runs. It should be clear that our formulation of DCT actually entails (ED1)

which itself entails the denial of (ED2). To see this latter entailment, note that (ED2) claims to state God's reasons for commanding as He does. But whatever reasons God has for commanding something (namely that that something is morally obligatory) must obtain independently of His issuing those commands, in which case the asymmetric dependence relation asserted by (ED1) could not obtain. It is therefore obvious how the defender of DCT ought to answer (ED). Curiously, however, Plato has Euthyphro give the opposite response (i.e. that an action is pious because it is loved by the gods), and it is not entirely clear why. It may be that Plato thought that (ED1) led to obvious absurdities, and would not deign to put such absurdities into the mouth of one of his characters. Just what those absurdities might have been we shall explore shortly. We might wonder, however, why the theist should be so bothered about which of (ED1) and (ED2) he accepts. If one can consistently hold (ED2) while asserting that all and only those things that God commands are morally obligatory then why should we be in the least tempted by (ED1)?

In effect, (ED2) claims to reveal the reasons for which God issues His commands. If (ED2) is true, then it is because we are morally obliged to keep our promises that God commands us to keep them (assuming, of course, that we are so obliged). If this were the case, then promise keeping would be morally required even if God had not commanded it. In short, if (ED2) is true, then moral requirements obtain independently of God. Furthermore, if (ED2) is true, then it would appear that the moral code is in some sense 'above' God, and that He is bound by it in just the same way as us. For these reasons, (ED2) will be unattractive to the theist, who will be forced to consider the other option.[6]

Turning to (ED1), and the motives which may have prompted Plato to have Euthyphro endorse (ED2), we first note that if (ED2) states that God has moral reasons for issuing His commands, (ED1) would surely entail that God has no moral reasons for issuing His commands; that they are issued without moral reasons. This appears to make morality somewhat arbitrary. Secondly, if we endorse (ED1), questions arise as to what it means to say that God is good. DCT seems to entail (M) and (G).

(M) Mary is good if, and only if, and because, Mary does as God commands.
(G) God is good if, and only if, and because, God does as God commands.

Now the first of these may be acceptable, but the second is somewhat surprising. Not only is it unclear that God issues any self-directed commands, it also seems that no-

one could be good simply in virtue of following whatever commands they happen to issue to themselves. The problem seems even more acute if we adopt a theory centred on God's will rather than on His commands, for then God would turn out to be good simply because He does what He wills! Now, if this is all that God's goodness amounts to, it surely doesn't amount to very much, and it would be hard to see how God's goodness makes Him in any way worthy of praise or worship. C.S. Lewis, who posed the Euthyphro dilemma in several of his writings, summarises the problem well.

> [H]ow is the relation between God and the moral law to be represented? To say that the moral law is God's law is no final solution. Are these things right because God commands them or does God command them because they are right? If the first, if good is to be *defined* as what God commands, then the goodness of God Himself is emptied of meaning and the commands of an omnipotent fiend would have the same claim on us as those of the 'righteous Lord'. If the second, then we seem to be admitting a cosmic diarchy, or even making God Himself the mere executor of a law somehow external and antecedent to His own being. Both views are intolerable. (1943b: 255)

Before we begin our response, I should like to state a second Euthyphro-like argument against DCT. This argument has received recent expression in Kai Nielsen's book *Ethics Without God*. The same basic argument occurs throughout the book, but one of the clearer statements runs as follows:

> For 'God commanded it' to be a morally relevant reason for doing something, let alone a definitive moral reason for doing it, it must, at least, be the case that God is good. A believer, of course, believes this to be the case, but what grounds does he have for this belief? If he says that he knows this to be true because the record of the Bible, the state of the world or the behaviour of Jesus displays God's goodness, the believer clearly displays by his very response that he has some logically prior criterion for moral belief that is not based on the fact that there is a deity.
> Yet it is more natural for a believer to reject the very question "How do you know God is good?" on the grounds that it is senseless. It is like asking "How do you know that scarlet things are red?" or "How do you know that puppies are young?" If he is something of a philosopher, he might tell you that "'God is good,' like 'puppies are young,' is analytic, it is a truth of language. We could not – logically could not – call any being, ground of being, power or force 'God' if we were not also prepared to attribute or ascribe goodness to it." ... [But this requires that] we can properly call some being ... 'God' only if we already know how to judge whether or not such a being ... is good. In this fundamental way even the devout religious believer cannot possibly base his morality on his religion – that is, on his belief in God. He, too, has an even more fundamental criterion for judging something to be good or morally obligatory. Since this is so, God cannot be the only criterion for moral belief, let alone the only fundamental or adequate moral criterion. We must look elsewhere for the foundations of morality. (1990: 90-1)

According to DCT, what God commands is morally relevant. Nielsen's argument assumes that this could not be the case unless God is good. Furthermore, we cannot know that God is good unless we know that He lives up to some moral standard.[7] According to the argument, this moral standard must be something we are acquainted

with independently of God's commands. If it were not, if the standard were derived from God's commands, we would in effect be assuming the moral relevance of God's commands, which is exactly what we are trying to prove. Therefore, the argument continues, to be justified in accepting DCT we must be in possession of a moral standard which is not derived from God's commands. However, the forms of DCT we are considering assert that all moral standards derive from the ultimate standard of God's commands. If Nielsen's constraint on rational belief in God's goodness could be met, it would immediately follow that all such DCTs are false. On the other hand, if it could not be met, then it would seem that we could have no adequate grounds for thinking God's commands morally relevant. Either way, these forms of DCT are in serious trouble.[8]

Initial Response to Nielsen

As I mentioned in the introduction, Nielsen's argument has a distinctive epistemological twist. The crucial assumption in Nielsen's argument is that if any component of our knowledge of morality is derived from God, then this will vitiate any attempt to use our knowledge of morality to establish God's goodness. This, however, is an assumption that need not be granted. Consider a parallel case suggested by J.P. Moreland.

> [T]here is a certain epistemological or conceptual order to moral knowledge that's different from the metaphysical order regarding the existence of goodness itself. I might have to look at a road map of Chicago before I can know where Chicago is, so the road map might be first in the order of epistemology, but Chicago has to exist prior to the fact of the road map. Similarly, God's goodness would exist prior to the existence of finite, derived goodnesses, though conceptually or epistemologically, I might have to understand what "goodness" means before I would be able to make a judgement that God is good. (Moreland and Nielsen 1993: 130-1)

There is, of course, a slight slip in the way Moreland has put things here. He implies that I could find out where Chicago is simply by looking at a road map of Chicago. This is obviously false. To learn the location of a place is always to learn its position relative to geographical facts with which we are already familiar. If we cannot connect the items on the map of Chicago with geographical knowledge gleaned from other sources, then while the map may give us all sorts of other information about Chicago, it will not tell us where Chicago is. Nevertheless, Moreland's intentions are clear enough, and his point is surely right. If Michael does not know where the post-office is, then he might look in the street atlas. Relative to Michael, then, the atlas will be

epistemically prior to the geography of the town. This is simply to say that Michael would be acquainted with the atlas first, and from it, he would gain knowledge of the town, and of the position of the post-office. However, the geography of the town (and the location of the post-office) is metaphysically prior to the atlas: the atlas was put together with reference to the town. But that the map was created in this way does not invalidate the knowledge Michael gleans from it. Indeed, if the atlas were not so constructed one might conclude that the atlas was of no use at all. In some important sense unless a belief is derived from the thing which the belief is about then that belief will not, and could not, amount to knowledge. But it seems to be precisely this to which Nielsen is objecting.

At this stage, I ought to point out that though Nielsen's argument has been revealed to be unsound, his basic point has not yet been undermined. Why not? Because I have yet to delineate any plausible theory according to which we have a way of assessing God's goodness that is epistemically prior but metaphysically posterior to the goodness of God. My refutation of Nielsen's argument relies upon this possibility, but unless this possibility is plausibly thought to be realised, Nielsen's conclusion will stand firm. However, I think that there are plausible DCTs that could make use of this loophole in Nielsen's argument. I will outline such a theory later in the chapter.

Initial Response to the Traditional Dilemma

The first line of response to the Euthyphro dilemma is to argue that in so far as accepting (ED1) has the consequences the objector claims it to have, those consequences are in no way objectionable. The proponent of the Euthyphro dilemma, then, contends that DCT makes morality arbitrary and empties the goodness of God of all content. Calling the first objection the Arbitrariness Objection and the second the Emptiness Objection, we devote a section to initial responses to each. My reservations about these responses will follow these two sections.

The Arbitrariness Objection

There are several possible responses to this objection but the most obvious is simply to claim that (ED1) in no way entails that God's commands are arbitrary. As discussed above, it does entail that God's commands are not issued for moral reasons but that hardly entails that they are issued without *any* reasons, which is surely the worrying consequence that the objector had in mind.[9]

At this point the objector might reply that God's reasons are here acting as an independent moral standard, and that if an action is morally required because God commands it, and God issues that command for reason R, then that action is really morally required for reason R. That is, the objector might reason as follows.

(Arb1) God's commands are issued for particular reasons.
(Arb2) If some action is morally required, this is because God commands it.
(Arb3) If God commands that action, He does so for some reason, R.
(Arb4) If X because Y, and Y because Z, then X because Z.
(Arb5) Therefore, if that action is morally required, this is for reason R.

The key premise of this argument appears to be (Arb4), which asserts the transitivity of the relevant 'because' relations. But are these relations transitive or not? Many similar relations do not appear to be transitive. Although a person might have had a heart attack because he was exercising hard, and he might have been exercising hard because he wanted to get fit, the conjunction of these propositions does not obviously entail that he had a heart attack because he wanted to get fit.

Despite this, I worry that some amended version of (Arb4) may be defensible and do not wish to place any weight upon its denial.[10] Rather I offer a response that does not hinge upon rejecting this premise, but on denying the interpretation of (Arb5) according to which it provides a good account of morality.

All that (Arb1) requires is that for any particular command, there is some reason why that command was issued. It does not require that there is some *one* reason behind all of God's commands. (Arb1) would allow that $command_1$ is issued for reason R_1, $command_2$ for reason R_2, $command_3$ for reason R_3 and so on indefinitely.

This being the case, accounting for moral properties by reference to God's commands may provide a much more unitary account of those properties than would an account which enumerated each of R_1, R_2, R_3, and so on. This in itself would give us reason to prefer the account provided by DCT to that provided by the conjunction of many (Arb5)-like propositions. Even if this point is denied, we are still free to accept the (Arb5)-like propositions while denying that their truth constitutes a viable moral theory in opposition to DCT.[11]

The Emptiness Objection

According to the emptiness objection, DCT entails that 'God is good' is devoid of all significant content. This is because according to DCT, God is good if, and only if, and because, God does what He commands. We noted above that the problem seems all the more acute if we formulate our DCT in terms of God's will, rather than his commands, for then God will be good if, and only if, and because, God does what He wills! But remarks such as 'God does what He commands' and 'God does what He wills' are not totally devoid of meaning. They can be understood as expressing a kind of consistency on God's part, stating that He acts by the same principles as He lays down for everyone else. Since it is by no means analytic that a person lives by the same rules as they want others to live by, it is not analytic that God is good, and hence, even on DCT this statement is not an 'empty' one.[12]

Lewis and "Terrible" 18th Century Theologians

While there is some mileage in the responses given above, in this section I suggest that these responses do not wholly succeed in neutralising the Euthyphro dilemma. Again, we take the arbitrariness issue first.

Perhaps by labelling God's commands arbitrary, the objector means simply to call their rationality into question. If so, we must then ask after the ways in which a command could fail to be rational. One obvious answer to this question is in terms of means/end rationality. It is in general irrational to issue commands in an attempt to further ends that cannot be furthered by the issuing of those commands. In some cases, the irrationality will emerge out of the end itself. In such a case, the end would be one that could not be served by anything (such as the desire to see a square circle). However, in most cases the irrationality would arise due to an incompatibility or lack of relation between the end and the means. Now whatever ends God has, He surely doesn't have any intrinsically irrational ends such as desiring to see a square circle, and being all-knowing, for any ends that He does possess, He will not attempt to further those ends by issuing commands that could not in fact further them.[13]

So far as I can see, the only remaining available complaint would be that God's ends themselves are arbitrary in that they might have been very different from what they in fact are and that, had they been, God would have issued different commands and different things would have been right and wrong, good and bad. However, the

objector will press, surely rape, for example, or cruelty for its own sake, could not possibly be right and any theory that implies that it could is false. Since DCT appears to be such a theory, DCT must be false. As with the Karamazov Thesis (KT) which we distinguished from (KT*), we must distinguish the following two propositions.

(R) According to DCT, rape might be morally required.
(R*) According to DCT, rape might have been morally required.

The proponents of DCT need not accept (R), but in it certainly seems that they must accept (R*). Our question, then, is whether accepting both DCT and (R*) is objectionable. Since rape was just a handy example, this, of course, amounts to asking about the modal status of moral claims. While I have no firm intuitions about these matters, I think that the moral status of actions cannot be contingent to quite the radical degree that DCT seems to imply.

There may, we shall assume, be possible worlds in which rape is not morally wrong, and even worlds in which is it morally required. I submit that if there are such worlds, they must be substantially different to our world in both non-moral and non-theological respects. This in turn will imply that God could not have created a world exactly like the actual world but for radically different reasons from those for which He created the actual world. If He could, then these different ends would have been best served by issuing different commands and the moral obligations in such a world would be radically different from those in ours despite the perfect similarity in non-moral and non-theological respects. While my intuitions about the modal status of morality are slightly confused, I feel sure that any DCT with this implication is unacceptable. A world identical to (or closely resembling) ours in all natural (that is in all non-moral and non-theological) respects must be identical to (or closely resemble) ours in moral respects. As a useful shorthand, we will express this point by saying that morality exhibits *strong modal status*.[14] C.S. Lewis seems to agree:

> There were in the eighteenth century terrible theologians who held that "God did not command certain things because they are right, but certain things are right because God commanded them". To make the position perfectly clear, one of them even said that though God has, as it happens, commanded us to love Him and one another, He might equally well have commanded us to hate Him and one another, and hatred would then have been right.[15] It was apparently a mere toss-up which He decided on. Such a view in effect makes God a mere arbitrary tyrant. It would be better and less irreligious to believe in no God and to have no ethics than to have such an ethics and such a theology as this.
>
> (1958: 54)

The arbitrariness objection, then, has become the objection that DCT entails certain false modal claims about morality. Is there any way to save the theory from such an implication without losing the core of DCT? I will return to this question shortly. First, we move to reconsider the emptiness objection.

Although the remarks in the previous section go some way towards answering the emptiness objection, I find them less than fully satisfying. Were the question to arise in daily life, I doubt we would think a person living up to the standard they lay down for others (that is a person's lack of hypocrisy) to be sufficient for their moral goodness. Our worry is well expressed by Lewis when he writes, "Unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured we can do no measuring" (1943b: 250). Unless the moral standard (measuring rod) is independent of God, we cannot judge (measure) God to be good. We must admit, of course, that God is no ordinary person, and that His goodness might be something quite different to ours – but if divine and human goodness differ in such a way that it becomes impossible to understand why God's commands should be morally relevant, then we shall fall prey to Nielsen's argument. Strongly suspecting that such a minimal account of God's goodness could not be sufficient to ground the moral relevance of God's commands, I must rank the earlier response to the emptiness objection a failure.

The Lewisian Response and the Avoidance of Arbitrariness

The responses we have so far considered seem, then, to be of only limited value. The arbitrariness and emptiness objections can be expressed so as to be unaffected by these responses. We begin our search for an adequate rejoinder to these objections by examining the Lewisian response.

> When we attempt to think of a person and a law, we are compelled to think of this person either as obeying the law or as making it. And when we think of Him as making it we are compelled to think of Him either as making it in conformity to some yet more ultimate pattern of goodness (in which case that pattern, and not He, would be supreme) or else as making it arbitrarily ... But it is probably just here that our categories betray us. It would be idle, with our merely mortal resources, to attempt a positive correction of our categories. ... But it might be permissible to lay down two negations: that God neither *obeys* nor *creates* the moral law. The good is uncreated; it could never have been otherwise; it has in it no shadow of contingency; it lies, as Plato said, on the other side of existence. [But since only God admits of no contingency, we must say that] God is not merely good, but goodness; goodness is not merely divine, but God.
> These may seem like fine-spun speculations: yet I believe that nothing short of this can save us. A Christianity which does not see moral and religious experience converging to meet at infinity ... has nothing, in the long run, to divide it from devil worship.
> (1943b: 256)

Lewis seems to be claiming that we must avoid the false dilemma of either putting God above morality or morality above God. In some way, the two must be on the same plane. Lewis' suggestion is that God is goodness or, more precisely, that God is identical with the property of goodness. We may formulate this claim as (GG).

(GG) God = (His?) goodness

The motivation for this seems to be that God, if He exists, is a necessary being and that morality has a similar necessity. Claiming that these 'two' necessities are in fact one solves the question of the relationship between these 'two' necessities. Lewis' position here is a variant of the doctrine of doctrine of Divine Simplicity, according to which God is identical to His attributes.

At this point, I must confess to not having much idea about what (GG) could mean. It appears to assert an identity relation between God and an abstract object, indeed between God and a property. Whether this is likely to be true or objectionable will of course depend upon what one understands by 'abstract object' and 'property.' For the sake of argument we shall grant the doctrine of Divine Simplicity should be rejected on the grounds that it entails that God is property, and that the God of theism could not be a property.[16] Our objective, then, is to see how Lewisian a position we may defend *without* endorsing the doctrine of Divine Simplicity.

Lewis' primary aim in affirming Divine Simplicity was to safeguard the modal content of morality while not making God 'subject' to the moral law in any objectionable sense. Various alternative ways to achieve this aim suggest themselves.

Firstly, we could claim that if morality has strong modal status, it is no more objectionable to suggest that God is subject to the moral law than that He is 'subject' to the laws of logic. Thus we could reject DCT but nevertheless hold that it is necessarily true that all and only those things that God commands are morally right – for God commands them because they are morally right. Nor need this make God totally irrelevant in moral matters, for one of the things that may be morally right is to honour one's benefactors, of which God is the greatest. It might even be among the necessary moral truths that the commands of God are morally binding if, and only if, in obeying those commands one need not violate any other moral dictate. In this way, the necessary moral truths could secure the moral relevance of God's commands.[17]

This kind of response may be of particular value for any *analytic* moral truths. If *murder* simply means *wrongful killing*, for example, then the advocate of DCT should

surely admit that the truth of 'murder is wrong' need not be accounted for along the lines of DCT, and that God's being 'subject' to this moral truth is in no way objectionable. However, it seems likely that there are moral statements whose modality is not due to their being analytic, and for these we turn to our other options.

Secondly, we might – though I admit to being unsure about this – make the standard philosophical move of 'rigidifying' our theory. This simply means that we take God's commands in *this world* as definitive of morality in *all possible worlds*. It would still be possible for God to command things other than those He had, but in worlds where He did so, those commands would not be morally binding. For example, in this world (the Bible tells us) God commands us not to steal. The rigidified theory would hold that God issuing this command in this world fixes that stealing is wrong in all possible worlds. On this account theft would not only be wrong in those worlds (should there be any) in which God does not issue this command against stealing, but even in those where God commands it.

Thirdly, making what we will call the *essentialist* response, we could say that just as morality has a strong modal status, so too do God's commands.[18] If certain actions are *necessarily* wrong, that is because God *necessarily* forbids them. Drawing upon our earlier discussion this would seem to mean that God couldn't have just any purpose (any end) in creating whatever worlds He creates; He could only have a morally good purpose. This is not merely to say that whatever purposes God were to adopt would be morally good (since His purposes are definitive of goodness), but rather to say that God could not have adopted those purposes which are (in fact) morally bad. This would be because God is necessarily good, *de re* as well as *de dicto*.[19]

The viability of this response to the arbitrariness objection clearly hinges upon there being a better response to the emptiness objection than we have yet seen. But if such a response were available, the resulting position would have significant similarities with that offered by Lewis. According to both pictures, God and His goodness are inseparable: on Lewis' picture because they are identical, on this one because God is essentially good.

Since it seems clear that the first option also avoids the emptiness objection, those who take this course will clearly be immune to the Euthyphro dilemma. But this immunity is gained only at the cost of giving up on a thoroughgoing DCT. The second and third options seem to have some promise, but the viability of each hinges upon there being some better (DCT saving) response to the emptiness objection.

Giving Content to the Goodness of God

Above we voiced the worry that (G), while not making God's goodness tautologous, did not give it sufficient content to ensure the moral relevance of God's commands: a person's commands shouldn't be taken seriously just because they manage to live up to those commands themselves. We also noted that Lewis himself urged that unless "the measuring rod is independent of the things measured we can do no measuring" and that applied to our situation this maxim entails that God cannot be meaningfully called "good".

It seems to me that Lewis' maxim is both importantly wrong and importantly right. It is right in that there is no single sense of the word "metre" in which both the thing measured and the thing measuring can be said to be a metre in length. Similarly, on DCT there is no single sense of the word "good" which can legitimately apply to both God and humans. However, to simply say that God is good in a different sense from us mere mortals will not suffice. If the goodness of God is radically different to the goodness of men and women, we will be unable to avoid Nielsen's argument. In such a situation, God's goodness would not be sufficient for the moral relevance of His commands. We must therefore, give some further content to God's goodness than is expressed in (G).

(G) God is good if, and only if, and because, God does as God commands.

Until this point the discussion has been extremely theoretical, with examples of morally right or wrong acts being used merely for illustrative purposes. It is the theoretical nature of the discussion that makes it hard to see what further content can be given to saying that God is good. How so? By making it easy to ignore the obvious fact that a person is good if, and only if, they are loving, kind, just, merciful, generous, truthful, patient and the like. Now the truth of DCT in no way entails that God has any of these qualities and so DCT can hardly entail that His possession of them is a tautology.

Combining this with the essentialist strategy, it will, of course, turn out to be necessarily true that God has these features, but since not all necessary truths are analytic truths, this need not worry us. There will still be differences between divine and human goodness, but these will not be so pronounced as the difference would be were (G) the only content we could give to God's goodness. The main difference is that as applied to God, goodness is primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive. In

other words, to say that God is good is not to evaluate Him. but simply to describe Him as possessing such attributes as those mentioned above.[20]

Divine Nature Theory

Assuming that the remarks of the previous section lay the emptiness objection to rest. I will take up the essentialist response to the arbitrariness objection and leave the rigidifying response for others to explore. The essentialist strategy, then, yields a theory that is defined by the following statements.

(DCTa) An action is morally obligatory for a particular agent at a particular time, if and only if, and because, God commands that agent to perform that action at that time.

(DCTb) An action is morally wrong for a particular agent at a particular time, if and only if, and because, God commands that agent to refrain from that action at that time.

(DCTc) An action is morally permitted for a particular agent at a particular time, if and only if, and because, God neither commands that agent to perform that action at that time, nor commands that agent to refrain from that action at that time.

(DCTd) God is essentially perfectly good. That is, God is essentially perfectly loving, truthful, merciful, patient, generous, and the like.

(DCTe) Since a being with these essential attributes could not command just anything, God's commands have strong modal status.

To these I would like to add the following concerning axiological moral statuses.

(DCTf) An attribute of X is morally good (in a prescriptive sense), if and only if, and because, that attribute is among the attributes of X that God counts as reasons to approve of X.

(DCTg) An attribute of X is morally bad (in a prescriptive sense), if and only if, and because, that attribute is among the attributes of X that God counts as reasons to disapprove of X.

(DCTh) An attribute is morally indifferent (in a prescriptive sense), if and only if, and because, that attribute is among the attributes of X that God neither counts as reasons to approve of X nor to disapprove of X.[21]

(DCTi) Since a being with God's essential attributes could not count just anything as reasons to approve or disapprove of things, God's reasons have strong modal status.

The first three, (DCTa) to (DCTc), simply assert the minimal DCT stated at the outset. (DCTd) adds to this our understanding of God's essential goodness, which in turn supports (DCTe) and (DCTi) according to which God's commands and reasons cannot be arbitrary (i.e. have strong modal status). The latter is important since (DCTf) to (DCTh) assert that axiological moral statuses are dependent upon God's reasons. I call

the theory encapsulated in these statements Divine Nature Theory (hereafter DNT), because by securing God's commands and reasons in His character, it effectively makes the divine nature the ultimate standard of moral value. In *Reflections on the Psalms* when considering what the Psalmist might mean in calling God's commands 'true', Lewis writes:

> When the poets call the directions or "rulings" of Jahveh "true" they are expressing the assurance that these, and not others, are the "real" or "valid" or unassailable ones; that they are based on the very nature of things and *the very nature of God.* ... His laws have *emeth* "truth", intrinsic validity, rock-bottom reality, *being rooted in His own nature.*
>
> <div align="right">(1958: 54-5, emphasis added)</div>

It remains to be shown that this theory can take advantage of the loophole that we earlier pointed out in Nielsen's argument against Divine Command Theories, but first we must address a preliminary objection. This objection contends that DNT simply relocates the issues raised by the Euthyphro dilemma, and that if this dilemma is appropriately reformulated the problems will resurface. There are various ways in which the dilemma could be reformulated, but I cannot imagine these reformulated dilemmas having any success.[22] This is because in (DCTd) we have reached God's essential attributes, and cannot sensibly ask *why* He possesses those attributes. The dilemma simply does not arise. But in case anyone still has worries let me put another Euthyphro-like dilemma myself. Of any allegedly ultimate moral standard, we can ask the following question:

(ED*) Do actions possessing moral status M possess moral status M because they are endorsed by the allegedly ultimate moral standard, or does the allegedly ultimate moral standard endorse those actions because they possess moral status M?

(ED*) asks us to choose between (ED1*) and (ED2*).

(ED1*) Such-and-such actions possess moral status M because they are endorsed by the allegedly ultimate moral standard.
(ED2*) The allegedly ultimate moral standard endorses such-and-such actions because they possess moral status M.

It might be claimed that if we endorse (ED1*) our alleged standard will be arbitrary, but that if we endorse (ED2*) then there must be some more ultimate moral standard. But then we are heading for an infinite regress of allegedly ultimate moral standards, each of which would be arbitrary unless legitimated by a higher standard.[23]

But if this shows anything at all, and surely it does, it shows that if there are any moral standards, we must at some point reach an ultimate moral standard beyond

which no further standard exists. The defender of DNT claims that this ultimate standard is the nature of God.[24]

We now move to consider Nielsen's argument once more. If DNT is to take advantage of the shortcomings in Nielsen's case, then it must explain – in a way consistent with (DCTa) to (DCTi) – how a person can rationally come to think that God's commands (and/or reasons) are morally relevant.

Nielsen's argument insisted that we cannot rationally think that God's commands are morally relevant unless we can rationally think that God is good. The next part of the argument claimed that we can judge God to be good only by some independently known standard of morality. Were this not the case, were we using a standard derived from God, we would, in effect, be reasoning in a circle, assuming what we are intending to prove. However, if we do use a standard that is not derived from God, then there must be such a standard ... but the forms of DCT we are interested in assert that there is not. So, the argument concludes, either such DCTs are false, or there is no rational way of coming to think that God's commands (reasons) are morally relevant.

The problem with Nielsen's argument is really that he assumes that God's commands have been His only input. But instead, it could be that by making us in His image, God has given us an alternative means to moral knowledge (such as immediate innate knowledge of certain moral truths, or a faculty of intuition through which such truths can be obtained). These two ideas are not mutually exclusive and both may be incorporated into the position I am outlining here. The basic point is that if either (or both) of these hypotheses were true, the moral beliefs that we would arrive at could be reliably formed, and so would count as knowledge even though we do not (or need not) know their ultimate source. This knowledge could then be used to reason back to the goodness of God. When it comes to making moral judgements, although there are many hard cases there are also many clear-cut cases. We are often capable of accurately evaluating the moral status or standing of some action or person. The defender of DNT needs to make only two claims about moral epistemology.

> (ME1) The faculties we use in making these day-to-day judgements can also be reliably used to ascertain the goodness of God.
> (ME2) We have those faculties because we are made in God's image.

This gives us just what we need in order to take advantage of the loopholes in Nielsen's argument, for it makes the metaphysical order of things begin with and in

God, while the epistemological order of things begins with us, with the knowledge or faculties that God has given us.[25]

In case it is not yet clear why this avoids Nielsen's argument, let me put things another way. The problem with Nielsen's argument, remember, was that it confused the 'epistemologically prior' with the 'metaphysically prior'. To take advantage of this fact a theistic ethical theory must come up with a way in which someone might 'come across' morality without 'coming across' God – and so could 'come across' morality first. But if God has made us, and made us with an ability to acquire moral truths without prior reference to God's commands then we can 'come across' morality first. Since this supposition clearly is consistent with (DCTa) to (DCTi), Nielsen's objection fails to refute DNT.

Before we move on, I should address a modified version of Nielsen's argument that may be thought more troubling. The reformulated objection contends that we cannot legitimately use the beliefs and faculties that God Himself has given us to reason back to the goodness of God. The objection is best explained through an example.

Imagine that you live in a land whose ruler is an evil tyrant. Unknown to you, this ruler has implanted a microchip into your brain that dictates the kind of thoughts you are able to have. The chip dictates that whenever you turn your thoughts to the ruler it will appear to you that he is 'doing the right thing'. Now suppose that you were to discover the truth about the microchip. Wouldn't this undermine your belief that the ruler was a good man? It would seem so. The objection comes to its conclusion when it is further pointed out that the scenario just imagined and the Divine Nature Theory actually have the same structure. If our beliefs about the ruler are undermined in one case, our beliefs about God must be undermined in the other.

This argument has a certain appeal, and I must grant that it has a valid point. The point is that any explicit justification of my belief that God is good will be circular. But that point can be happily conceded. Circularity need not be vicious, and the kind of circularity involved here is not in any way peculiar to my position. Indeed, any theory that posits objective values will face the same problem, which is essentially a sceptical one. Some sceptical challenges are fair and others are not, and we will clarify the distinction by the use of a couple of examples.

Case1: The Spanish Tutor

In complete ignorance of the language, I hire a tutor to teach me Spanish. After much study, all directed by the said tutor, my training is complete. In a sceptical moment it strikes me that she might have made it all up; perhaps I have not been learning Spanish at all. To be sure, I cannot have been learning sheer nonsense, but it might not have been Spanish. My knowledge that she can speak Spanish comes only from her testimony, and from her being able to speak the language that she has taught me.

This 'parallel' case is interesting. My intuition is that if she does speak Spanish (and if this is the language she has been teaching me), then I know Spanish and, if I could shake off my scepticism, I would know that I know Spanish. Obviously, if she does not speak Spanish, then I don't either. I suppose that once the question is raised, the paucity of my evidence is a worry, but then perhaps I could do some further kind of checking, by looking in a Spanish dictionary or something. The problem is that in the God-based-ethics case this checking is not possible, for we are dealing with the final standard of morality, and there is no other point of reference. This difference prevents this case being parallel to the situation with DNT, but it also prevents the challenge to DNT being a fair one. A fair sceptical challenge is (at least) one that does not fault a position for not answering questions that no position could be expected to answer. But no position could help us to provide explicit non-circular justifications for all of our moral beliefs, and DNT is no exception here. By their very nature, such global sceptical challenges cannot be completely answered without either allowing epistemic externalism, or a degree of circularity in our justifications, or both. The structure of our second case is more nearly parallel to that of DNT.

Case 2: The Metre Stick

In Paris, they hold a rod that is taken to be the standard by which 'metre-hood' is judged. It is a metal bar with a mark near either end. Anything whose length is equal to the distance between these two marks is one metre long. Once all this is granted, it clearly follows that the distance between these two marks on the bar is one metre.[26] Suppose, however, that someone was unsure; suppose someone was unwilling to grant that this rod in Paris really is the standard of 'metre-hood'. He first wanted to be sure that the distance between the two marks really is one metre.

Would it pose this figure any real problems if he were to discover (what is not strictly true, but must be true in some more extended sense) that all the other metre

sticks he could use to measure the rod in Paris were ultimately derived from the rod he was measuring? Something peculiar would be going on to be sure. But none of this would prevent our man from concluding that the distance between those two marks was one metre. In case two, the sceptical threat has vanished. It seems to me that the same is true of Divine Nature Theory. The only sense in this position is vulnerable to sceptical threats is the sense in which every position is vulnerable.

Essential Goodness and other Divine Attributes

The position we have been defending avoids the Euthyphro dilemma by contending that God's commands (and 'approval states') are rooted in His essential nature. But this raises two sets of questions: firstly, questions about how God can be praised for moral attributes that He couldn't but possess, and secondly, questions about how God can be omnipotent He if cannot perform actions contrary to His essential nature.[27] The answers that I offer to these important questions are not fully worked out, but in my opinion represent ideas worthy of further consideration.

On the Essential Goodness and the Praiseworthiness of God

The assumption behind the first of our questions is that if A could not have failed to be F, then A cannot rightly be praised for being F. As plausible as the principle sounds, on any of its viable readings no conclusions inimical to classical theism can be derived from its conjunction with DNT. It seems that we *can* think something or somebody worthy of praise even if it isn't by their choice that they are so worthy – we can admire the beauty of a painting ... or even the elegance of a proof. In a similar way, God is to be admired and praised for who and what He is. Furthermore, the defender of DNT can maintain that God has done many good things that He need not have done: things that He is under no obligation to do, but for which it is right to give Him thanks and/or praise. His creation of the spatio-temporal universe is an obvious example. Another would be His promise making (as opposed to His promise keeping).

Moreover, it is precisely the self-sufficient, independent and necessary nature of God's goodness that makes it so remarkable. To praise God is not to congratulate Him for having achieved a remarkably high standard of moral goodness, it is rather to respond to Him in a way appropriate to His greatness. God's greatness is an essential or necessary greatness, and the necessity here may even add to God's greatness.

God's moral greatness consists in the fact that He is essentially loving, truthful, merciful, patient, generous, and the like. His non-moral greatness includes His being all-knowing, all-powerful and the creator and sustainer of all contingent existence. The appropriate response to someone possessing these attributes – whether of necessity or otherwise – is one of awe, wonder, and devotion. This is what the theist has in mind when she says that God is worthy of praise. Perhaps this is a different sense of the word "praise" than that used in the principle above, but this would simply show the principle to be irrelevant here.

On the Essential Goodness and the Omnipotence of God

Various thinkers have contended that if God is omnipotent then He must be able to sin, and that if He is able to sin then He cannot be essentially good. It is not entirely clear that Christians should be especially worried by this argument as the New Testament tells us that God cannot lie (Hebrews 6v18), that God cannot be 'faithless' (2 Timothy 2v13), and that God cannot be tempted (James 1v13). In addition to this, the most basic reflections seem to reveal that God cannot commit suicide (because He is a necessary being); that He cannot scratch His left knee (because He doesn't have one); and that He cannot learn the alphabet (because He has always known it). I find it very difficult to believe that any of these 'inabilities' represents a serious threat to God's omnipotence. No doubt there are certain simplistic accounts of omnipotence that would be undermined by these reflections, but they give us no reason to suppose that no more adequate account can be developed.[28] This is not the place to offer an account of my own, but I do have a few thoughts specifically on the relation of omnipotence and 'the power to sin'.

It is interesting to note that Aquinas held that far from entailing God's ability to sin, God's omnipotence is (part of) what secures His perfect goodness. "To sin," wrote Aquinas, "is to fall short of a perfect action; and hence to be able to sin is to be able to fall short in action, which is repugnant to the omnipotence of God. Therefore it is that God cannot sin, because of His omnipotence."[29]

In effect, Aquinas denied that 'the power to sin' refers to a genuine power. Indeed, it seems sensible to ask whether all phrases of the form "the power to ..." pick out genuine abilities. So long as both represent possible actions, one might be tempted to suppose that if no single action could be of both type T_1 and type T_2 then the power to

perform actions of type T_1 is distinct from the power to perform actions of type T_2. But consider the following 'power phrases'.

(1) The power to pick up a blue piece of paper
(2) The power to pick up a green piece of paper
(3) The power to perform the morally wrong action S
(4) The power to perform the morally permissible action P

It seems to be a necessary truth that anyone who has the power picked out by (1) also has the power picked out by (2). This is because (1) and (2) seem to pick out the same power. Moving to (3) and (4), the defender of DNT might claim that for any S there is some P such that (3) and (4) will pick out the same power. The claim does not seem wildly implausible and it clearly entails that if God possesses the power picked out by (4) then He also possesses the power picked out by (3). Let's call this the power to perform actions of type T. It would seem that when a person performs action S or action P they are simply exercising the ability to perform actions of type T in a particular way. For this reason we must distinguish between the powers that some being possesses and the ways in which those powers are exercised. To say that God cannot sin, then, may not be to say that there is some power that God does not possess, but rather to say that there are ways in which God necessarily never exercises His powers. It might be objected that this is no defence of God's omnipotence because in such a circumstance there would at least one power that God lacks: namely, the power to exercise His powers in certain (sinful) ways. The response, however, is obvious: either there is no such power, or this phrase only picks out a way of exercising certain other powers that God does possess but necessarily never exercises in that way.[30] In general, what this kind of response asks us to do is to distinguish the range of powers that a being possesses from the ways that a being exercises those powers.[31]

We shall leave this response aside to discuss another. The most important element in this response to the objection asks whether, other things being equal, a god who is able to sin is truly greater than one who is not. If not then such an ability need not be attributed to the being than which no greater can be conceived, and so need not be attributed to God. One might argue that the ability to sin is not a 'great-making' one in the following fashion:

(GM1) All 'great-making' abilities are sometimes worth exercising
(GM2) The ability to sin is never worth exercising
(GM3) Therefore, the ability to sin is not 'great-making'

A more sophisticated version of this response could be based on the assumption that sovereignty over the moral realm is more 'great-making' than the ability to sin. In that case, if DNT were the only viable means of safeguarding God's sovereignty over the moral realm, then it would be a straight choice between such sovereignty and the ability to sin – and the theist would surely be rational in holding God to possess the attribute that makes for the most greatness. Furthermore, if DNT is not the only viable way to secure God's sovereignty over the moral realm, then there must be some other viable response to the Euthyphro dilemma, in which case arguments against DCTs based on that dilemma fail.[32]

Conclusion

The first thing to emphasise is just what this chapter has *not* demonstrated. It has not shown that Divine Nature Theory or any other form of DCT is true. Nor has it offered responses to all possible objections to such positions. It has shown, however, that there are versions of DCT which preserve God's sovereignty over the moral realm without falling prey to two popular arguments against such positions: the Euthyphro dilemma, and Nielsen's epistemological argument. We responded to the Euthyphro dilemma by pointing out that the commands of an omniscient and perfectly loving, generous, merciful, patient and truthful being would not be issued without reason, and that since these characteristics are essential to God, His commands possess a strong modal status. It was also observed that God's possession of these attributes is sufficient to give significant content to God's goodness. In the last section of the chapter, we considered various objections according to which DNT, due to its ascribing essential goodness to God, is incompatible with other traditional theistic doctrines. We showed that the theist has ample resources to respond to these points in ways consistent with DNT.

The resulting position, Divine Nature Theory, has much in common with Lewis' own, and is motivated by largely the same considerations. On these grounds, it seems fair to think the position a Lewisian one. In closing this chapter, I offer the reader the following 'Euthyphro' dilemma: Do you say things are good because they are good, or are they good because you say they are? If the latter, then your moral standard seems to be subjective and arbitrary (and you can't object if God's turns out likewise). However, if you choose the former, then you have to explain where the moral standard comes from ... and Divine Nature Theory is certainly an option!

Chapter 3
C.S. Lewis and the Possibility of Miracles

It [is] not merely a world full of miracles; it [is] a miraculous world. (Chesterton 1936: 45)

PEOPLE HAVE VIEWED MIRACLES in many different ways. Some have thought that miracles are by their very nature impossible. Others have thought that the advance of science will render appeal to such special acts of God superfluous. Yet others have thought that miracles are, from the nature of the case, incredible: they could never be supported by evidence sufficient to justify our belief in them. Rudolf Bultmann, who attempted to 'demythologise' Christianity by stripping it of all reference to the miraculous wrote, "it is impossible to use the electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles."[1] In a similar vein the German physicist Max Planck said that, "Faith in miracles must yield ground, step by step, before the steady and firm advance of the forces of science, and its total defeat is indubitably a mere matter of time."[2]

The first question I want to look at in this chapter is whether miracles are possible or impossible, whether there is or is not a coherent concept of the miraculous. I will be arguing that there is a coherent conception of the miraculous, that miracles are possible. As is to be expected in a dissertation on C.S. Lewis, the position I defend, and the arguments with which I defend it are broadly Lewisian. I will approach the issue rather obliquely, first discussing two different theories of scientific laws, or as they are often called, laws of nature. These two theories will form the background against which alternative definitions of the miraculous will be discussed and in relation to which various arguments concerning the possibility of miracles will be assessed. Further questions concerning the miraculous will be addressed in the next chapter.

Building upon the discussion of the laws of science, the second subject to be addressed is the limits of scientific explanation. Here I will use our earlier discussion of the laws of nature in support of a tentative version of the cosmological argument.

Before I begin, however, I should note an important feature of the miraculous that will not be discussed here. It should form part of our definition of *miracle* that a miraculous event is one of religious significance, an event meriting a sense of awe and wonder. However, it is not this element of the miraculous that has led people to object to miracles, it is rather their relation to science or to laws of science. It is that aspect of the miraculous that this chapter (and the next) will focus upon.[3]

Two Conceptions of the Laws of Nature

The two theories I wish to discuss under this heading are very broad, and are perhaps better thought of as two *kinds* of theory of laws of nature rather than as two theories of the laws of nature. Each of these two 'theories' can be refined in many different ways, but certain central features will remain unchanged. For the sake of simplicity, I will speak of the *regularity theory* and of the *more-than-regularity theory*.

Regularity Theory

The regularity theory of laws of nature holds that a law, or rather a statement of a law, is simply a highly generalised description of the actual course of events. Take, for instance, the law of gravity. The law simply consists in the fact that all unsupported bodies fall. So, unsurprisingly, the statement of that law is this: *all unsupported bodies fall*. The important point about regularity theory is that the law is not something behind the regularity in nature that explains it; rather the law *is* the regularity in nature. Similarly, the statement of the law does not attempt to describe something behind the observed course of events, which would explain it; it simply describes the actual course of events. The only other things to be added are to distinguish statements of laws of nature from other kinds of descriptive statement. To do this we say that a statement of a law of nature differs from a statement of a law of logic in that the former will, if true, only be contingently so, while the latter will hold of necessity. Further, we say that a statement of a scientific law differs from any other true description of contingencies in that all the former are of the form *All things of type W are also things of type X* or (equivalently) *Nothing of type Y is also a thing of type Z*. Lastly, it must be added that the place holders W, X, Y and Z, when filled out, must contain no reference to any particular time, place, entity or event. The laws of nature are non-local. So

according to regularity theory, a statement S is a statement of a law of nature if, and only if, each of the following is true.

(i) S is true.
(ii) The truth of S is contingent.
(iii) The logical form of S can be reduced to *All things of type X are also things of type Y.*
(iv) *X* and *Y* contain no reference to particular times or places.

The law of nature itself is what it is in the world that makes S a statement of the law, that is: a contingently obtaining non-local regularity in nature.[4]

More-Than-Regularity Theory

The difference between the regularity theory and the more-than-regularity theory is that the latter holds that a law of nature is something beyond, behind or at least other than a regularity we observe in nature. I will distinguish between two varieties of more-than-regularity theory. For the lack of more convenient names, we shall refer to them as the *little-more-than-regularity theory* and the *much-more-than-regularity theory*.

According to the former, a law is not something behind or beyond an observed regularity, but is nevertheless something other than a regularity. This theory has much in common with regularity theory in that, if it is correct, a statement of a law of nature is simply a short hand, highly generalised description of the actual course of events. However, the logical form of these descriptions is not that asserted by regularity theory. According to the little-more-than-regularity theory, the logical form of a law is not simply *All things of type X are also things of type Y*, but rather *All things of type X are also things of type Y, unless something interferes.* Now this extra clause, the meaning and importance of which will become clear later, could have been built into our filling out of X, making this kind of theory a subspecies of regularity theory. But it will aid our discussion if we stipulate that no theory can be both a regularity theory and a more-than-regularity theory, that, in other words, we are barred from adding "unless something interferes" (or anything equivalent) to the filling out of X, it must always constitute an additional clause and must therefore change the logical form of a statement of law.

In the much-more-than-regularity theory, a law is something behind or beyond a regularity in nature. Indeed the regularity is taken to be explained by the law. The big question is what this thing behind the regularity is supposed to be. One popular answer

is that it has to do with relations between properties or universals. So, using our earlier example, one might say that there is such a relation between the properties of *being unsupported* and of *falling*. Some philosophers want to make the connection between the properties a necessary one, others a contingent one, but for our purposes this need not be decided. One important feature of this picture of laws of nature is that there is a logical gap between laws and regularities in nature. This has the advantage that the laws can explain the regularities,[5] an advantage we will look at more later. It also has the consequence that the law and the regularity are in principle separable. As a matter of logic, there could be a regularity without a law (though this is unlikely) and a law need not produce an absolute regularity (or anything even approaching one). For this reason, like the little-more theory, the much-more theory can make sense of the idea that 'something interfered.'

One qualification must be added. My talk of these extra clauses in our statements of law should not be taken to mean that anyone who holds a more-than-regularity theory must add a 'non-interference clause' to his statements of law, rather these clauses may quite legitimately remain implicit without it being implied that no interference is possible.[6]

Miracles as Violations of the Laws of Nature

In section X of his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1758), entitled "Of Miracles", Hume states that "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature"; in a footnote he expands this definition, saying "A miracle may be accurately defined, [as] a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent" (Hume 1777: 33, 284).

Given that the essay in which Hume gave this definition has become the centre of the majority of subsequent debate about miracles, it is hardly surprising that this definition of the miraculous is now by far the most popular. It will be helpful to have this definition before us.

(Def$_1$) A miracle is, by definition, a violation or transgression of the laws of nature.

Now that we have this definition on the table it should be fairly clear why I first began with a brief outline of two (kinds of) theories of the laws of nature: for how these laws

are conceived will clearly have a bearing upon whether they can be violated or suspended.

In the following subsections, I will set out the arguments of two philosophers, Alastair McKinnon (1967) and Nicholas Everitt (1987), both of whom use (Def$_1$) to argue for the impossibility of miraculous events. My final assessment of the arguments will be reached in a rather roundabout way, but I shall conclude that neither manages to establish the impossibility of the miraculous.

McKinnon's Argument

That McKinnon does adopt Hume's definition of the miraculous should become clear from what follows; he also holds to the regularity-theory with regard to laws of nature.[7] Putting these two positions alongside one another, he argues for a conclusion he states thus:

> *Miracle* cannot correctly and consistently describe any event ... Or, to put the matter another way, the attempt so to describe such events must inevitably lead to cramps and contradictions ... The core of our objection is quite simple: the idea of a suspension of a natural law is self-contradictory. (1967: 308-9)

I have no doubt that the reader will have anticipated the argument – but McKinnon's statement of it is quite brilliant.

> The contradiction [will] stand out ... clearly if for natural law we substitute the expression *the actual course of events*. Miracle would then be defined as "an event involving the suspension of the actual course of events". (1967: 309)

McKinnon's argument could be schematised as follows

(1) A statement of a law of nature is simply a partial description of the actual course of events.
(2) Therefore, a law of nature is just a part of the actual course of events.
(3) A miracle is, by definition a violation or suspension of a law of nature.
(4) So, a miracle must be understood as an event involving the suspension of the actual course of events.
(5) The idea of an event involving the suspension of the actual course of events is incoherent.
(6) Therefore, the idea of a miraculous event is incoherent.

The argument is clearly valid, and its only debatable premises are the first and the third. The only ways to object to the argument are either to call the Humean definition into question or to question the regularity-theory of laws of nature.

At this point I will not suggest ways in which one might argue against the regularity-theory of laws of nature, I will only point out that it is far from being an unquestioned orthodoxy. Later I will suggest an argument, inspired by Chesterton, which intends to establish that the only way to hold this theory without irrationality is to abandon naturalism.[8]

What I want to do now is to suggest an alternative to the Humean definition of miracles which would be consistent with the regularity-theory, and would thus allow for the possibility of miracles. I take my inspiration here from Hugo Meynell, who said

> I think that Hume's highly influential definition of a miracle, as a violation of the laws of nature, is misleading, and obscures discussion of the subject, whether one believes in miracles or not. Augustine's definition is much better. He says that when God carries on in the ordinary kind of way, we call it nature, but when God acts in some strikingly exceptional kind of way, for our instruction and admonition, we call it a miracle.
>
> (Varghese ed. 1998: 155)

The suggestion seems to be roughly this:

(Def$_2$) A miracle is an exceptional or striking act of God.

Meynell wants to say that the line between the miraculous and the non-miraculous is the same as that drawn between the ordinary and the exceptional. I grant that this is problematic, for there are certain improbable events which no-one would want to think of as miraculous, but that no-one would think of as ordinary. This account, at least when only developed as far as this, offers no way to distinguish the improbable or surprising from the miraculous. But, the problem is that such a distinction must be drawn.[9] This objection to (Def$_2$) is one with which I have every sympathy, and one to which I will offer a response. That response will be a methodological one, and will require the use of material yet to be discussed. I will now move on to discuss the second argument against the possibility of the miraculous, that of Nicholas Everitt.

Everitt's Argument

Just as McKinnon's argument assumed that Hume's definition of miracles, (Def$_1$), was correct, so too does Everitt's, though he does offer some interesting thoughts on alternative definitions towards the end of his paper. Everitt's argument is very similar to that of McKinnon except that he considers the possibility of someone moving away from a strict regularity-theory. But let's take his argument one stage at a time.

> [T]here are good grounds for thinking that the traditional concept of a miracle ... is indeed incoherent. For what is incompatible with a truth is itself false. If. therefore. it is a true statement of a law of nature that all A's [are] B's, it follows that any miracle report which says that there is an A which is not a B is false. It is thus logically impossible for any assertion that a miracle has occurred to be true. (Everitt 1987: 347)

This seems to be just another way of stating McKinnon's argument. But Everitt goes on to consider a possible reply.

> Suppose that their form [i.e. that of the Laws of Nature] is not 'All A's are B's,' but rather 'All A's are B's unless God intervenes to make an A that is not a B.' The truth of such a statement certainly allows the existence of an A which is not a B (provided it is produced by God). But such an occurrence cannot count as miraculous. for it involves no violation of any law of nature. (1987: 348)

This is an interesting argument, and one that could easily have been expanded to do more work. Everitt has stuck with the idea that a law of nature must describe the actual course of events, but he needn't have. Everitt's argument could have been extended to cover (both kinds of) the more-than-regularity theory too. In these theories, the statements of the law may be identical to the equivalent statements in the regularity theory. However, what makes them true is something different (albeit only slightly in the case of the little-more theory). So, within the more-than-regularity view, we could have a statement of law saying that all As are Bs, but this would not entail that there are no As which are not Bs. Remember, there is – in the more-than-regularity theory – a logical gap between the law and the actual course of events. The law allows for other eventualities, so long as they could be made consistent with the implicit extra clauses attached to the law. These extra clauses, whether implicit or explicit, are known as *ceteris paribus* clauses, and most, if not all, laws do actually have such clauses. What does all this mean? It means that things only happen as the law predicts if nothing interferes. If I let go of a stone, will it fall to the ground? Well yes, so long as no-one catches it before it reaches the ground, and so long as no unexpected extremely large gust of wind carries it away to who knows where, and so long as ... and so it goes. On this account, the laws of nature tell us what will happen if nothing interferes. Thus. on this account. attached to all statements of law is the implicit or explicit extra clause: 'so long as nothing interferes.'

With this in mind, Everitt's argument looks as if it has a valid point to make. The truth of the statement of a law such as 'All As are Bs' (with implicit *ceteris paribus* clauses) needn't rule out an A which is not a B. Everitt also seems correct when he

asserts that the occurrence of an A, which, because of interference from outside, was not a B, would not be a violation of the law of nature. He declares, therefore, that since a miracle must be conceived as such a violation, miracles are impossible.

But, to me at least, this seems preposterous. Suppose that there is a law of nature that says that all dead men stay dead (so long as nothing interferes). Further, suppose that only the interference of something supernatural could bring a dead man back to life. In this situation, it would be absurd to say that even if God brought a man back from the dead it would not count as a miracle, because there is not and cannot be any true description of these events which is in contradiction with a true law-statement. Nothing Everitt has said rules out the coherence of the scenario, he only rules out calling the event miraculous. Surely, this counts more against his *definition of* the miraculous than it does against the miraculous itself. Everitt sees that some readers might feel this way and so writes the following.

> The theist may seek to evade the force of this argument by dropping from his definition of 'miracle' any reference to the violation or transgression of the laws of nature. But if he does this, he makes it impossible for miracles to perform the function which theists have traditionally supposed that they could perform, namely, providing evidence for the existence of God. For if an alleged miracle does not violate the laws of nature, it will be explicable in terms of those laws. In that case, there is no explanatory work to be done by the hypothesis that the miraculous event was caused by God. (1987: 349)

I admire Everitt's tenacity, but he must have gone wrong here. That the occurrence of an event does not contradict a law of nature does not show it is explicable without reference to God. If the reason that the event doesn't violate the law is that the law has an implicit or explicit 'if nothing interferes' clause, and something has indeed interfered, then the event in question cannot be explained without reference to that thing which has interfered, and is not explained solely by the law. If the 'thing that has interfered' is God, a possibility that Everitt allows, then all explanations that make no reference to God will be incorrect or incomplete. Furthermore, nothing that Everitt has said rules out that there may be some cases in which we can know that the only thing that could interfere, or which could have interfered so as to produce the event, is God, and yet in which we also know that something must have interfered. In such a case, it would hardly be reasonable to say that since no law has been violated, we do not have any evidence for the existence of God.[10]

At this point it seems clear that, while Everitt's arguments do perhaps establish that nothing can be coherently be described as a "violation of a law of nature," we needn't

admit that he has shown that there is no coherent concept of the miraculous. If a defender of Everitt were to insist on his definition, the debate would become merely verbal. Nothing can stop him using the word "miracle" any way he likes to use it. But those of us will have to disagree who believe that certain events, the occurrence of which his argument does not rule out, do nevertheless merit that appellation. It seems then that the correct response to Everitt's argument is not to concede the impossibility of the miraculous, but rather to conclude that *miracle* needn't be defined in terms of violations or suspensions of the laws of nature.[11]

Miracles as Events that would not occur were Nature 'Left to Itself'

The following rather lengthy quote comes from C.S. Lewis' paper, "Religion and Science" (1945f), which is written as a dialogue between a naturalist and a theist.

'Don't we [know] ... that nature *must* work in an absolutely fixed way? I mean, the laws of nature tell us not merely how things *do* happen, but how they *must* happen. No power could possibly alter them.'

'How do you mean?' said I.

'Look here,' said he. 'Could this "something outside" that you talk about make two and two five?'

'Well, no,' said I.

'All right,' said he. 'Well, I think the laws of nature are really like two and two making four. The idea of their being altered is ... absurd ...'

'Half a moment,' said I. 'Suppose you put sixpence into a drawer today, and sixpence into the same drawer tomorrow. Do the laws of arithmetic make it certain you'll find a shilling's worth there the day after?'

'Of course,' said he, 'provided no one's been tampering with your drawer.'

'Ah, but that's the whole point,' said I. 'The laws of arithmetic can tell you what you'll find, with absolute certainty, *provided that* there's no interference. If a thief has been at the drawer of course you'll get a different result. But the thief won't have broken the laws of arithmetic – only the laws of England. Now aren't the laws of nature in much the same boat? Don't they tell you what will happen *provided* there's no interference?'

'How do you mean?'

'Well, the laws will tell you how a billiard ball will travel on a smooth surface if you hit it in a particular way – but only provided no one interferes. If, after it's already in motion, someone snatches up a cue and gives it a biff on one side – why, then, you won't get what the scientists predicted.'

'No, of course not. He can't allow for monkey tricks like that.'

'Quite, and in the same way, if there was anything outside nature, and if it interfered – then the events the scientist expected wouldn't follow. That would be what we call a miracle. In one sense it wouldn't break the laws of nature. The laws tell you what will happen if nothing interferes. They can't tell you whether something *is* going to interfere. I mean, it's not the expert at arithmetic who can tell you how likely someone is to interfere with the pennies in my drawer; a detective would be more use. It isn't the physicist who can tell you how likely I am to catch up a cue and spoil his experiment with the billiard ball; you'd better ask a psychologist. And it isn't the scientist who can

tell you how likely nature is to be interfered with from outside. You must go to the metaphysician.'

Lewis' point here is the same as that made in the last section: a miracle needn't be seen as a violation of a law of nature, but can instead be seen as an event which would not have happened had nature been 'left to itself'. Scientists regularly talk about *closed* and *open* systems. The second law of thermodynamics, for instance, states that within any *closed* system the amount of energy available for work always decreases. In other words, so long as the system is not interfered with from the outside the amount of useful energy will only decrease. The central question about the possibility of miracles is therefore whether it makes sense to think of nature as an open system.

Lewis seems to have thought that this understanding of the miraculous entailed the stronger claim, that miracles are logically possible only if God exists, or rather only if something outside of nature exists, and that (as a result) one cannot establish the occurrence of a miracle without *first* establishing that there exists something besides nature. There is an insight here, but I think Lewis has made an error. The *actual* occurrence of a miracle *does* require the existence of something beyond nature. But the *possibility* of such an occurrence requires only the *possibility* of the existence of something beyond nature. In one sense, this does entail that we cannot establish the occurrence of a miracle without establishing the existence of something beyond nature. But this is the sense in which if we establish a miracle, then we will have established the existence of something beyond nature at the same time. As Michael Martin points out (1990: 102-3), to have a reasonable debate about the actual occurrence of miracles one need not assume the supernatural, the only requirement is that it be an open question whether or not there exists anything beyond nature.

Nevertheless, if someone already adheres to naturalism there will clearly be problems in debating the occurrence of miracles, since this view, if true, would rule out their actuality. If debate about any particular (alleged) miracle is to be of any use, naturalism cannot be an unquestionable dogma. Thus Lewis' strategy, which was to attempt a refutation of naturalism before discussing the occurrence of miracles, made good sense even if it was not strictly necessary. Lewis' case against naturalism was outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, but drawing from other elements of his work, I suggest a rather different argument against naturalism at the end of the chapter

Let me go back a little. I am suggesting that a miracle be conceived as an event that would not have happened had nature been left to itself. Lewis himself uses this definition. In his *Miracles*, he writes that in "calling [events] miracles we do not mean that they are contradictions or outrages; we mean that, left to her own resources, [nature] could never have produced them" (1960b: 66). Antony Flew and J.L. Mackie seem to work with similar definitions.[12] Indeed Mackie offers a very helpful expansion of just what such a definition comes to. On this understanding a miracle is

> an event which, given that the world was a closed system working in accordance with ... [the laws of nature], and given some actual earlier complete state of the world, simply could not have happened at all. (Mackie 1982: 21)

Developing this a little further, I suggest

(Def₃) An event, E, is a miracle only if, (i) a true description of an actual earlier state of the world, (ii) a statement of the correct laws of nature, and (iii) the assumption of naturalism, together entail the non-occurrence of E.[13]

Depending upon the miracle in question (i) may be a superfluous condition, or at the other extreme, the earlier state of the world may (as Mackie suggests) have to be a complete 'world-state.'

An objection from 'within the camp'

The main problem with the proposed definition of the miraculous is one that only those who believe in God ever seem to raise. By the end of this chapter I hope it will become fairly clear why. The problem is well captured by Francis Beckwith.

> The term 'interference' seems to imply that the universe is an autonomous mechanism ... [However,] from the point of view of Theism, the world is not autonomous, but exhibits whatever characteristics it has, including its natural regularities, because of God's creative intentions ... Even the term 'intervention' is misleading, in that it seems to imply the picture of God acting in a world from which God is normally absent. (1989: 139)

Alvin Plantinga makes the same point

> This is, of course, a deistic rather than a theistic conception of ... nature; on the theistic conception the world is never "left to itself" but is always (at the least) conserved in being by God. Nor can we take [the] suggestion counter-factually, as the suggestion that a law of nature describes the world as it would be if it *were* left to its own devices; for (again, on the theistic conception) if the world were left to its own devices, apart from the conserving activity of God, it would no longer so much as exist; it isn't possible that the world exist apart from the conserving activity of God. (1986: 111)

The problem is that this conception of the miraculous seems to imply some kind of deism or, as one might call it, semi-deism. Deism is the view that having created the world, God remains aloof. He set it up with laws to govern it and now simply leaves it to run according to those laws. The title of Richard Dawkins' book *The Blind Watchmaker*, while it certainly *refers* to evolution, *alludes* to the God of deism. A watchmaker need only make the watch and 'wind it up.' It will then continue to work (until it has 'wound down') without any further input from him.[14]

This is the deistic conception: God takes a hands-off approach to his creation. He remains aloof. He is (in the words of Peter Kreeft) the "snob God". Another way to put this would be to say that while, like theism, deism posits the existence of a God who transcends the physical universe, unlike theism it denies that this God is also immanent in the universe. A strict form of deism would hold that miracles do not occur, for God is not sufficiently involved in His creation to perform them. Nevertheless, the conception of miracles under discussion does seem to imply some similar view, a view I call 'semi-deism.' According to this view, God is active in the world only when miraculous events are occurring, and is otherwise aloof.[15,16]

Approaching a More Adequate Definition

Given that the three definitions looked at thus far each have their problems, it would be tempting to completely abandon the idea of defining the miraculous. This, however, would be too hasty. Before I move on, I want to summarise the problems that faced each definition we have considered. The first definition, (def_1), was that a miracle is a violation of a law of nature. But the arguments for the impossibility of miracles that sprang (quite legitimately) from this definition seemed to indict the definition much more than they did the concept of the miraculous. The second definition, (def_2), drew the distinction between the miraculous and the non-miraculous in the same place as that between the regular and the extraordinary. But this definition offered no way to distinguish a miraculous event from an improbable one. The third definition, (Def_3), said that an event is a miracle if it would not have occurred were nature left to itself. This however implied that nature is generally left to itself, that God is not normally active in the world. Thus, this definition is unacceptable to theists, who hold that God is always active in the world. One could render the definition acceptable to the theist by saying that there is no contrast class, all events are events happening due to Gods

action, and that therefore the world as a whole would cease to exist without God's activity. This seems right, but such a move would entail that all events are miraculous, and indeed that the continued existence of the world is a miracle, things that the theist's interlocutor is hardly likely to grant. This is no problem with the definition as such, but it does seem to put the theist in a weak dialectical position vis-à-vis arguing for the actual occurrence of miracles.

The question, therefore, is whether we can construct a definition that, while faithful to our intuitive understanding of the concept, avoids the problems outlined above. I believe we can. My first point is that we must make a distinction between God's general and God's special activity. This is a distinction parallel to that between general and special revelation, a distinction theologians commonly make.[17] I should, therefore, give a rough definition of *revelation*. Revelation primarily has to do with God's self-disclosure: with God revealing His existence, character and purposes to men and women. General revelation is the kind of revelation accessible to all people at all times. General revelation is therefore rooted in the natural world and any features of it that could be discovered by any person living in any part of the world and at any time. Special revelation is just that kind of revelation that is not general. If the Bible is the inspired word of God, then it is an important aspect of special revelation. There are other aspects besides, but listing them is not important. So we have a distinction between general revelation and special revelation, and I am now suggesting a similar distinction between God's general and special activity. These 'two' distinctions may really be just one distinction under two different descriptions, but I am not sure.[18] If not, the two are certainly related or parallel distinctions. What I propose is that a miracle is an event that would not have occurred were it not for the special action of God.

God's general action is (at least) that of upholding the ordinary course of events. Consider an analogy. With a model train set, it is standard to have a loop around which the trains will generally run. Coming off from this loop will be other pieces of track, along which, by flicking the correct switches, the 'driver' can make a train travel. Now were it not for the track, the trains could not travel at all, and where it not for the switches, the trains could only take one route. The analogy may be a little strained, but the track in general symbolises God's general activity, without which nothing would occur. The activating of the switches symbolises God's special activity, by which God

enables things to run along a different route from the normal one. Whether or not the reader finds this analogy helpful, the suggestion is as below.

> (Def$_4$) An event, E, is a miracle only if, (i) a true description of an actual earlier state of the world, (ii) a true statement of the laws of nature, and (iii) the assumption that God is not *specially* active (on this occasion), together imply the non-occurrence of E

Reply to a Possible Objection

It might be objected that just as (Def$_3$) assumed that God is not generally active in the world, (Def$_4$) supposes that God is generally active. Thus just as the previous definition was (dialectically) unacceptable to the theist, this one is unacceptable to the atheist.

This puzzling objection has a point; one to which I offer two responses, the second of which is a methodological one. Firstly, (Def$_4$) does not entail that God is generally active. One way of God's not being *specially* active is his not being active at all. Secondly, if the atheist were still reluctant to accept (Def$_4$), I would suggest that the correct thing to do would be to allow the atheist to use (Def$_3$), and for the theist to work with (the semi-deistic reading of) that definition but only 'for the sake of argument'. If, on these grounds, it can be established that some events have occurred which would not have occurred were nature left to itself, then naturalism has been undermined, and the move to theism can be made a little further down the line. This is the same methodological response that I wish to make to the problem for the definition of miracles as extraordinary events (Def$_2$). The thought is that a theist who is committed to the regularity-theory of laws of nature could use the other theories and definitions, merely for the purposes of recognising and establishing the miraculous, and then carry the miracle over into his world-view without carrying over the rival concepts of miracles and laws of nature. All the same, this seems to solve the epistemological problem for this position without solving its metaphysical one of providing a real distinction between the miraculous and the improbable. The way to solve this problem seems to be simply to assimilate this view to the one that I have been proposing: that miracles are events that would not occur were it not for the special activity of God.

Closing a final loophole

The argument so far has, I believe, left only one real loophole. I've been suggesting that the theist and the atheist can debate as to the reality of miracles, because the theist can make use of the deistic conception of the miraculous simply 'for the sake of argument' without granting the implication that God is active in the world only when miracles occur. This however seems to be assuming that the atheist would also be happy to work with this understanding of miracles. But if the atheist held to the regularity theory of the laws of nature, this is not something that he or she would easily grant, and none of the methodological points above will bridge the divide.[19]

This, therefore, is where I want to present the argument I mentioned earlier. The argument is inspired by G.K. Chesterton, and concludes that one of naturalism and the regularity theory of laws of nature must be rejected.[20] But before I come to this argument let me briefly put forward a consideration which, in my opinion, should lead us to reject the regularity theory or at least to be less concerned to hold on to it. In all that has been written above there has been constant reference to the *ceteris paribus* clauses of law statements. Reflection on the laws of nature suggests that many laws, if not all, do have such clauses. This in itself should lead us to adopt at least a little-more-than-regularity theory for at least some laws of nature. Depending upon what miracle is being alleged, it may be that this is sufficient to open up genuine dialogue on the reality of that alleged miracle. But given that coherence among our theories is a virtue, it would be preferable to adopt one theory for all laws, which would then require a total rejection of the regularity theory.

Now back to that argument of Chesterton's. In *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton writes

> [W]hen I came to ask [the scientists] I found they had really no proof of the unavoidable repetition in things except the fact that the things were repeated. Now, the mere repetition made the things to me rather more weird than more rational. It was as if, having seen a curiously shaped nose in the street and dismissed it as an accident, I had seen six other noses of the same astonishing shape. I should have fancied for a moment that it must be some local secret society. So one elephant having a trunk was odd; but all elephants having trunks looked like a plot. (1908: 262-3)

Chesterton is arguing that the repetitions found in nature must have an explanation. One elephant having a trunk is odd, but it could be a one off quirk, a brute fact. But when we discover that all elephants have trunks this cannot be thought a mere coincidence. But if the regularity theory of laws of nature is correct, these laws do not

remove this element of coincidence: the law is identical to the regularity and, therefore, cannot explain it. Once the regularity theory is adopted, the inevitable result seems to be that there is explanatory work that must be done, and that cannot be done from within nature. Therefore, we must reject either naturalism or the regularity theory of laws which would otherwise prompt that rejection.[21] It is worth noting, however, how the passage quoted above continues. Allow me to indulge in a rather long quote.

> [T]he repetition in Nature seemed sometimes to be an excited repetition, like that of an angry school master saying the same thing over and over again. The grass seemed to be signalling to me with all its fingers at once ... The sun would make me see him if he rose a thousand times. The recurrences of the universe rose to the maddening rhythm of an incantation, and I began to see an idea.
> All the towering materialism which dominates the modern mind rests ultimately upon one assumption; a false assumption. It is supposed that if a thing goes on repeating itself it is probably dead; a piece of clockwork. People feel that if the universe was personal it would vary; if the sun were alive it would dance. This is a fallacy even in relation to known fact. ... The sun rises every morning. I do not rise every morning; but the variation is due not to my activity, but to my inaction. Now, to put the matter in a popular phrase, it might be true that the sun rises regularly because he never gets tired of rising. His routine might be due, not to a lifelessness, but to a rush of life. The thing I mean can be seen, for instance, in children, when they find some game or joke that they specially enjoy. ... They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. ... Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical *encore*. ... I had always vaguely felt facts to be miracles in the sense that they are wonderful: now I began to think them miracles in the stricter sense that they were *wilful*. ... In short, I had always believed that the world involved magic: now I thought that perhaps it involved a magician.
> (Chesterton 1908: 263-4)[22]

The philosophical point to take away from all this quotation is this: while regularity theory is incompatible with the occurrence of 'one off' miracles, unless regularity theory is false, nature is nevertheless full of objects, events and/or series of events which – in a looser sense of the term – seem to merit being labelled miraculous. In any case, the supernatural cannot be avoided by recourse to the regularity theory.

Summary

Firstly, I argued that the common definition of the miraculous, according to which a miracle is a violation of a law of nature, is incorrect. With such a definition, it becomes easy to argue for the impossibility of the miraculous. But on examination of these arguments, we discovered that the deductions told more against this definition of the

miraculous than against the miraculous itself. We also looked at two different conceptions of the laws of nature. In relation to the more-than-regularity theory, I argued that the possibility of the miraculous can be fairly easily established. This conclusion was less obviously warranted in relation to the regularity theory, but it looked far from unreasonable. In any case, following G.K. Chesterton, I argued that the naturalist who held to the regularity theory would be committed to the occurrence of a huge number of remarkable coincidences which seem beyond belief. If my arguments are sound then the conclusion established is that there is no conclusive objection to the possibility of miracles. Along the way, the concept of the miraculous has also been refined. We concluded that the correct (theistic) definition of the miraculous was as an event which would not have occurred were it not for the special activity of God.[23]

On the Laws and Limits of Science

I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that I would put forward a tentative version of the cosmological argument, and so I shall. This argument is based upon our discussion of the laws of nature. Actually, I shall have to say a little more about these laws before I will be able to progress. The important thing is that statements of law all have a form similar to one of the following: (i) 'All things of this kind are things of that kind,'(ii) 'Any so-and-so, under these conditions, will behave in the following manner,' (iii) 'Anything which has feature F also has feature G.' At this point, I also want to introduce an assumption, one which many of us make all the time: namely, that something is natural only if it can be subsumed under a law of nature. The consequences of this seemingly harmless assumption are immense. But we can only reach them by a series of small steps. We must first unpack the nature of scientific laws a little further.

The first thing to note is that the laws don't give us an unequivocal statement of what will occur, rather they tell us what will occur *if* we are dealing with certain kinds of thing, or things under certain conditions. The truth of the statement of law does not give us those things or those conditions, the statement does not tell us that we are dealing with certain things, or that any particular condition will indeed obtain. It all hangs on an *if*. But look what follows.

In order to explain any event you have to assume the universe as a going concern, a machine working in a particular way. Since this particular way of working is the basis of all explanation, it can never be itself explained. ... If the 'natural' means that which can be fitted into a class, that which obeys a norm, that which can be explained by reference to other events, then nature herself as a whole is *not* natural. If a miracle means that which must simply be accepted, the unanswerable actuality which gives no account of itself but simply *is*, then the universe is one great miracle. (Lewis 1942b: 116)[24]

The problem is that if in order to count as natural something must be subsumable under a scientific law, then it is an inevitable result that nature, taken as a whole, cannot be natural. Nature taken as a whole cannot be natural because it cannot be subsumed under the laws of science. It cannot be subsumed under the laws of science because all laws require, for their application, some 'initial conditions,' something to fill the first gap in the "if ..., then ..." formula. Stephen Hawking makes the same point.

[The laws of science are] only a set of equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to govern? Is the ultimate unified theory so compelling that it brings about its own existence? Although science may solve the problem of how the universe began, it cannot answer the question: Why does the universe bother to exist? I don't know the answer to that. (Hawking 1987)

In another passage, Lewis puts it this way.

The dazzlingly obvious conclusion now arose in my mind: *in the whole history of the universe the laws of nature have never produced a single event.* They are only the pattern to which every event must conform, provided only that it can be induced to happen. But how do you get it to do that? ... The laws of nature can give you no help there. All events obey them, just as all operations with money obey the laws of arithmetic. Add six pennies to six and the result will certainly be a shilling. But arithmetic by itself won't put one further shilling into your pocket. Up until now I had had a vague idea that the laws of nature could make things happen. I now saw that this was exactly like thinking that you could increase your income by doing sums about it. The laws are the pattern to which events conform: the source of events must be sought elsewhere.
This may be put in the form that the laws of nature explain everything except the source of events. But this is rather a formidable exception. The laws, in one sense, cover the whole of reality except – well, except that continuous cataract of real events which makes up the actual universe. They explain everything except what we should ordinarily call 'everything'. The only thing they omit is – the whole universe. (1945d: 330)

We may summarise the argument as follows

(1) Something counts as natural only if it can be subsumed under, and therefore explained in terms of, a law of nature or a set of such laws.
(2) If something is to be subsumed under, and therefore explained in terms of, a law of nature, then the initial conditions of that law must be satisfied.
(3) If naturalism is true, then the only things that could satisfy such initial conditions will be parts of the material world.

(4) Therefore, if naturalism is true and nature taken as a whole is natural. then certain parts of nature must play an essential role in the explanation of nature taken as a whole, and must therefore be part of their own explanation.

(5) However, nothing can be (part of) its own explanation.

(6) Therefore, either naturalism is untrue or nature is unnatural.

It is but a small step from here to concluding to the existence of something beyond the natural realm. The obvious way to avoid the conclusion is to deny the first premise. But denying that something is natural only if subsumable under natural law will not open the possibility that the universe can be explained in terms of science; rather it will simply make the 'unexplainedness' look a little more palatable. In the context of the debate over miracles, this is an interesting move. People commonly reject miracles precisely because science cannot explain such events. But here we are admitting that there is at least one other thing that all accept but that science cannot explain: namely the existence of the universe.[25] The impossibility of providing a scientific explanation of the existence of the universe does not count against our belief in the universe. Why should the impossibility of providing a scientific explanation for any given miraculous event count against our belief in miracles? We might say that the existence of the universe is obvious, but there is no good evidence for the miraculous. That, however, be an admission that the problem is not that miracles are impossible but that there is insufficient evidence: a different problem entirely.[26]

The naturalist might deny (1) while thinking that it does contain an insight, an insight worth saving. This could be done by saying that with a little revision (1) could be accepted. The required revision would look like this:

(1') Something counts as natural only if either that thing *or each of its parts* can be subsumed under, and therefore explained in terms of, a law of nature or a set of such laws

In effect, this claims that if all the parts of something are natural (as defined by (1)) then the whole is also natural. This would seem to offer a way out, but it must be noted that technically the naturalist who makes this move commits the fallacy of composition. For, as the naturalist is very quick to point out in connection with other forms of the cosmological argument,[27] we cannot infer that a whole has a certain feature from the fact that the parts have that feature. Such inferences may move from truth to truth, but they don't succeed in doing so simply because they are inferences of this kind. Indeed, a great many inferences of this kind lead to blatant falsehoods. For

instance we would clearly be making a mistake if from *each of the five rooms in a particular house has exactly one window*, we inferred that *the house as a whole has exactly one window*. The inference from *all the parts of W have feature F* to *W as a whole has feature F* is invalid.

In fact, there are still more reasons to question this move for it entails that nature as a whole can only be natural if it has no first moment. This is because the way in which each part of nature can be seen as natural is presumably as being explained by a combination of the laws of nature and the occurrence of *earlier* events. Without those earlier events, the events in question would not be subsumed under the laws. But then we can always ask whether those earlier events are themselves natural, and we would have to appeal to still earlier events, and so on *ad infinitum*. So, naturalism (combined with this attempt to rescue (1)) commits us to there being no earliest time, which to all intents and purposes is the same as saying that the past is infinite, and the universe never began.[28] Given that nearly all working scientists accept the big bang model of the universe, according to which the universe did begin it would seem better for the naturalist to drop (1) altogether, and stick with his assertion that nature is unexplained and unexplainable.[29] Still, even at this point the atheist seems on slightly weak ground, for the logic of this final quote from Chesterton is irresistible.

> [I]t is absurd for the [atheist] to complain that it is unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make everything out of nothing; and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into everything.[30]

Chapter 4
C.S. Lewis, David Hume and the Credibility of Miracles

While it is certainly true that when something altogether extraordinary is reported, the wise man will require more evidence than usual and will check and re-check the evidence very carefully, nevertheless at some stage in his accumulation of respectable evidence the wise man would be in danger of becoming dogmatic and obscurantist if he did not believe the evidence. (J.C.A. Gaskin 1988: 155)

BUILDING UPON THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, I here endeavour to provide a critique of David Hume's famous argument against the miraculous. The intended conclusion of Hume's argument was that while miracles may be possible, we know from the very nature of the case that no evidence should ever be sufficient to convince us that one has occurred.[1] As ever, my critique draws heavily upon the work of C.S. Lewis. G.K. Chesterton also plays a supporting role.

Lewis discusses Hume's argument in his *Miracles*. While I will argue that Lewis' main criticism of Hume is – in the end – mistaken, much that he says is of importance. As far as I am aware Chesterton's work never mentions Hume, but much of it is nevertheless pertinent.

The precise nature of Hume's argument is itself a matter of much debate. But one thing is fairly clear: the argument is split into two very distinct sections. The first section mounts a philosophical objection to belief in miracles on *a priori* grounds. The second section seems to embody a more historical approach. Though Hume does not make it clear precisely what role is to be played by these two parts of his essay, the following seems both a plausible and sympathetic reading: the two parts of the essay comprise the two parts of an argument with an 'even if..., but in fact...' structure.[2]

Thus, I interpret Hume as arguing, firstly, that *even if* the evidence for a putative miracle is as good as it could possibly be, we would still be irrational to believe that a miracle has occurred. Hume is interpreted as then arguing that *in fact*, the evidence is nowhere near as good as that. I shall refer to these two parts of Hume's overall argument as the *In Principle* argument and the *In Fact* argument.

The big question about Hume's overall argument is how the *In Principle* argument is supposed to work. A great many interpretations have been offered. I will first examine

an interpretation suggested by C.S. Lewis. Lewis' main objection to this argument (namely, that it begs the question) seems exactly right, but while his reading of Hume is not unwarranted, other more sympathetic readings are possible. Thus Lewis' refutation of the *In Principle* argument is, at best, incomplete.

The formulation of the *In Principle* argument that I have adopted was inspired by the relevant portion of J.L. Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism*. I say, "inspired," for, as with Hume, Mackie is not perfectly clear. I will also consider three related *a priori* objections to the miraculous. The first asks why a person should see an event as a miracle rather than as a disproof of a particular putative scientific law. The second asks why one should not think of the alleged miracle as a brute fact: uncaused and therefore inexplicable. The third comes from Antony Flew and concerns the relationship between inductive reasoning, the uniformity of nature and the occurrence of miracles.

This will complete my discussion of the *even if* section of Hume's argument. I will then move on to a brief discussion of the *in fact* section. Here Lewis has little to say, but Chesterton has some important contributions to make.

C.S. Lewis' Reading of Hume's *In Principle* Argument

Rather than quote Hume at length before getting to the real substance, I will first outline Lewis' interpretation of Hume, and show what motivates it. After a brief examination of why such an argument against the credibility of miracles would fail, I will attempt to show that there is reason to suppose this interpretation is not what Hume intended and, indeed that other interpretations are available.

In Chapter 13 of *Miracles*, entitled "On Probability", C.S. Lewis writes

> Ever since Hume's famous *Essay* it has been believed that historical statements about miracles are the most intrinsically improbable of all historical statements. According to Hume, probability rests on what may be called the majority vote of our past experiences. The more often a thing has been known to happen, the more probable it is that it should happen again; and the less often the less probable. Now the regularity of Nature's course, says Hume, is supported by something better than the majority vote of past experiences: it is supported by their unanimous vote, or, as Hume says, by "firm and unalterable experience." There is, in fact, "uniform experience" against Miracle; otherwise, says Hume, it would not be a Miracle. A miracle is therefore the most improbable of all events. It is always more probable that the witnesses were lying or mistaken than that a miracle occurred.

Lewis continues

Now of course we must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely "uniform experience" against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.

(1960b: 105-6)[3]

Certain passages in Hume invite this interpretation and this criticism; indeed much of the first part of C.S. Lewis' interpretation seems absolutely correct. Here's Hume ...

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full *proof* of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call *probability*. All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance.

(1777: 30)

Lewis' initial remarks seem a perfect summary. Later Hume writes ...

A miracle is a violation of a law of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. ... Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. (1777: 33)

Looking only at these texts makes Lewis' interpretation look very plausible. Hume does seem to assume that our experience of nature is totally uniform. And Lewis is surely correct to think that to make such an assumption is to beg the very question at issue.[4] If this were the sum total of Hume's argument, I would be inclined to accept Lewis' interpretation as correct, and the accusation of circularity as final. However, to me at least, this conclusion seems overly hasty.

One thing that should make us think twice about this interpretation of Hume is that it seems to make all the previous comments about probability irrelevant. If Lewis' interpretation is correct, the argument does not (or at least need not) make use of these comments at all. Now Hume clearly thought the comments on probability were

relevant at this juncture, and to suppose that he just didn't realise that this material was irrelevant seems silly. Furthermore, since it will be seen that Hume's argument does not require the question begging assumption that our experience of nature is totally uniform, we are not justified in rejecting Hume's conclusion without first examining the alternative interpretation(s).

But before we come to my suggested interpretation of Hume's argument, it will be useful to do a little more groundwork. We begin with the continuation of the passage quoted above.

> And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.
>
> (Hume 1777: 33)

It is the second half of this which is of interest here. What can Hume's talk about his proof being "destroyed" by an "opposite proof" mean? Hume mentioned similar things earlier in the essay. Having already noted that where "experience is not entirely uniform on either side," there is a "mutual destruction of arguments," Hume states that there can be a "contest of two opposite experiences; of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind by the force, which remains".

Hume seems to mean that there may be two arguments from experience which support opposed conclusions, and whether you should accept one conclusion, the other, or remain agnostic, depends upon the evidential force of those two arguments. If the two arguments are equally good we have a complete "mutual destruction of arguments" leaving neither conclusion well supported. Alternatively, if one argument is better than the other, it does not establish its conclusion to the same degree of certainty as it would in the absence of the other argument but only to a lesser degree, in proportion to its degree of superiority over the other argument.

We may say with confidence that Hume thinks that there may be arguments from experience for the miraculous, but if he has an argument that is (in his words) "as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined" then no "opposite proof" could be superior but would (at best) only be equal to it. In such a case, there would be a "mutual destruction of arguments" with nothing remaining on either side, and then we would have to remain agnostic, for there would remain no evidence either way.

Now this seems to be the plain meaning of this part of Hume's argument, but there is still a difficulty. The argument is about what has been observed, about whether (for example) someone really has seen a dead man come back to life. Hume's examples suggest a situation where we want to decide what will happen (or did happen) in a particular situation and where there are two competing opinions each supported by arguments of the form "in such-and-such a number of similar situations what happened was ...". But in all of Hume's examples he allows that each side has a non-zero number of situations which support their case. But surely Hume does not want to admit even a few cases of dead men coming back to life. What he really wants to do is to say that we ought to suspend judgement in all such cases; that such cases belong to what we may term the *contested* or *undecided* category. While this suggests that some of Hume's examples were not especially well chosen or not sufficiently well explained, it does serve to explain why Hume spoke of "firm and unalterable experience": for in all the uncontested cases our experience is uniform.[5]

So, Hume is allowing that our experience is not uniform, while at the same time making sure that 'non-uniform' experiences do not form any part of our evidence for miracles. This may initially sound like another question begging move, but on reflection it seems fair. What makes the move sound unfair is that 'experience' has a certain ambiguity. The term can be used in at least two different ways. In common usage 'experience' is what philosophers call 'a success term'. Compare the word *see*. There is a proper sense of this word in which it is impossible to see things that are not there. If someone says that they saw a ghost, and if that person does not believe in ghosts, then the charitable way to interpret him is as saying that he underwent the mental processes one would undergo if one really did see a ghost. That is, we will interpret him as saying that the episode was entirely in his own mind and that in fact he saw no such thing. In this sense of the word *see*, therefore, if someone sees something occur, then that thing must have actually happened. What we want to say about this person is not that they think they did actually see a ghost, but that they think they only *seemed-to-see* one. Just as we can usefully distinguish between *seeing* and *seeming-to-see*, we can also distinguish between an *experience-of* something and an *experience-as-of* that thing, and the word 'experience' is used in both senses, though using the word in latter sense is something only those acquainted with philosophy tend to do. We cannot have an experience-of something without that thing actually being there to

experience. But we can have an experience-as-of something without it being there to experience. Of course, most, if not all, experiences-as-of something are also experiences-of that something: many times when we seem-to-see something we do in fact see it.

Now if Hume allowed the defender of the miraculous to include in the evidence for miracles experience-of (and not just experience-as-of) non-uniform events – that is, miracles – then obviously the defender of the miraculous would have begged the question himself. Having made this distinction we can now see that Hume should, in principle, allow experience-as-of a non-uniform event (or miracle) to form part of evidence for the miraculous, and the defender of miracles should be content with this.[6]

A More Charitable Reading of Hume's *In Principle* Argument

Having done a sufficient amount of groundwork we now come to my own preferred reading of Hume's argument. I should say at this point that my reading of Hume is by no means the only possible one, but it seems a reasonable one. Moreover, even if it is not Hume's intended argument it may well be Mackie's, and is certainly an interesting argument and one well worth discussing. Many contemporary readings of Hume have seen him as reasoning in a broadly Bayesian fashion. What Hume is trying to establish is that the intrinsic probability of a miracle is so low that no amount of evidence, however great, could justify a person in believing one to have occurred. The basic principle seems clear, and is almost common-sensical. The more weird and wonderful the event being reported, the more evidence one needs before it becomes reasonable to accept the report. Hume writes

> Suppose, for instance, that the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual. ... But in order to increase the probability against the testimony of witnesses, let us suppose, that the fact, which they affirm, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous. (1777: 32-3)

To this he adds the following comment, and confirms our earlier observations about the basic structure of his argument.

> [S]uppose also, that the testimony considered apart and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case, there is a proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist. (1777: 33)

Hume's argument is supposed to show that in order to establish a miracle, we must admit evidence for a law of nature which that miracle is supposed to 'violate', and that in doing so we give Hume all the material he needs to show that the deck is so stacked against a miracle that it will be impossible to have enough evidence to justify the belief that the miracle has occurred.

We need only a small amount of evidence to convince us that our train is running late but we would need considerably more evidence to convince us that the reason for its delay is that its driver was abducted by aliens while the train was waiting to depart from the next station down the line. Hume wants to argue that the amount of evidence (that should be) required to convince us of a miracle is greater still, and indeed is greater than could possibly be achieved.

Therefore, the *in principle* portion of Hume's argument can be seen as having two quite distinct stages. The first stage of the argument attempts to establish the (very) low intrinsic probability of the miraculous. The second stage attempts to support the inference from this sub-conclusion to the conclusion that no amount of evidence could ever be sufficient to render belief in miracles rational.[7] To reach this conclusion Hume is going to need a pretty convincing argument. It seems sensible to demand a larger amount of evidence for a miracle than for the more hum-drum events of daily life, but why should the demand be for such a large amount of evidence that the demand could never be met, not even in principle?

That this is what Hume thought of himself as establishing is clear, for otherwise his "proof" would not be "as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined". If a more "entire" argument could be imagined it could be marshalled in favour of the miraculous, and while there would be a "mutual destruction of arguments", there would be a remainder which would offer some support for the miraculous claim. Hume, in other words, thinks (the first stage of) his argument establishes that the intrinsic probability that a report of a miracle should be true is either zero, or infinitesimal.[8] Now it may well be a consequence of probability theory that if we can set the intrinsic probability of an event at zero or at an infinitesimal value, no evidence would ever be enough to (sufficiently?) raise the epistemic probability of that event from its corresponding initial low value.[9] The problem with so many papers on this subject is that they have these (im)probabilities as assumptions.

and then proceed to the conclusion just stated. I can see no fault in their reasoning, but the assumption seems gratuitous, and should be supported by an argument.

J.L. Mackie clearly sees that this is an essential part of the argument, and frequently remarks that the occurrence of a miracle must be thought of as "maximally improbable".[10] But even in Mackie, it seems difficult to find an argument for this conclusion. However, the following quote does contain the seeds of such an argument.

> Now if the event reported is a miracle, it must be literally contrary to the laws of nature, it must contradict the conclusion of an induction of maximum strength. That is, it must be as unlikely as anything could be. (Mackie 1982: 17)

If we ignore the fact that the first statement is false (which Mackie as much as admits later in the chapter), we can see something of real value here. Neither Mackie nor Hume can rely upon the assumption that a statement of a law and the report of a miracle contradict one another.[11] But the experiences that confirm a law of nature also provide inductive support for other relevant claims. If all observed As have been Bs, this provides some support for a law according to which *all As are Bs, unless something interferes*. But this state of affairs would also provide inductive support for the simple generalisation that all As are Bs. Now, even if a miracle report is not contradictory to a law of nature, if the law of nature is well established (and it must be if the event is to be justifiedly thought a miracle) then the miracle report will contradict a well-established generalisation.

Tidying things up a little, Hume's argument appears to go roughly thus: to establish a miracle you must do two things. You must first establish a law (or set of laws) of nature. You must then establish the occurrence of an event that 'violates' that law (or that set of laws). In doing the former, you must posit a huge number of instances of the law. These instances support not only the law (which has *ceteris paribus* conditions), but also a simple generalisation (which does not). We cannot weigh the probability of the miraculous seeming event in the same scales as the probability of the law for (as was shown in the previous chapter) the relevant assertions do not contradict one another. But we can weigh the probability of the event in the same scales as the probability of the simple generalisation, since in this case the relevant assertions do contradict one another. Since we have a huge number of instances of the law, we have an equally vast number of instances of the generalisation, with no (agreed upon) counter-instances. This means that the probability that the generalisation (as well as the

law) is true is extraordinarily high, and that correspondingly the probability that the report of the miracle is true is extraordinarily low. However much evidence one now marshals for the miracle, the argument concludes, it will not be enough to overturn, that is to sufficiently raise, this initial improbability.

Evaluating the *In Principle* Argument

As it stands my main criticism of the argument is that the desired conclusion just does not follow. At best, the argument has only shown that the probability that the generalisation be true is very high, and therefore that the initial probability that the report of the miracle be true is very low. But to establish a probability which is very low is not to establish a probability of zero or an infinitesimal probability. These are very different things. For whereas it is (we are supposing) logically impossible that there be sufficient evidence to overturn a zero or an infinitesimal initial probability, there certainly could be sufficient evidence to overturn an initial probability which is very low.

That the argument (or its first stage) makes this error should have been clear enough when looking at the short quote from Mackie. What, after all, is an induction of *maximal* strength? The only real candidate is that such an induction is a form of deduction, in which each and every thing of a certain kind has been observed and seen to possess a certain feature, and we therefore conclude that all things of that kind possess that feature. This, unfortunately, just takes us back to Lewis' interpretation of the argument, where all experience is assumed to be uniform. The inference must remain truly inductive. The next most obvious candidate is that we have observed all cases bar one. However, even this line of thinking clearly assumes that there is a finite limit to the number of observations that could be made. But in the case of scientific law, this is a preposterous suggestion. We could always drop another heavy object and thus (miracles apart) observe another instance of the law of gravity. This would seem to show that no induction from a finite number of cases could ever be thought of as an induction of maximal strength, for we could always add another observation and so enlarge the number made.[12]

This in turn suggests that an induction of maximal strength is one based upon an infinite number of observations. Now I do not intend to debate whether this is true, but only to say that if it is, it is a truth we cannot make use of here. We have not made an

infinite number of observations, and yet we are sure that we are justified in saying that it is a law of nature (for example) that unsupported heavy objects tend to fall. In short, we only have a finite number of observations and with only a finite number of observations Hume's argument cannot succeed, because from a finite evidence base we cannot deduce a zero or infinitesimal (initial) probability for any (kind of) event.

While this objection seems decisive in itself, further problems can be raised. One such problem concerns the use this argument makes of induction. The first thing to note here is that Hume was himself rather sceptical about induction, or at least often gave that impression. He seems to have thought that something's always having happened in the past was no kind of evidence for its continuing to happen in the future; although we have a habit or custom of making such inferences, they are not warranted by the evidence.

But this is not really a problem with the argument; it is more of an irony. The first real problem arises from the fact that induction is a reliable method of reasoning only when the cases from which we generalise are a representative sample of the group about which the generalisation is supposed to hold true. In short, the sample must not be a biased one. The following example illustrates this principle.

Suppose that a piece of research suggests that water quality around the UK is at an all time low. This conclusion has been inferred from a large number of samples of water all of which showed levels of cleanliness well below the averages of those taken in previous years. Superficially, this may seem like convincing evidence, but we should always be ready to ask further questions. The important question in this case is where these samples were taken. Were they taken at many different locations around the UK? Was the water at these locations representative of the water in all locations around the UK? If it transpired that all the samples where taken in one particular spot where it is well known that the water is rather murky, this would lead us to question the conclusion. Equally, even if the samples were taken from many different locations, if they were all places where one expects lower levels of cleanliness in the water this would undermine the result. The water samples must be representative of the water in the UK as a whole. What this water is like at its worst does not tell us much (if anything) about what the water is like in general.

Similarly, what happens when God does not intervene in a special way does not tell us anything about what happens when He does. Both the defender of the miraculous

and his opponent think that all the agreed upon cases were cases in which there was no special act of God. But to extrapolate from what happens when God does not act, to what happens in all cases seems illegitimate. The only way this could be made legitimate is by adding the assumption that either God does not exist or, if He does, He is unlikely to perform miracles. But such an assumption seems gratuitous.[13]

This objection may seem weak since it is always possible to object that a sample is biased. Imagine someone, call him Henry, considering whether to adopt the (absurd) theory that by the year 2020 humans will have the ability to eat houses. It would be natural to argue against this position by saying that this would be a monumental change in the capacities of humans and in all history no such change has occurred to the human race or at least has not occurred so quickly. Henry (the house eater) might object that the evidence we are bringing against the theory comes from a biased sample, since all the cases of 'little or no change' come from prior to the year 2002, they all come from the past. Were we on the brink of this huge change, Henry might argue, it would turn out that our sample was hopelessly biased.

The proper response to this is twofold. Firstly, we must admit that inductive reasoning is fallible and that, as a result, mistaken conclusions can result from even the best of inductive inferences. This would then allow that Henry's point is misleading. The conclusion of the induction would (if the house eating theory were correct) be mistaken, but the inference would not have been shown to be unreasonable. In particular, it would not have been shown to make illegitimate use of a biased sample. Secondly, we could defend the rationality of the inductive inference (even if mistaken) by arguing that the sample could only be reasonably labelled 'biased' if we had some reason to think that the mere passage of time, or the date shown on a calendar, would have a causal effect on the capacities of human beings. But we have no such reason. Compare the case of the 'millennium bug.' Here the worry was that the turning of the year from 1999 to 2000 would cause a crisis. Now someone might have responded to this that it was just the turning of the year and that since no previous new year has brought the kind of disaster that some were expecting as the year 2000 approached, we should not have been worried about the millennium bug. However, this argument really does rely upon a biased sample. The worry about the change of the calendar was due to the fact that so much of society is so heavily dependant upon computers and no-one was sure how a computer not designed to recognise such a date would respond (since

the computers were designed to have the year as 19__). In other words, while the hysteria surrounding the millennium bug was largely mistaken, it was not entirely unreasonable; there had never previously been, in a society so heavily dependent upon computers, a change of date that the said computers were not designed to recognise. If we have reason to think that a specified difference in the conditions under which the samples were taken would have altered the outcome, then we have reason to think that the sample is biased. (Or rather, this would give us reason to think the sample biased unless we also had reason to think that the 'specified difference' is one that is unlikely to obtain in the unexamined cases.)[14]

But this is exactly the situation with regard to the miraculous. All parties agree that in the cases where no miracles occurred God was not specially active. Since it is surely reasonable to think that His special action would make a difference, the Hume/Mackie inductive inference (to the conclusion that miracles are unlikely to have occurred or to occur) does seem to depend upon a biased sample. The accusation of bias could, of course, be avoided if we had independent reason to think God's existence or special action impossible or unlikely. But that we have such reasons, which is something I would dispute, would require a separate demonstration.[15]

While evaluating Hume's argument, we should spend at least a little time considering the following oft-quoted passage.

> The plain consequence is ... That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish ... When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider ... whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other ... and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion. (1777: 33)

Though beautifully written, the passage above is very apt to mislead the less careful reader into thinking that Hume has here established something which he has not. For while this passage contains an important truth, this truth is stated in such a way as to make it seem equivalent to something much more contentious.

If Hume, when he says that a man should always "reject the greater miracle," means simply that a man should always reject that statement which our evidence suggests is the least likely to be true, then Hume is obviously correct. But because Hume has here

used the term 'more miraculous' as if it were equivalent to the term 'less probable,' and because it would not be a genuine miracle for all our evidence to be misleading, Hume implies that all our evidence being misleading would be 'less of a miracle' and therefore more probable than the occurrence of the real miracle which this evidence is being cited to support. What follows is that in so far as the defender of miracles allows that 'more miraculous' is meaningful at all,[16] he cannot allow that it is equivalent to 'less probable.' To assume such an equivalence, as this passage seems to, is to beg the question against the defender of miracles.[17]

It is also worth mentioning another common objection to Hume's argument. But it should be noted first that the discussion of this objection will take us on a rather large detour around other material related to the question of the credibility of miracles. Anyway, the objection states that if Hume's argument proves its intended conclusion it should also prove something else which we think is obviously false. This unintended conclusion is that our current scientific theories should under no circumstances be revised or abandoned. If the miraculous events are ruled out because they are contrary to (a naturalistic understanding of) current understandings of the laws of nature, other anomalies should be ruled out too. However, it is normally thought that persistent anomalies should lead us to think that our theories need revision. It clearly follows that good science depends upon the fact that we can have good evidence for events whose occurrence would contradict (naturalism plus) our current scientific theories. The point is well put by C. Stephen Evans.

[O]ur initial presumption against exceptions to natural regularities cannot be so total as to prevent empirical testing of the laws of nature. It must be possible for observers to recognise and give credible testimony that an exception to what is thought to be a law of nature has occurred. If this were not possible, then it would be impossible to test laws of nature, and almost all working scientists agree that such testability is an important characteristic of genuine laws. If we followed Hume's policy, we would in effect always reject an observation of an apparent counter-instance to a law of nature, on the grounds that its prior probability is too low, but this would make scientific progress impossible. So it must be possible to believe on reasonable grounds that an exception to what is currently accepted as a law of nature has occurred. (1996: 156)[18]

Now this seems right as far as it goes, but on its own it does not go far enough. As Evans realises, the sceptic's response will be that while it is possible for us to "believe on reasonable grounds that an exception to what is currently accepted as a law of nature has occurred," these exceptions should lead us to revise our laws, not to proclaim a miracle. This move is wholly understandable, and it has to be admitted, of

course, that in the vast majority of cases this will be the correct procedure. To suggest otherwise would be ridiculous. But notice also that this is not a way of defending Hume's argument against miracles; it is rather a completely separate objection to belief in the miraculous. C.S. Lewis seemed to have such a response (that is, a response according to which we should *always* revise our understanding of science, not proclaim a miracle) in mind when he wrote

> The ordinary procedure of the modern historian, even if he admits the possibility of miracle, is to admit no particular instance of it until every possibility of "natural" explanation has been tried and failed. That is, he will accept the most improbable "natural" explanations rather than say that a miracle has occurred. Collective hallucination, hypnotism of consenting spectators, widespread instantaneous conspiracy in lying by persons not otherwise known to be liars and not likely to gain by the lie – all these are known to be very improbable events: so improbable that, except for the special purpose of excluding a miracle, they are never suggested. But they are preferred to the admission of a miracle. Such a procedure is, from the purely historical point of view, sheer midsummer madness unless we start by knowing that any Miracle whatever is more improbable than the most improbable natural event. (1960b: 105)

As we shall see, Lewis seems correct here, but it is well worth spending a while longer on this issue. The important question at this point is how to distinguish between cases in which a counter-instance to an accepted law should lead us to accept a miracle and those cases in which such a counter-instance should lead us to revise the law.

A number of people have followed Richard Swinburne's suggestion that the relevant difference between these two kinds of exception is their repeatability. According to Swinburne a miracle is, among other things, a "non-repeatable counter-instance to a law of nature" (1970: 26). Surprisingly some writers have suggested that miracles need not be unrepeatable since there is presumably no logical bar on God's performing two miracles of the same kind.[19] This is surprising not because the remarks are incorrect, but because they are so uncharitable as to be entirely beside the point. On my own reading, Swinburne is not suggesting that God could not perform two miracles of the same basic kind. Rather he is suggesting that if an event is wholly natural, one ought to be able to get (or at least to expect) other events of its kind to happen in relevantly similar circumstances. Swinburne's suggestion provides an epistemological check on what we allow to be classed as miraculous, it is not (I believe) intended as part of the definition of the miraculous. It seems clear that strictly speaking miracles are repeatable. Swinburne's point is that we can never have reason to believe in a *repeatable* miracle. This is because, as J.C.A. Gaskin has pointed out, if God were to

intervene and produce a miracle of a fixed kind every time a certain sort of physical state obtained this situation would indistinguishable from one in which there was a law according to which events of this kind occur (Gaskin 1988: 159-60).

Suppose we want to find out whether an event E is repeatable, and the feature of this event which makes it appear miraculous is that it is an event of kind K. There seem to be two basic ways of finding out whether E is repeatable: the direct method and the indirect method. The direct method involves the attempt to recreate the event in question under fair laboratory conditions.[20] If under these conditions, we regularly get an event of kind K, that suggests that the event is repeatable. On the other hand, if, however closely we recreate the earlier situation in which E occurred, we cannot produce another event of kind K, this suggests that event E is non-repeatable. There will often be practical or ethical barriers that prevent us from carrying out such experiments. Some circumstances cannot be recreated, others, even if they could be, should not be. In such situations, we must resort to the indirect test, which can, of course, be used as a supplement (and not just an alternative) to the direct test.

The indirect test involves assessing the plausibility of various theories, laws or hypotheses. The basic principle is this: if any theory that would account for event E naturalistically turned out to be a theory having certain features, the possession of which makes the theory implausible, that would suggest that no theory of that sort was true. But if the only theories according to which events of kind K can occur naturally and could therefore occur repeatedly, are ones we are rightly inclined to think are untrue, this would suggest that event E is non-repeatable.

The question, of course, is this: what are the features of a theory that make it plausible or implausible? The first thing to note is that not all theories are created equal. Swinburne (1970: Chapter 3) considers two formulae, both of which have been produced to account for four pieces of data. The data in question lead us to plot four points on a graph at (1,1), (2,2), (3,3) and (4,4). The formulae are given by (1) and (2).

(1) $y = x$
(2) $y = (x - 1)(x - 2)(x - 3)(x - 4) + x$

Both of these theories account for the data, but (2) is unnecessarily complicated. The simplicity of (1) gives us a presumption in its favour. In the case of putative miracles, we can admit that the naturalist will always be able to find some theory that would fit the data. However, we need not admit that such a theory would be on equal footing

with the theory that God performed a miracle. Of course, this will depend upon exactly what the data are, and how clumsy the theories in question turn out to be. As J.A. Cover points out, it may be that event E

> proves so stubbornly recalcitrant to explanation by any remotely plausible gerrymandering of existing scientific law, that one goes further in preserving the unity of science by admitting [a miracle] than one could possibly go [by holding the event to be natural and accepting the attendant consequences for the laws of nature]. (1999: 347)

Some laws do so much work for us that they cannot bear even the slightest alteration. How, for example, might we revise the laws of nature to accommodate Jesus' resurrection? The relevant law in the case of Jesus' resurrection is, of course, that dead people stay dead. Any extra clauses added to this law, apart from the necessary *ceteris paribus* clause, would deprive it of all explanatory power. Grace Jantzen puts the point well.

> If a situation arose in which there were compelling evidence for believing that Jesus rose from the dead, a revision of our supposed laws would hardly be the appropriate response ... Where there is a single exception to a perfectly well established and well understood law, and one that is inexplicable unless one appeals to divine intervention (in which case it assumes enormous significance), what can be gained by making the [law] read, "All [dead men stay dead] except those who have an unknown quality, observed on only one occasion and hitherto accountable for only by divine intervention." ... The skeptical response would be inadequate. (Jantzen 1979 quoted in Taliaferro 1998: 375-6)[21]

It might be thought that one way to change our formulation of the law in question so as to avoid the miraculous would be to make the law statement probabilistic. Instead of saying that *Under circumstances of kind C, things of kind K exhibit behaviour B* we might have something like *Under circumstances of kind C, things of kind K exhibit behaviour B in n% of cases*. Scientists are currently working with law statements of very much this form, and so it cannot be claimed that they are too clumsy to be rationally adopted. In reply to this, I should firstly point out that on an intuitive level something seems to have gone wrong when a person makes this response. Saying that a good reformulation of the relevant law statement would be, for instance, *n% of dead people stay dead* just seems wrong. Secondly, this raises the question of how the value of *n* is to be assessed. But it seems that the value of *n* is either practically indistinguishable from 100 or is impossible to assess. In the one case, the law will offer no *new* predictions and in the other no predictions at all. Confirmation of the revised law (over and above the old non-probabilistic version) would therefore be rendered impossible. In other words, in a great many cases the move to a probabilistic

formulation would be entirely *ad hoc*. This would give us reason to believe that the contentious event would not pass Swinburne's indirect test of repeatability, and therefore that the event was indeed a miracle.

Thirdly, the measure of the 'clumsiness' of a theory is not entirely intrinsic to the statement of that theory. It also depends upon how well that theory coheres with other accepted laws and theories. If the law we are interested in operates in a field of science where the other laws are non-probabilistic then this will give us further reason to think the proposed revision dubious.

Fourthly, the event in question may not merely be in contradiction with a naturalistic interpretation of currently accepted physical laws, it may stand in a much more radical relation to them. The resurrection story of Jesus, if true, does more than contradict a naturalistic interpretation of the law that *dead people stay dead*. The Gospel reports do not present Jesus as having made a lucky escape from the jaws of death. He is presented as victor over death. If the records are correct, Jesus did not appear in a weak and debilitated condition as a fitting object of pity. He appeared as the Lord of Life, worthy of worship. Even if we adjust our understanding of the law that *dead people stay dead*, and make that law probabilistic we would have to do a good deal more to accommodate the resurrection, for example, as a non-miraculous event. These considerations show that there could be a situation in which it would be unreasonable to move to a probabilistic formulation of a law to avoid admitting the miraculous. Grace Jantzen's conclusion, quoted above, stands firm and so in turn do Swinburne's two non-repeatability tests, which he summarises as follows.

> [I]t might be that any modification which we made to the laws of nature to allow them to predict E might not yield any more successful predictions than [the laws we had previously held to] and they might be so clumsy that there was no reason to believe that their predictions not yet tested would be successful. Under these circumstances we would have good reason to believe that [event E was non-repeatable]. ....
> We have to some extent good evidence about what are the laws of nature, and some of them are so well established and account for so many data that any modifications to them which we could suggest to account for the odd counter-instance would be so clumsy and *ad hoc* as to upset the whole structure of science. In such cases the evidence is strong that if the purported counter-instance occurred it was a [miracle]. (1970: 30-2)

Not every event which is alleged to be miraculous will survive these tests for non-repeatability. But there is no good reason to suggest that none will. Since these tests do seem to be rationally motivated, and since any event which passes the tests is plausibly

thought of as non-repeatable, it follows that these tests provide an adequate response to the objection that we should always revise the laws.

It seems best to address a second objection to the miraculous at this juncture, since it bears a marked similarity to the one just considered. According to this objection, while all the preceding reasoning may show us that there could be sufficient evidence to accept that some event has no natural cause, it does not establish a supernatural cause for the simple reason that it has not ruled out the possibility of the event having no cause at all.

Again, we must grant that because we cannot conclusively prove that every event has a cause, we cannot prove beyond doubt that some alleged miracle has a cause. But it should be questioned whether this requires any proof. The general principle (that every event has a cause) is certainly intuitively correct, and – as Aristotle knew well – one should always try to avoid demonstrating the truth of something obvious since it can only ever be done from premises whose truth is less obvious. Indeed, even David Hume, who raised such big questions about the principle that all events have causes, nevertheless accepted the principle. In his letters, we find him saying that the claim that something should arise without a cause is "absurd."[22] But if common sense sides (as it seems to) with the principle that all events have causes, then common sense clearly sides against this objection.

But we can say more. It will be remembered that in the previous chapter I mentioned that the context of an event is part of what might make it appropriate to call the event miraculous. Now we will see that the context can also play an evidential role. As C.S. Lewis points out, a miracle may be thought of as an event which

> in the forward direction (i.e. during the time which follows its occurrence) ... is interlocked with all Nature just like any other event. Its peculiarity is that it is not in that way interlocked backwards, interlocked with the previous history of Nature. (1960b: 64)

But Lewis goes on to say that that an event is not interlocked with nature in the backwards direction only entails that it is not at all interlocked in the backwards direction if we add the assumption that there is nothing besides nature. The believer in miracles might well hold (and if he is a Christian, does hold) that there can be clues within nature about whether an event is interlocked with 'supernature' in the backward direction. Such clues would include an event's being predicted (or prophesied, as Christians prefer to say), its being prayed for, its occurring in the life of someone of

great religious significance or of someone especially devoted to his religion. Let's take the first two contexts: prophecy and prayer.

If an event occurs which one would not – without having some inside knowledge – expect to occur, then that the event was predicted suggests that the person who predicted it did have some inside knowledge. But if the event has no natural cause, or indeed no cause, it is very difficult to see how a person could have had such knowledge. One might attempt to avoid the implications of this by holding that some humans have a *natural* faculty of seeing into the future, or by saying that the whole thing was a big coincidence. However, the former would stretch our credibility to the limit, while there are obviously limits as to how far one can rationally push the coincidence line.[23] A context of prayer has a similar effect to that of prophecy. Under normal circumstances were I to ask a person for something, that I receive that thing in the post, let's say, would give me excellent reason to think that they sent it (Cover 1999: 347-50). But the case of a context of prayer seems exactly parallel. Without postulating some kind of causation (and quite possibly an intelligent cause), it may be a literally incredible coincidence that the very thing prayed for has come about. It should be noted that these points are especially strong when the prayers or prophecies in question are extremely specific, and when their truth has (from a naturalistic point of view) an extremely low initial probability, or when we have reason to believe the events would be unrepeatable in Swinburne's sense. At some point, the appeal to coincidence must become irrational. We cannot prove beyond all doubt that the context of the event resonating with the event in this way is not a coincidence, but the demand that we must do so is unreasonable.

A Mistaken Objection from C.S. Lewis, and a Related Argument from Antony Flew

Returning to objections to Hume's *In Principle* argument it is also worth mentioning another objection from C.S. Lewis. I should point out in advance that I don't think this objection really counts against Hume's argument, for it seems to backfire, and the obvious method by which the defender of miracles should avoid being slain by his own objection also offers a way out for anyone defending a Humean argument against miracles. So what is the objection? To understand it we must first think a little more deeply about the nature of inductive arguments.

Now an inductive argument is one that attempts to generalise from past experience, to argue from the known to the unknown. When we make an inductive inference what we are doing is projecting the patterns we find in our experience, suggesting that those patterns also hold for the things we have not (yet) experienced. One obvious feature of inductive arguments is that the more observations (or the more kinds of observation) we have already made and which fit our pattern, the more support they will give to an inductive argument's conclusion.

It has often been commented (most notably by Hume himself) that all inductive arguments assume what philosophers call "The Uniformity of Nature." Now it is not entirely clear what is meant by this phrase but the general idea is easy to grasp. To say that nature is uniform comes to saying things go on in the same way in all times and in all places. The question of just how things go on is a question to be settled by observation. But it is presumed that anything that goes on in one situation will also go on in any other sufficiently similar situations. Another way of putting it would be that if an experiment in one place or time had result R, one would not expect the same experiment performed in a different place or at a different time (but in conditions otherwise the same as the first experiment) to have a result other than R. It should be fairly clear that if induction is to be a reliable method of inference then nature must indeed be uniform in this way. If nature were not uniform then this would mean that patterns holding in our experience are liable not to hold across things not yet experienced.

It has sometimes been supposed that induction could prove that nature is uniform, by arguing that nature has always behaved in a uniform way in the past, so we can infer the same about the future. But this assumes that the future will be like the past, which is just a way of assuming that nature is uniform. Unless nature is uniform, induction can tell us nothing about the world. Only if nature is uniform can we assume that the unobserved regions are like the observed ones. As may already have struck the reader, the question of whether miracles occur is closely related to the question of whether nature is uniform. In fact, if nature is uniform, it follows immediately that miracles do not occur.[24] But if induction is useless apart from the assumption that nature is uniform then the very use of induction begs the question against the miraculous. C S Lewis puts it well.

The question, "Do miracles occur?" and the question, "Is the course of Nature absolutely uniform?" are the same question asked in two different ways. Hume, by sleight of hand, treats them as two different questions. He first answers "Yes," to the question whether Nature is absolutely uniform: and then uses this "yes" as a ground for answering, "No," to the question "Do miracles occur?" The single real question which he set out to answer is never discussed at all. He gets the answer to one form of the question by assuming the answer to another form of the same question. (1960b: 107)

While a very pertinent issue has been raised here, the criticism has been overstated. For Hume and his defenders can reply that the person arguing for a miracle will also need to rely upon inductive reasoning. Thus, the defender of miracles seems to be involved in an inconsistency. This is presumably what the staunch atheist Antony Flew is getting at when he writes that the basic assumptions of critical history are as follows.

> [F]irst, that the present relics of the past cannot be interpreted as historical evidence at all unless we presume that the same fundamental regularities obtained then as still obtain today. Second, that in trying as best they may to determine what actually happened, historians must employ as criteria all their present knowledge, or presumed knowledge, of what is probable or improbable, possible or impossible. Third, that since the word miracle has to be defined in terms of physical necessity and physical impossibility, the application of these criteria inevitably preclude a proof of the actual occurrence of a miracle. (1997: 49)[25]

The argument seems to be roughly this: (i) If someone wishes to establish the occurrence of some historical event then, because they will need to use inductive reasoning, they must assume the uniformity of nature. But (ii) that nature is uniform rules out the occurrence of the miraculous. So, (iii) a miracle can never be established as a historical event. Christian philosopher, Stephen T. Davis also seems to understand Flew's argument this way.

> People who offer historical or probabilistic arguments in favour of the occurrence of a given purported miracle, Flew says, themselves presuppose the very regularity of nature and reliability of nature's laws that they argue against. Their position is accordingly inconsistent. (1993: 6)

At this point, it seems clear that Lewis' objection has backfired. What began as an objection that Hume's argument presupposed the uniformity of nature and thus begs the question against the defender of miracles, has now become the problem that the defender of miracles must himself assume the uniformity of nature and thus contradicts himself.

Our earlier discussion shows that Flew's claim that to establish a historical event one must assume the uniformity of nature, is (if not true), at the very least, well motivated. But the real question is why one needs to assume that nature is *totally*

uniform. All that the critical historian requires is that nature is *generally* uniform, as this is all that induction requires. Of course, when the assumption that nature is uniform is weakened in this fashion inductive arguments will be seen to offer less support to their conclusions, but less weight is not equivalent to no weight. Davis writes

> Why cannot nature, so to speak, almost but not quite always act regularly and ... predictably? If it did, then those who wished to argue for certain irregularities would naturally do so on the basis of regularities seen elsewhere. If there did turn out to be unique events, not analogous to any others (and some scientists argue that there are such events – e.g., the "Big Bang"), we would have no choice but to try to argue for them on the basis of regular and repeatable events. ... [T]here is no inconsistency in a miracle-believer holding that miracles are rare, maintaining that nature normally behaves naturally, [and] basing belief on those normal and natural operations of nature. Theists certainly believe that nature is uniform in the sense that the future will in many ways resemble the past. This is sufficient to form part of the foundations of the causal judgements they make about testimony. What is not required as part of the foundation of those judgements is the very different claim that nature is uniform in the sense that it is a closed and deterministic causal nexus. (1993: 6-7)[26]

This seems absolutely right. The point can also be bolstered with an observation from Norman Geisler. He remarks that arguments like Flew's confuse the *basis* of knowledge with the *object* of knowledge (Geisler 1997: 81-2). The general regularity of nature underlies our inference from evidence to fact, but the fact known need not be part of the general regularity. Davis's example of the big bang seems especially pertinent here. If the universe did begin with a 'big bang,' then this event is unique – for the universe can only have begun once. But this unique event is postulated because regularities within nature point to it. Certain observations suggest that the universe is expanding, but if this is a regularity of nature, then, imagining we could look into the past, the further back into the past we looked the smaller the universe would appear. Eventually we would get to a point where we could not wind time back any further without the universe disappearing completely. This point is the one at which the big bang is supposed to have occurred.[27] The regularity of nature provides the basis for our knowledge of a unique event. Unless that regularity is assumed to be complete (and there is no reason that it need be), there is no way to rule out these regularities providing a sufficient basis for belief in unique and irregular events.

We can conclude this section on nature's uniformity by noting that while this Lewisian objection to Hume's argument fails, so too does Flew's argument against the miraculous.[28]

The Failure of the *In Principle* Argument

In summary, despite the popularity of Hume's argument his conclusion *that miracles are so intrinsically unlikely that no amount of evidence would ever be sufficient to establish that one has occurred*, cannot be validly inferred from any of the available premises. No matter how unlikely it may be that a certain event should occur, it will always be possible, in principle, that that event should have occurred and that there be sufficient evidence to make belief in its occurrence reasonable. Allow me to end this section with a quote from Stephen T. Davis that neatly summarises much of the above.

> We cannot *a priori* rule out the possibility of ... rational belief in miracles. But Hume is not the sort of philosopher whom one can dismiss with a casual wave of the hand. Much of his argument is beyond reproach. He is mistaken when he asserts that our past experience of the normal course of events by itself settles the question of whether a miracle can occur, but he is surely correct that we base our rational expectation of what will happen on our best available knowledge of what has happened. He is mistaken when he asserts that it can never be what he calls the "greater miracle" for all the testifiers to a miracle to be wrong, but he is surely correct that rational people are inclined to accept the epistemological principle of always rejecting the greater miracle. He is mistaken when he asserts that it can never be rational to believe that a miracle has occurred, but he is surely correct that rational people will require strong evidence indeed before they will believe a miracle has occurred. (1993: 4-5)

Hume's *In Fact* Argument

In the first part of his discourse on miracles, Hume had granted, for the sake of argument, that in principle the evidence for a miracle may be very strong. But the second part begins with the assertion that on investigating the evidence we soon discover that, in fact, that evidence is never very strong at all.

> In the foregoing reasoning we have supposed, that the testimony, upon which a miracle is founded, may possibly amount to an entire proof, and that the falsehood of that testimony would be a real prodigy: But it is easy to show that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession and that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence. (Hume 1777: 34)

Hume puts forward four points that he thinks prove his case. He asserts that (i) there have never been a sufficient number of good witnesses to any miraculous event; that (ii) people have a tendency to accept such stories without requiring as much evidence as they ought; that (iii) miracle stories are chiefly found, and always originate, among the "ignorant and barbarous"; and that (iv) since the miracle stories of competing

religions cannot all be true, they cancel each other out. The fourth of these arguments is quite different in kind to the others, and will be examined first.

The Miracle Stories of Contrary Religions Cancel Each Other Out

Unlike Hume's other three considerations, this one is less of an observation and more of an argument. Hume's own statement of the argument runs thus:

> Let us consider, that, in matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary; and that it is impossible the religions of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, and of China, all of them, be established on any solid foundation. Every miracle, therefore, pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles), as its direct scope is to establish the particular system to which it is attributed; so has it the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system. In destroying a rival system, it likewise destroys the credit of those miracles, on which that system was established; so that all the prodigies of different religions are to be regarded as contrary facts, and the evidences of these prodigies, whether weak or strong, as opposite to each other. (1777: 37-8)

The argument seems to run roughly as follows.

(1) Religions A and B are different and (so) cannot both be true.
(2) Therefore, evidence that suggests that religion A is true, suggests that religion B is false.
(3) Any miracle-story of religion A, would, if true, be evidence that religion A is true.
(4) In turn, any evidence for the truth of a miracle-story of religion A is evidence that religion A is true.
(5) Therefore, any evidence for the truth of a miracle-story of religion A, will also be evidence that religion B is false.
(6) Since *A* and *B* can stand for any two religions, the evidence for the miracles of one religion is, therefore, evidence against the truth of all other religions.
(7) Therefore, the evidences of miracles in different and (so) contrary religions tend to cancel one another out.
(8) Therefore, (the evidences for) miracles offer no support to any one religion.

Much could be said about this argument. The first thing to say is that even if successful the argument's conclusion is limited. It does not show, as its context would suggest, that miracle claims are not well evidenced. Rather, supposing it succeeds, it shows that miracles do not offer support for any particular religion. So while miracles may not be of any use in deciding between religious systems, they could be of use in deciding whether we ought to adopt some religious system or other. Another way to put what seems to be essentially the same point is that miracles may not provide evidence for any one religious system but they do provide evidence against naturalism.

This may be thought somewhat puzzling, for while many religions deny the truth of naturalism, only one of these religions can be true, and so surely – it might be argued – we cannot use two miracles from contrary religions to support our rejection of naturalism. The clear implication is that a person who embraces one religion cannot accept the miracles of any other. Chesterton suggests otherwise when he says it is quite wrong to suppose

> that the Christian and the Moslem deny each other's miracles. No religion that thinks itself true bothers about the miracles of another religion. It denies the doctrines of the religion ... but it never thinks it worthwhile to deny its signs and wonders. ... The Pharisees did not dispute the miracles of Christ; they said they were worked by devilry. The Christians did not dispute the miracles of Mahomed. They said they were worked by devilry. (1904a: 388-9)[29]

While I disagree with the details of this (on which more shortly), the central contention seems correct. The adherents of any one religion, while they *may* deny the miracles of other religions, *need not* deny them. In fact, if they grant some particular miracle, they need not even say that it was performed by devilry. That God is the God of Christianity, for example, would not entail that He only performs miracles on behalf of those who hold to Christian doctrines. Hume's conclusion allows, therefore, that miracles may be thought of as a part of the debate between naturalism and supernaturalism.

However, the defender of miracles need not grant Hume's conclusion. For while it may be true that evidence for the occurrence of miracles of contrary religions would tend to cancel out, it doesn't follow that evidence for miracles can never offer support for any one religion. This is because we need not suppose that the evidence available equally supports all miracle-reports. More exactly, we need not suppose that there are at least two opposed religions whose miracles are equally well established. In particular, we need not hold that the miracles of Christianity are only as well evidenced as the miracles of any other religion. Hume's argument therefore leaves it open that if the miracles of one religion are uniquely well supported by the evidence then that religion would be uniquely well confirmed by the evidence for miracles (Geisler 1999: 461-2).

Further, it seems clear that the miracles of some religions ought to be regarded with much more suspicion than others. This is for two reasons. The first reason is that some religions do not have conceptual space for the miraculous. The second reason is that

some religions "have a founder or an early history that depreciates miracle claims" (D.K. Clark 1997: 202). These points require some expansion.[30]

To explain the first point we must go back to the very definition of the miraculous. Since a miracle is defined, roughly, as an event which would not have occurred were nature left to itself, a miracle requires that there exist something other than nature. That is, if a miracle occurs, naturalism is false. But some religions, most notably (some) pantheistic religions, do not hold to the existence of any being beyond nature. Some of these religions are just silent on the issue of whether such a being exists; others hold that there is no such being. David K. Clark concludes that one "could hardly defend the belief structure of ... a religion [that lacks the idea of a supernatural being] by appealing to stories about events requiring the action of a supernatural being" (1997: 202).

The second point is best illustrated by an example, that of Islam. While many Muslims hold that Mohammed performed miracles, the Qur'an contains no references, or at least no clear references, to such events.[31] This is what prompted St. Thomas Aquinas to say of Mohammed that, "He did not bring forth any signs produced in a supernatural way, by which alone divine inspiration is appropriately evidenced."[32] In fact, far from there being passages that suggest that Mohammed performed miracles, several passages suggest he did not.[33] Indeed numerous Muslims (and not just the 'liberal' ones) hold that Mohammed did not perform any miracles. According to one Muslim scholar, "Muslims do not claim any miracles for Muhammed. In their view, what proves Muhammed's prophethood is the sublime beauty and greatness of ... the Holy Qur'an, not any inexplicable breaches of natural law which confound human reason."[34]

Not all miracle claims have the same level of initial (im)plausibility. Some miracle stories are more plausible than others, in part because of the nature of the religious context in which they are alleged to occur. Further, it seems an obvious fact that this argument, proceeding as it does *a priori*, has not only not shown that *all* miracle stories are equally well evidenced, but it has not even shown that there are miracles in *two* religions that are equally well established. The point I am making here is that (8) simply does not follow from (7).

> (7) The evidences of miracles in different and (so) contrary religions tend to cancel one another out.

(8) Therefore, (the evidences for) miracles offer no support to any one religion.

Only in so far as there actually are such 'contrary evidences' will the evidences for miracles of contrary religions fulfil their tendency to cancel each other out. But Hume has done nothing to show that there are such contrary evidences. In other words, it is entirely compatible with (7) that the miracles of one religion are uniquely well evidenced. But clearly if this were the case then assuming the truth of

(4) Any evidence for the truth of a miracle-story of religion A is evidence that religion A is true

the conclusion would be false. Clearly, then, the argument is invalid. We can conclude with confidence that Hume's argument from the miracle-stories of competing religions has little weight. For even if it were proven that the miracles of two religions were equally well evidenced, only the qualified conclusion (that miracles do not provide evidence for any one religious system, but do provide evidence against naturalism) would follow. In particular, it would not follow that we have no good evidence for miracles.

An Insufficient Number of Good Witnesses

The short paragraph from Hume that we are to deal with under this sub-heading is very dense, and it will be helpful to have it before us.

> [T]here is not to be found, in all history, any miracles attested by a sufficient number of men, of [(i)] such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of [(ii)] such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of [(iii)] such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and [(iv)] at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable: All which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.
> (1777: 34)

There is certainly a good deal of logic behind the criteria that Hume is suggesting here. If a person's testimony is false, either its falsehood will be known to the testifier or it will not. In the first case the testifier is lying. In the second, the testifier is in some way deceived. Hume's criteria (labelled as (i) to (iv) above) are intended to rule out these two possibilities. The first two of Hume's criteria are easily explained. A good witness is one who is of "unquestioned good sense, education, and learning," so that we can be sure they have not been deceived in any way. A good witness is also to be of "undoubted integrity," so we can be sure they are not out to deceive us. The third

criterion, which says that a person must have "a great deal to lose," is there to ensure that the witness has a strong motive to tell the truth. The fourth criterion, that the "miracles" should be performed in a "public manner" so as to make "detection unavoidable" should the witness be deceiving his hearers, is presumably intended as a supplement to the third criterion. Together the third and fourth criteria say that a person should have much to lose, and that it should have been plain to the person that if they were to lie they would be more than likely to suffer that loss.

Now, according to Hume, not only must the witnesses to a miracle meet these four criteria, they must also be of a sufficient number. As J.L. Mackie has pointed out, the number of witnesses (or converging lines of evidence) is a very important factor (1982: 25-6). This is because as the number of independent witnesses to an event grows, so too does the improbability of all of them lying or being mistaken. In fact, Mackie rightly concedes that the testimony of two independent witnesses "is more than twice as good as each of them on his own." Schoolteachers take for granted that it is very unlikely for two people to come to the same error independently. That two exam scripts give identical and yet incorrect answers to a question is normally considered sufficient evidence that the two scripts are not independent of each other: someone has been cheating, copying someone else's work. The hypothesis that there should be an independent concurrence in error is given short shrift, dismissed summarily. If this is so, then when two or more independent witnesses give testimonies that concur, what they say should be taken very seriously. The difficulty is (of course) in showing that the witnesses are independent.

Having outlined Hume's criteria, and explained what seem to be his reasons for putting them forward, I can only say that I cannot see any reason to suppose that these criteria have never been met. Indeed as Francis Beckwith has pointed out, "when Hume finally does apply his [criteria] to an alleged miracle which appears to fulfil [them], his standards no longer seem attainable" (1989: 50). His discussion of the case for certain Jansenist miracles ends like this:

> Where shall we find such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact? And what have we to oppose such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events, which they relate? And this surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation.
> (1777: 40)

Here, as Richard Swinburne points out, "the credibility of the witnesses in terms of their number, integrity and education is dismissed, not as inadequate, but as irrelevant" (1970: 16). One cannot help but feel that Hume is implicitly assuming that his *in principle* argument was successful, but unfortunately, it was not. From the following quote, it seems clear that many of Chesterton's sparring partners tended to argue in just this fashion.

> The historic case against miracles is also rather simple. It consists of calling miracles impossible, then saying that no one but a fool believes impossibilities; then declaring that there is no wise evidence for the miraculous. The whole trick is done by means of leaning alternately on the philosophical and historical objection. If we say miracles are theoretically possible, they say, "Yes, but there is no evidence for them." When we take all the records of the human race and say, "Here is your evidence," they say, "But these people were superstitious, they believed impossible things". (Chesterton 1904a: 388)[35]

The Credulity and Dishonesty of the Witnesses

While the subheading above does not quite get at Hume's second observation, it will soon be seen to be appropriate. This observation is preceded, and seemingly strengthened, by the reiteration of a premise he used as part of his *in principle* argument. This premise states that *that which we have found to be most usual is always the most probable*. According to Hume, people have a tendency not only to ignore this sensible maxim but even to do the very opposite of what it enjoins. Mackie puts the point well.

> Hume points out ... that the human mind has a positive tendency to believe what is strange and marvellous in an extreme degree. 'The passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards the belief of those events from which it is derived.' ... [S]uch reports are, paradoxically, made more believable by the very divergence from the ordinary which in fact makes them less worthy of belief. (1982: 14-5)

Hume adds to this, claiming: "a religionist may be an enthusiast and imagine he sees what has no reality."[36] But he goes further still, saying a religionist "may know his narrative to be false and yet persevere in it, ... for the sake of promoting so holy a cause." Apart from being completely outrageous in coming dangerously close to branding all religious people as willing to lie so as to 'promote' their religion (a claim which there is no reason to believe), this point obviously overlaps with the previous observation that a good witness should be a man of integrity, and have a motive to tell

the truth. Thus, while being a good piece of rhetoric that comment can be safely ignored.

As to the other points raised by Hume in this section it seems best to respond by saying that there is no reason why a religious person cannot be by nature sceptical. Indeed, the biblical narratives suggest that all the disciples were despondent after Jesus' death and none were expecting His resurrection. Furthermore, all the disciples (not just 'doubting Thomas') were sceptical and refused to believe until they had seen the risen Jesus. Moreover, when Hume says that a person can "imagine he sees what has no reality," it is natural to interpret this as a reference to the ideas of self-deception, optical illusion, and hallucination. But, using the resurrection as our example, the only one of these hypotheses that would explain seeming to see a person who we know had previously died is the hypothesis of hallucination. But since collective and agreeing hallucinations are a form of independent concurrent error we can see that this hypothesis is ruled out by the earlier criterion of having a sufficient number of witnesses. Therefore, as with Hume's first observation, there is nothing here to show that there are no well-evidenced miracles.

Miracle-Stories Originate amongst the "Ignorant and Barbarous"

Having considered Hume's fourth observation out of order, we come to his third and our final consideration, which begins with the claim that

> It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations that they are observed chiefly to be found among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilised people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors. (1777: 36)

A little later he adds the claim that "It is strange ... that such prodigious events never happen in our days." This later point is clearly supposed to provide some kind of support for the former. But it does nothing of the sort. How frequently (or infrequently) a person is likely to hear reports of miracles depends upon the company they keep. Given the decline in religious belief it is hardly surprising that few people today believe in miracles or hear reports of them. But without a prior argument that no rational person should believe in miracles, that we tend not to believe in them is no evidence that we are intellectually superior to our ancestors. Without such an argument, Hume's claim here seems a classic example of what C.S. Lewis called "chronological snobbery," which in his *Surprised by Joy* he defined as follows

> [Chronological snobbery is] the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited ... [O]ur own age ... certainly has, like all periods, its own characteristic illusions. They are likeliest to lurk in those wide-spread assumptions which are so ingrained in the age that no one dares to attack or feels it necessary to defend them.
>
> (1955b: 167)

As to the main body of this objection, I cannot but point out that Hume never says what he means by "ignorant and barbarous." He cannot make it analytically true that those societies in which miracle stories originate are ignorant and barbarous without begging the question or labelling nearly every society in every age an ignorant and barbarous one. I refer the reader to the quote from Chesterton above (p. 83).

One possible reading of "ignorant" would be the lack of knowledge of the workings of nature. If this were Hume's intention then the extent to which the societies we are interested in were ignorant the point seems irrelevant. As Lewis pointed out (1960b: 50-2) a person does not believe in miracles unless he does believe that nature has a certain fixed way of working, and that the miraculous event does somehow go against the grain. It is hardly plausible to suggest in relation to the virgin birth that the ancients did not know where babies (ordinarily) come from, or in relation to the resurrection that they didn't know that dead people (ordinarily) stay dead.

Alternatively, if a society in which miracles are accepted can avoid being labelled "ignorant," then this observation seems equivalent to Hume's first. For the point seems to be that only the testimony of a person who is not easily deceived, and is not liable to attempt to deceive us is worthy of belief. But again, there seems to be no reason to suppose that all testimony in favour of the miraculous will come from such degenerate sources.[37]

The Failure of the *In Fact* Argument

Having assessed each of Hume's four objections to the actuality of good historical evidence for a miracle, we can now conclude that none of them was successful. The argument that the evidences for miracles of contrary religions cancel each other out, failed for two reasons. Firstly, it failed because it assumed that some miracles of inconsistent religious systems are equally well evidenced, but did not argue for this claim. Secondly, the argument failed because even if the claim were true it would not count against miracles as such but only their capacity to work as evidence for a particular religious system: they could still count as evidence against naturalism. The

other objections; that (i) miracles are not attested by a sufficient number of good witnesses, that (ii) those who attest to miracles are credulous and dishonest, and that (iii) miracle stories originate among barbarous and ignorant peoples, were each shown to be either question begging or unproved. It might be replied that Hume didn't think (or at least should not have thought) that each of these tests was on its own sufficient to undermine any miracle claim but rather that a miracle claim will have a hard time avoiding them in combination. The logic of this remark cannot be denied, and I have certainly not shown that there are any miracle claims that would pass all of Hume's tests (even in the more tentative formulations I have given them). But just as I cannot see any *a priori* reason to think that Hume's criteria have not been satisfied when taken individually, neither do I see any reason to think they have not been satisfied when taken in union. To decide the issue we must, of course, actually investigate the evidence.

Conclusion

Many have accused defenders of theism of adopting a god-of-the-gaps strategy, of arguing that since we currently have no natural means of explaining a certain phenomenon we ought to accept the existence of God as (part of) our explanation for that phenomenon. Many people have indeed argued in this fashion, and it is often a mistake. For as science progresses it frequently occurs that the phenomenon can later be explained naturalistically. The impression given is that God only operates in our current gaps in scientific knowledge and that since those gaps are continually shrinking, God will eventually be squeezed out. I agree that it is unreasonable to hold that all phenomena that currently have no natural explanation should lead us to postulate the existence of supernatural causes to explain them. But from the fact that *one should not always* infer the action of a supernatural power it by no means follows that *one should never* infer such action. It must be admitted that we cannot conclusively prove that some seeming miracle will never be explained by a well-evidenced law of nature. But we would commit the fallacy of the appeal to ignorance if we inferred from this that all seeming miracles *will* one day by explained by well evidenced laws of nature.[38] In any case, that our judgements are fallible is no reason not to make any judgements. Many of our judgements are fallible in just this way. Furthermore, just as we could be wrong in judging something to be a miracle, we could

also be wrong in judging something not to be a miracle. The possibility of error works both ways (Swinburne 1991: 230-1).

There is no reason to believe that in every case a credible naturalistic scientific explanation will be forthcoming. Indeed, we might say that someone who held that we will one day be able to explain everything naturalistically is guilty of holding to a 'naturalism-of-the-gaps.'[39] It is only a dogmatic assumption of materialism or naturalism that can guarantee any kind of safety from the miraculous. Chesterton makes the point brilliantly.

> Somehow or other an extraordinary idea has arisen that the disbelievers in miracles consider them coldly and fairly, while believers in miracles accept them only in connection with some dogma. The fact is quite the other way. The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them.
> (1908: 355)

That doctrine is, of course, naturalism. But clearly if one is trying to decide what world-view to adopt one cannot begin with the assumption of naturalism, and certainly not with the *dogmatic* assumption of naturalism. I am reminded of William James' dictum: "a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there would be an irrational rule" (1896: 206).

If I have been right in all the above, it will follow that one could rationally believe in miracles and, in turn, that the case for the miraculous could, if successful, be used as part of the case for theism.

Chapter 5
C.S. Lewis and the Freudian Critique of Religious Belief

The only line [we] can really take is to say that some thoughts are tainted [at source] and others are not – which has the advantage ... of being what every sane man has always believed. (Lewis 1941a: 180)

THE GENERAL OUTLINE of a Freudian critique of religious belief is well known. It was certainly known to C.S. Lewis. Moreover, a broadly Freudian critique seems, in the minds of many, to be a genuine obstacle and objection to accepting a religious worldview. This fact is remarkable in itself since Freudian psychology holds little weight among contemporary academics. But this observation about current intellectual trends is clearly no substitute for an examination of the issues.

Through an exploration of Freud's writings on religion, the current chapter aims to precisely formulate and to evaluate his critique. This evaluation will draw heavily upon the work of C.S. Lewis. While the Freudian critique of religion is not the primary focus of any single piece that Lewis wrote, it appears as a minor theme on a regular basis.[1] Our conclusion will be that the Freudian critique offers no support for atheism and amounts to little by way of an argument against the rationality of belief in God.

Freud on Religion: God as an Exalted Father

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the founder of psychoanalysis, a 'science'[2] which adherents regard both as a means of investigating psychological phenomena generally and a form of therapy for psychological disorders. That Freud saw religion to be within his expertise is itself, therefore, indicative of his views on the subject.

Freud's most important writings on religion are *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).[3] We will concentrate our attention on the *Future of an Illusion*. The reasons for this will become apparent shortly. But in order to give as full a picture of Freud's writings as seems appropriate, there follows a short summary of relevant aspects of the other two works.

It is well known that Freud's critique of religion involves what he calls the Oedipus complex and, therein, a person's relation to his father.[4] In *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses*

and Monotheism, Freud attempts to show that the relation between the Oedipus complex and religion is exemplified not merely on the level of individuals but of whole societies. *Totem and Taboo* is intended primarily as an explanation of the first appearance of religion. *Moses and Monotheism* is, among other things, intended as an explanation of the origin of Judaism and the Jews. Given that the Oedipus complex is a *mental* complex, it immediately follows (as Freud admits in *Totem and Taboo* but denies in *Moses and Monotheism*) that his arguments assume the existence of a collective mind or collective unconscious.[5] But what were Freud's conclusions in these two works? Freud provides a helpful summary of *Totem and Taboo* in his "An Autobiographical Study." Religion began, he claimed, through the interactions within an initial "primal horde."

> The father of the primal horde, since he was an unlimited despot, had seized all the women for himself; his sons, being dangerous to him as rivals, had been killed or driven away. One day, however, the sons came together and united to overwhelm, kill, and devour their father, who had been their enemy but also their ideal. After the deed they were unable to take over their heritage since they stood in one another's way. Under the influence of failure and remorse they learned to come to an agreement among themselves; they banded themselves into a clan of brothers by the help of the ordinances of totemism, which aimed at preventing a repetition of such a deed, and they jointly undertook to forgo the possession of the women on whose account they had killed their father. They were then driven to finding strange women, and this was the origin of exogamy which is so closely bound up with totemism. The Totem meal was the festival commemorating the fearful deed from which sprang man's sense of guilt (or 'original sin') ... This view of religion throws particularly clear light upon the psychological basis of Christianity, in which, as we know, the ceremony of the totem meal still survives, but with little distortion, in the form of communion. (1925: 252-3)

The devoured father came to be associated, indeed identified, with an animal (or in some cases a plant) which became the tribe's totem and was regarded as sacred so that it could not be killed (except in the totem meal) and was therefore taboo. Moreover, the animal came to be thought of as offering (fatherly) protection to the tribe in return for their not killing it as they had their real father. Due to its identification with the primal father, the tribe regarded themselves as somehow descended from that particular kind of animal.

I can only suppose that Freud believed this story to have repeated itself several times and with several tribes, and indeed in the history of all cultures where religion has a hold. For as will be clear to the reader, the concept of a father-totem who is feared, revered, and in relation to whom we think ourselves guilty, is not a million miles from the concept of God. Freud firmly believed that this is how religion must have begun.

Totem and Taboo is in many respects similar to *Moses and Monotheism*. While the former did not explicitly address the origin of monotheism, the latter was at least intended to. The book is primarily concerned with Moses and his role in the origin of Judaism. Freud argues firstly that Moses was not a Hebrew but an Egyptian, and that monotheism was (along with circumcision) not inherited through the line of Abraham (who according to Freud was invented by the Hebrews to make their past look more respectable) but from the Egyptians among whom it was a temporary aberration. Following the Biblical account, Freud claims that Moses did lead the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, and that he taught them in the desert where they wandered for many years. According to Freud, however, the Hebrews were uneasy about this new monotheism and the severe moral restraints it imposed upon them. The result was that they killed Moses there in the desert. Moses had been a "mighty prototype of a father" (Freud 1939: 356) and, as with the killing of the father of the primal horde, his murder was a deed that was to come back and haunt the Hebrews forever. Through the memory of this event and the associated feelings of guilt, the monotheism of Moses was to gain an unshakeable hold upon the Hebrew mind.

The Oedipal nature of this theorising should be fairly evident. In both books, Freud argues that hatred towards a father figure results in the killing of that figure. But commingled with the hatred was also a love and admiration of the one killed. The result of the murder was, therefore, a deep sense of guilt, and a feeling that the wishes of the dead should still be respected. Freud comes to the following conclusion in *Totem and Taboo*.

> At the conclusion, then, of this exceedingly condensed inquiry, I should like to insist that its outcome shows that the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex. (1913: 219)

The honest reader cannot but feel that Freud's historical work is rather tenuous and that he has 'shoe-horned' his history to fit his Oedipal theory. This feeling is only strengthened when we read his comments on his historical research: "I am reading books without really being interested in them, since I already know the results; my instinct tells me that" (McGrath 1993: 138). Indeed, the historical side of this work is "thoroughly rejected by anthropologists" both on the grounds of insufficient evidence and evidence to the contrary (Vitz 1999: 12). About *Totem and Taboo*, Alvin Plantinga writes that "Taken as a serious attempt at a historical account of the origin of religion

... it has little to recommend it and is at best a wild guess, much less science than science fiction" (2000: 138). William Alston provides a useful summary of the problems with the two accounts.

> Such is Freud's theory as we have it in his two major works on religion. There is no doubt that as historical explanation it is fantastic. There seems to be little basis for the assumption of the primal horde and its violent dissolution, other than its usefulness for a psychoanalytic explanation. And other features of the account have found as little acceptance among anthropologists and historians. For example. it is not generally thought nowadays that totemism is the earliest form of religion, or that every group passed through a stage of totemism. And practically no Old Testament scholars accept the thesis that Moses was murdered by the Israelites. (Alston 1966: 70)

Alston goes on to criticise Freud for assuming the existence of a collective mind and a social 'memory' which persists without its content ever being taught or passed on in any normal manner. This assumption is surely problematic.[6]

However, even in these works a second, and Freud clearly believed *complementary*, account of the origins of religion can be discerned. This account does not involve the Oedipus complex in such a direct or obvious fashion, but it is still tied closely to the father figure. Near the end of *Totem and Taboo* we read the following.

> The psychoanalysis of individual human beings ... teaches us with special insistence that the god of each of them is formed in the likeness of his father, that his personal relation to God depends on his relation to his father in the flesh and oscillates and changes along with that relation, and that at bottom God is nothing other than an exalted father.
>
> (1913: 209)

Now this is not really any different from the Oedipal account. But to this Freud adds that "a longing for the father" "constitutes the root of every form of religion" (1913: 210). In *Moses and Monotheism* we find similar assertions.

> We understand how a primitive man is in need of a god as creator of the universe, as the chief of his clan, as personal protector. ... A man of later days, of our own day, behaves in the same way. He, too, remains childish and in need of protection, even when he is grown up; he thinks he cannot do without support from his god. (1939: 376)

The suggestion is an account of the origins of religion less dependant on emotional ambivalence towards the father and more dependent upon the father's positive role. In *The Future of an Illusion* this idea is brought to the fore. In very crude terms. Freud's argument is that belief in God results from the desire that there be such a being as God. But what does this desire amount to and why do we have it? Freud starts with the second of these questions, and his answer begins with a consideration of the essential purpose of culture or civilisation.

Human civilisation, by which I mean all those respects in which human life has raised itself above its animal status and differs from the life of beasts ... presents. as we know. two aspects to the observer. It includes on the one hand all the knowledge and capacity that men have acquired in order to control the forces of nature and extract its wealth for the satisfaction of human needs, and, on the other hand. all the regulations necessary in order to adjust the relations of men to one another. (1927: 184)

The primary purpose of a culture is to protect its members from the ravages of nature. to make it easier to live and live well. Culture's secondary purpose is to regulate the interactions between its members. Roughly, the first purpose is achieved through advances in science and technology, and the second through advances in morality or at least sociable conduct. However, Freud explains that the primary aim of culture is not something that any culture ever has or ever will fulfil.

There are the elements, which seem to mock at all human control: the earth. which quakes and is torn apart and buries all known life and its works; water, which deluges and drowns everything in a turmoil; storms, which blow everything before them; there are diseases, which we have only recently recognised as attacks by other organisms; and finally there is the painful riddle of death, against which no medicine has yet been found. nor probably will be. With these forces nature rises up against us, majestic, cruel and inexorable; she brings to our mind once more our weakness and helplessness, which we thought to escape through the work of civilisation. (1927: 195)

But just as the powers of science and technology cannot overcome all the onslaughts of nature, neither can the moral code solve the problems of social interaction. The code is itself imperfect, and is never perfectly adhered to or perfectly enforced: people get hurt. Given the finite power and imperfect nature of culture, more will be required if its members are to be able to fully "reconcile [themselves] to the sacrifices [they have] made on behalf of civilisation" (1927: 193). Freud offers two suggestions: art and (more importantly) religion.

Freud claims that religion entered human culture in several stages. The first stage was the personification of nature. If the actions of nature could be seen as wilful and not merely the result of impersonal forces then perhaps those wills can be influenced.

We apply the same methods against these violent supermen outside that we employ in our own society; we can try to adjure them, to appease them, to bribe them, and by so influencing them, we may rob them of a part of their power. A replacement like this of natural science by psychology not only provides immediate relief, but points the way to a further mastering of the situation. (1927: 196)

Freud explains that with the advance of science these personifications withdrew from nature and became separate beings – gods. Since science made belief in their influence

over nature's forces difficult to understand,[7] the gods now drew to themselves the role of assuring the moral justice which culture had failed to provide.

> It now became the task of the gods to even out the defects and evils of civilization, to attend to the sufferings which men inflict on one another in their life together and to watch over the fulfilment of the precepts of civilization, which men obey so imperfectly. Those precepts themselves were credited with a divine origin; they were elevated beyond human society and were extended to nature and the universe. (Freud 1927: 198)

Over time, these gods were (in our culture) unified into a single God who was then conceived of as an ideal being: complete in knowledge, power and goodness. Freud summarises the resulting religious world-view as follows.

> Life in this world serves a higher purpose. ... Everything that happens in this world is an expression of the intentions of an intelligence superior to us, which in the end, though its ways and byways are difficult to follow, orders everything for the best – that is, to make it enjoyable for us. Over each one of us there watches a benevolent Providence which is only seemingly stern and which will not suffer us to become a plaything of the over-mighty and pitiless forces of nature. Death itself is not extinction, is not a return to inorganic lifelessness, but the beginning of a new kind of existence which lies on the path of development to something higher. ... In the end all good is rewarded and all evil punished, if not actually in this form of life then in later existences that begin after death. In this way all the terrors, the sufferings and the hardships of life are destined to be obliterated. ... And the superior wisdom which directs this course of things, the infinite goodness that expresses itself in it, the justice that achieves its aim in it – these are attributes of ... the one divine being into which, in our civilisation, all the gods of antiquity have been condensed. (1927: 198-9)

The larger picture that Freud was presenting may have been obscured in the course of my more detailed presentation. Freud was arguing that our helplessness at the hands of nature and the lack of compensation for the renunciation of instinct, by reminding us of our vulnerability as an infant, leads us to desire a father who will protect us from nature and provide the recompense we seek. Freud summarises his position in the following passage.

> The derivation of religious needs from the infant's helplessness and the longing for the father aroused by it seems to me incontrovertible, especially since the feeling is not simply prolonged from childhood days, but is permanently sustained by the fear of the superior power of Fate. I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection ... The origin of the religious attitude can be traced back in clear outlines as far as the feeling of infantile helplessness. ... In my *Future of an Illusion* I was concerned ... with the system of doctrines and premises [of a man's religion] which on the one hand explains to him the riddles of this world with enviable completeness, and, on the other, assures him that a careful Providence will watch over his life and will compensate him in a future existence for any frustrations he suffers here. The common man cannot imagine this Providence otherwise than in the figure of an enormously exalted father. Only such a being can understand the needs of the children of men and be softened by their prayers and placated by the signs of their remorse. (1930: 260-1)

Christian philosopher Peter Kreeft gives us a clear and admirably short summary of Freud's critique of religious belief. "Modern psychology," he writes

> tells us how people create a fantasy world to live in when the real world becomes unliveable. The real world always fails to come up to our dreams (unless our dreams are incredibly trivial), and the tension between the two may tear a weak soul apart, forcing it to live in either one without the other. For the majority, this one is the "real world", and they dully and stoically abandon their dreams. But others abandon reality and live in a dream world. Isn't this the origin of religion? Freud thinks so. (1989b: 162-3)

Having argued that religion is rooted in wish-fulfilment, Freud concludes that religion is therefore an illusion and, on the basis of this, goes on to claim that religion is "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity, like the obsessional neurosis of children, it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father" (1927: 226). As if it were not clear enough that Freud's evaluation of religious belief is – to understate the matter – a negative one, let me finish the section with a final quote from *Civilization and its Discontents* where he writes that religious belief

> is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the majority will never be able to rise above this view of life. It is still more humiliating to discover how large a number of people living today, who cannot but see that this religion is not tenable, nevertheless try to defend it piece by piece in a series of pitiful rearguard actions. (1930: 261)

Evaluating Freud I: Genetic Arguments and the Genetic Fallacy

Freud's critique has generally been understood as an attempt to show that religious belief is not rationally acceptable. But there are a number of ways in which a belief may fail to be rationally acceptable. There are a corresponding number of ways in which Freud's argument could be construed. As we shall see, some of these interpretations are more sympathetic than others.

So what are the different ways in which a belief can be shown to be intellectually wanting? There seem to be essentially four. The belief may be false, probably false, unjustified, or unwarranted. (I will offer a rough distinction between these third and fourth possibilities later.) But before we come to assess Freud's argument on these various readings, it will be worth our while to develop a few conceptual tools. First, I will offer a definition of *genetic argument*, a general category to which (it will emerge) Freud's argument clearly belongs. Genetic arguments will be of four kinds corresponding to the four possible negative evaluations of a belief mentioned above

The central question about genetic arguments will be whether they can avoid committing the genetic fallacy.

Our first task, then, is to define what we mean by a *genetic argument*. They come in four kinds, kinds that I will label genetic arguments *to falsehood, to probable falsehood, to lack of justification*, and *to lack of warrant*.[8]

> (DGA) Definition of Genetic Argument: An argument is a genetic argument if, and only if, essential among its premises there is a description of the historical/psychological process through which a belief came to be held, and the conclusion of the argument is that this belief is either (i) false, (ii) probably false, (iii) unjustified or (iv) unwarranted.[9]

It seems obvious that Freud's argument is indeed a genetic argument. He was, after all, arguing that religious belief is ultimately rooted in wish-fulfilment. However, it is far from obvious which type of genetic argument Freud saw himself as offering. Indeed at times he has been understood in each of these ways. Our aim will be to discover if, and when, a genetic argument is a good one, and to apply this result to Freud's argumentation.

Genetic arguments are often thought to commit the genetic fallacy but just as genetic arguments come in a number of forms so too does the accusation of committing the genetic fallacy. Our questions about genetic arguments can, therefore, be put in terms of the genetic fallacy. These questions would then be: (i) What forms of argument are said to commit the genetic fallacy? and (ii) Are those forms of argument really fallacious? Few works on formal and informal fallacies address these questions, and they seem to have received surprisingly little attention from philosophers generally.[10] I offer the following definition of the fallacy.

> (DGF) Definition of the Genetic Fallacy: An argument commits the genetic fallacy if, and only if, having taken the origins of a belief to be relevant to some aspect of its evaluation it then *illegitimately* faults the belief because of its origin.[11]

From this definition, and wholly due to the word *illegitimately*, it follows immediately that if an argument is appropriately given this label, then the argument is indeed fallacious. But it hardly follows from this that there is such a thing as the genetic fallacy, for it may not, for all we have seen thus far, be appropriate to give any arguments this label. Our question then, is whether genetic arguments commit the genetic fallacy.[12]

This question will be approached via a series of examples, on the basis of which genetic arguments could be constructed. Some of these arguments would be much more plausible than others. To prevent the reader jumping to hasty conclusions all our examples are given at the outset.

Hypochondria Example

Alice believes she has some kind of cancer. Despite this, doctors refuse to examine her because she is a known hypochondriac. Indeed, her belief that she has cancer stems from her hypochondria.

Lying Scientist Example

Bob believes that the Sun is at least 150 million miles from the Earth. He believes this because he was told this by Chris. However, Chris has developed two annoying habits. Firstly, he only ever says anything about subjects mathematical or scientific if he knows the truth on the matter. Secondly, on these matters he always says something contrary to the truth. He does this because he thinks people are very ignorant and gullible when it comes to maths and science and thinks such deception amusing. His friends are used to this and cope admirably, but Bob and Chris are perfect strangers.

Atlas Example

David believes that Paris is the capital of France. He believes this because he looked it up in an atlas.

Bible Example

Edward believes that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He believes this because he read it in the Bible.

From each example it would be possible to reconstruct an argument which has premises like (1) and (2) and a conclusion like (3a), (3b), (3c), or (3d).

> (1) S believes that P.
> (2) S came to hold that belief by means of process X.
> (3a) Therefore, the belief that P is false.
> (3b) Therefore, the belief that P is probably false.
> (3c) Therefore, the belief that P is unjustified.
> (3d) Therefore, the belief that P is unwarranted.

Some of these arguments would clearly be hopeless. Others would seem to be much better. Take the lying scientist example. Bob comes to believe that the Sun is at least 150 million miles away from the Earth. From the way we have set this case up, we can see that this belief is false.[13] Further, it appears we should be able to create a *genetic argument to falsehood* from this material. Suppose we try to do it like this.

> (4) Bob believes that the Sun is at least 150 million miles from the Earth.
> (5) Bob believes this on the basis of testimony from Chris.
> (6) Therefore, that belief is false.

Persuasive though this argument may be (to those who know Chris), it is strictly invalid. The argument can only be made valid if we include something about the invariably erroneous nature of beliefs based on Chris's testimony (on a certain range of subjects). This could either be included in a restatement of (5), or added as an extra premise. If we choose the former route then (5*) would be sufficient.

> (5*) Bob's belief, whose truth (or otherwise) is a matter for either mathematics or science, was formed in accordance with the testimony of Chris, whose testimony on such matters is always false.

So, from the example of the 'lying scientist' we can draw our first conclusion: not all genetic arguments to falsehood are fallacious. But some, indeed most, are. Consider the hypochondria and atlas examples and the following arguments.

> (7) Alice believes she has cancer.
> (8) This belief results from her hypochondria.
> (9) Therefore, this belief is false.

> (10) David believes that Paris is the capital of France.
> (11) This belief results from his consulting an atlas.
> (12) Therefore, this belief is false.

While we might find it tempting to endorse the first of these arguments, we know that something is wrong with the second: it is clearly invalid. But since the first argument has no relevant differences to the second, the first must be invalid too.[14] To make either argument any good, as with the argument from the lying scientist example, we must add further premises or alter the existing ones. We can see in advance that with the second argument this will not work. Why? Because the belief is true! Any connecting premises or reworked premises that would validate the argument would render the argument unsound through the addition of a false premise. What about the first argument, the one about Alice? Clearly, we need either to add something to (8) or

to introduce an extra premise: something to the effect that all beliefs (of a certain kind) that result from hypochondria are false. To introduce some jargon, let's say that a genetic argument to falsehood requires an *invariably yields errors* premise.[15] But in the case of hypochondria induced belief the resulting argument would include a premise whose truth is doubtful to say the least.

What about genetic arguments to probable falsehood? Such an argument based on the hypochondria example looks very promising.

(7) Alice believes she has cancer.
(8) This belief results from her hypochondria.
(13) Therefore, this belief is probably false.

While this argument is strictly invalid, where the parallel argument for the falsehood of Alice's belief had only a small degree of initial plausibility, in this case the argument seems much more convincing. But what is it that makes this argument seem correct? In my estimation, two factors are relevant. The first is that were Alice not making any complaint at all, we would estimate the probability of her having cancer to be quite low, in accordance with statistics for people with the same relevant physical characteristics as Alice. Secondly, we believe that Alice has formed her belief in a way which is not in any fashion responsive to the facts of the matter. Both factors are important. Clearly, if most people (with the same relevant physical characteristics as Alice) did have cancer we would not say that this belief was probably false.[16]

So, the background statistics are relevant to our assessment of probability. But the reliability of the method by which she formed the belief is also relevant. If Alice had come to her belief in some other way, we might conclude that her belief is probably true. This is because some ways of forming beliefs are sensitive to the facts about which a belief is being formed, whereas others are not. If for example she formed this belief because she has certain symptoms of cancer, we might think her belief has a (comparatively) high probability of truth. To make the argument a good one, through still not a deductively valid one, we need two extra premises such as (14) and (15).

(14) Statistics show that the likelihood of someone who shares Alice's relevant
      physical characteristics having cancer is very low.[17]
(15) Hypochondria-induced beliefs are insensitive to the truth-value of their content.

If these additional premises were true, and if there were no other relevant information, then the inference to (13) would, in my opinion, be fully justified. To simplify things

later, let's say that if a genetic argument to probable falsehood is to be persuasive there must be a *low prior likelihood* premise,[18] and a *no sensitivity* premise. Unless plausible premises of this kind are available, such an argument will be fundamentally flawed.

Before I begin my discussion of genetic arguments to lack of justification and to lack of warrant, it is clearly important to explain the distinction between beliefs that are (un)justified and beliefs that are (un)warranted.

I should point out in advance that these are terms that philosophers frequently use in connection with questions such as "what distinguishes true belief from knowledge?" and that in that connection, various accounts of these ideas have been offered. To avoid confusion however, I shall lay down the following as *definitions* of justification and warrant.[19]

Firstly, to say that someone's belief is *justified* is to say something primarily about the *person* who holds that belief. It is to say that *they* are justified in holding it ... that they have not gone wrong intellectually in having that belief. It seems that Bob, in the lying scientist example is justified in believing as he does.[20] All the same, his beliefs are false. One can, therefore, have a justified false belief.

Warrant is what makes the difference between true belief and knowledge. In other words, knowledge is warranted true belief. This, however, is rather formal and does not tell us very much. Some people have said that warrant is really just the same as justification. But this seems wrong. For example, suppose that at three o'clock precisely Greg glances at a clock and forms the belief that the time is indeed three o'clock. His belief is true, and surely (we may suppose) he has not gone wrong in forming this belief, so it is also justified. But does the belief count as knowledge? Not necessarily. This is because, for example, the clock may have stopped (some multiple of twelve hours earlier) but by sheer luck happen to be showing the right time at the moment Greg looked at it. In such a case, we surely wouldn't say that Greg *knew* it was three o'clock. The truth of his belief is too fortuitous for that. Such Gettier cases have led most philosophers to say that justification and warrant cannot be the same thing.[21] However, whatever warrant is, it seems plausible to suppose it includes justification. Indeed, I shall stipulate that it does.

What more should we say? Cases such as these suggest that while justification is centred upon the person's relationship with their belief, warrant puts more emphasis on the person's and/or their belief's relationship to the world. We might say that a belief

can be warranted only if the way in which the belief was actually formed was actually reliable, was sensitive to the facts about which the belief was being formed.[22]

Justification, as we shall understand it here, is more closely connected with warrant than the above may suggest. It is, I suggest, 'what warrant looks like from the inside.' In other words, a person's belief is justified if, after reflection, it seems to them just as it would seem (or just as they should expect it to seem) if it were warranted; whereas whether or not a belief is warranted depends further upon whether the method through which the belief was formed was a reliable one – one sensitive to the truth about the matters concerned.

Just as Bob may be justified in believing as he does, it also seems that Edward (from the Bible example) may be justified in his beliefs about Jesus. If he has the right background beliefs there is nothing to prevent his belief that Jesus was born in Bethlehem being fully justified. Edward need not have gone wrong intellectually in having this belief. However, if it were to turn out, say, that the Bible is hopelessly unreliable as to historical and geographical matters (such as are in play with the belief in question) this would imply that the belief is unwarranted. Alternatively, if it turns out that the Bible is very reliable on such matters, then the belief is probably warranted. If a belief is to be warranted, in other words, it must be produced (or perhaps sustained) by a cognitive faculty which is sensitive to truth and which when functioning properly reliably 'produces' true belief. Note again that none of this would entail that the belief in question is true.

In short, I stipulate that a belief is justified if, and only if, the factors over which the agent rightly takes control are – so far as the agent can tell – properly arranged for the reliable formation of true beliefs and the agent is responsible for this being the case. This is why we are evaluating the believer when we call their belief (un)justified. A belief is warranted if, and only if, it is justified and in addition to this, the factors over which the agent does not rightly take control are properly arranged for the reliable formation of true beliefs. Justification, then, has to do with factors that are in some sense *internal* to the agent, while warrant also includes the *external* factors.

The application of these principles to genetic arguments to lack of justification and to lack of warrant should be fairly obvious. For such arguments to be persuasive there must be additional premises. In genetic arguments to lack of justification, we should use something like (16).

(16) If a belief is hypochondria-induced then it was formed (or is sustained) in an intellectually irresponsible way.

Although alternative formulations are possible, the chief virtue of putting things this way is that it fits well with the stipulation that to say that a belief is *justified* or *unjustified* is to evaluate the believer and not the belief. If we keep in mind that such a premise is intended to complement my definition of justification, it should be more than adequate for our purposes.

While (16) is very plausible, it is certainly not a necessary truth and could, at least in theory, be questioned. Moreover, if we look back at our stock of examples, the parallel premises are not, or not obviously, available for use in genetic arguments to lack of justification. Let's call a premise relevantly similar to (16) an *irresponsibility* premise.

In the case of an argument to lack of warrant, the additional premise would be something like (15) used above in connection with arguments to probable falsehood.

(15) Hypochondria-induced beliefs are not sensitive to the truth-value of their content.[23]

That such a premise is common to both arguments to probable falsehood and arguments to lack of warrant entails that if there is a successful instance of the former there is also a successful instance of the latter. Conversely, it also entails that if an argument to lack of warrant is unsuccessful, so too is the corresponding argument to probable falsehood.

What can we conclude from the preceding discussion? We examined four types of genetic arguments. We saw that none of these arguments is valid without the addition of extra premises.[24] We also saw that some of these arguments are rightly persuasive, whereas others are not. Whether or not a genetic argument gives us reason to believe its conclusion depends upon the plausibility of the extra premises which are (or could be) supplied. Any genetic argument must contain premises such as (1) and (2).

(1) S believes that P
(2) S came to hold that belief by means of process X

In our jargon, if a genetic argument to falsehood is to be valid (or persuasive) it requires an *invariably yields errors* premise (such as (17) below). If an argument to probable falsehood is to be persuasive it requires a *low prior likelihood* premise (such as (18)) and a *no sensitivity* premise (such as (19)). If an argument to lack of

justification is to be persuasive it requires an *irresponsibility* premise (such as (20)). If an argument to lack of warrant is to be persuasive it requires a *no sensitivity* premise (such as (19)).

(17) All beliefs (of the same kind as P) produced by process X are false
(18) The prior likelihood of P is independently known to be low
(19) The belief formation process X is not sensitive to the truth-value of the beliefs it produces
(20) If a belief is formed by means of process X then it is formed in an intellectually irresponsible way

If a genetic argument is offered when the above-described extra premises are unavailable, that argument can be said to commit the genetic fallacy.

We now move on to apply these results to the Freudian critique of religion. It seems clear that Freud was endorsing some kind of genetic argument. The first question is whether his argument is intended as an argument to falsehood, to probable falsehood, to lack of justification or to lack of warrant. This, however, is a question I will not attempt to answer directly. Instead, I will offer four readings of Freud's critique based on the four kinds of genetic argument outlined above. My aim will be to show that Freud's critique fails on each of these four readings.

Before we continue, I should point out in advance that the initial discussion will assume that Freud is importantly correct: that religion does indeed result from a desire for the protection of a father. This is an assumption that can be questioned and will be questioned later.

Evaluating Freud II: Does Freud Show that Theistic Belief is ...

... False?

The short answer to this question is "no." While some people seem to understand Freud this way and (for reasons that will become clear) then argue that such an argument must fail, Freud explicitly denied that his argument takes this form.

> When I say that these things [i.e. religious beliefs] are illusions, I must define the meaning of the word. An illusion is not the same thing as an error; nor is it necessarily an error ... What is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes ... Thus we call a belief an illusion when a wish-fulfilment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its relations to reality. (1927: 212-3)

Freud goes on to claim that we cannot make any (well motivated) judgement as to the "reality value" of religious beliefs, that they can be neither proved nor refuted (1927:

213-4). So Freud clearly didn't take himself to be showing religious belief to be false. But it might be thought that while Freud did not understand his argument like this, it nevertheless can serve that function. This, however, would be an error. For a genetic argument to falsehood requires a premise according to which the method by which the belief was formed is invariably erroneous. That is, we need a premise such as (22).

(22) All beliefs that result from wish-fulfilment are false.[25]

But this premise is not merely unavailable but almost certainly false. As Freud himself points out (1927: 213), wishes do sometimes come true!

... Probably False?

That the intended conclusion of Freud's argument is the probable falsehood of religious belief is much more plausible. Nevertheless, for reasons I will explain shortly, it seems that Freud's argument cannot establish this conclusion either. The first thing to note is that Freud may well have understood his argument in this fashion. Consider the following passage.

> To assess the truth-value of religious doctrines does not lie within the scope of the present inquiry. It is enough for us that we have recognized them as being, in their psychological nature illusions. But we do not have to conceal the fact that this discovery also strongly influences our attitude to the question which must appear to many to be the most important of all. We know approximately at what periods and by what kind of men religious doctrines were created. If in addition we discover the motives which led to this, our attitude to the problem of religion will undergo a marked displacement. We shall tell ourselves that it would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent Providence, and if there were a moral order in the universe and an after-life; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be.
> (Freud 1927: 215)

Here it seems that Freud is arguing, or more accurately *concluding,* that it would be a remarkable coincidence if the world were just as we wish it to be with respect to God, morality, and the after-life. Now if it were true that under these circumstances the truth of these beliefs would be a remarkable coincidence, that would seem to entail that the beliefs in question are probably false.[26]

But an argument (to and) from coincidence to probable falsehood requires all the premises that a normal genetic argument (as outlined above) to that conclusion would require, and perhaps more besides. After all, that two states of affairs A and B obtain is a coincidence only if (a) the prior likelihood of either is low, and (b) A does not explain B, B does not explain A, and there is no C such that C explains both A and B.

Now, there is, presumably, more to a coincidence than that ... but if A and B both obtaining is to be a coincidence both of these conditions must be met.[27]

Applying this to our example, (a) requires (at least) that there must be a low prior likelihood of belief in God being true, and (b) requires that belief is not sensitive to the truth-value of its content, or else the truth would (partially) explain the belief. But these are just the premises required by a genetic argument to probable falsehood. The question is whether these premises are true.

So, on this reading, Freud's argument requires the addition of a *low prior likelihood* premise and a *no sensitivity* premise. Unlike with the example of Alice the hypochondriac, it is unclear what might be meant by saying that the prior likelihood of the belief being true is low. *Likelihood* and *Probability* are notoriously slippery terms. We needn't get deeply into the theory of probability – but we do need a few basic tools to help us in our thinking about the matter.

We may distinguish between (a) the probability that something *is the case*, and (b) the probability that something *would be the case*. We will refer to the first kind of probability as *epistemic* probability, and the second as *metaphysical* probability. Suppose that Samantha roles a die and then declares that it came up as a six. Tom, hearing this, might (understandably) come to believe that she did indeed role a six. But what is the probability of his belief being true? I have deliberately phrased this question ambiguously to illustrate the point I wish to make. Since the belief could only be true if the die did indeed come up a six, we might think of the question as asking either (m) or (e).

(m) What is the probability that Samantha *would have* rolled a six?
(e) What is the probability that Samantha *did* roll a six?

Supposing that the die is a fair one, the answer to (m) is presumably $\frac{1}{6}$ (or $16\frac{2}{3}\%$). But if Samantha is not generally the type who lies, surely the answer to (e) is something much closer to unity (that is 1 or 100%). When evaluating Tom's belief we cannot hope to discredit it by pointing out (or even by demonstrating) that the probability that it *would be true* is rather low. It is *epistemic* probability that is directly relevant to the evaluation of a belief. To assess the epistemic probability of a belief is to assess the level of confidence that we *ought* to have in that belief.

However, in the case of Alice the hypochondriac, the kind of probability that was referred to in the low prior likelihood premise was metaphysical probability. This is not

a problem of course, for an argument could (it would seem) mention one kind of probability in a premise and another in its conclusion.

But suppose we attempt to follow the same pattern in the case of Freud's argument, we then need to consider what is the metaphysical probability that God exists. In other words, we need to know what the probability is that God *would* exist. The question sounds really rather odd, and not without reason. Surely, if the question makes any sense the answer must be either unity (i.e. 1 or 100%) or zero. It is like asking what is the probability that one plus one *would* equal two. Either it does equal two or it does not; the question of (metaphysical) probability does not arise. Something similar would seem to hold for the existence of God.

But perhaps the low prior likelihood premise need not be understood in terms of metaphysical probability after all. Perhaps it could be understood in terms of epistemic probability. This would, of course, require that we say something extra about the case of Alice the hypochondriac. We could defend the argument to the probable falsehood of Alice's belief by saying something like: although the premise as stated only gives us the metaphysical probability of the belief being true, in the absence of any specific evidence on the matter, our assessment of the epistemic probability of the belief being true should be guided by – indeed be equal to – our best assessment of the metaphysical probability.

This seems a reasonable assumption, and allows us to defend the argument against Alice's belief without assuming that the *low prior likelihood* premise need generally refer to metaphysical probability.

So, if Freud's argument is to work we must understand the low prior likelihood premise in terms of a low prior epistemic probability of – a low prior rational level of confidence in – the proposition that God exists. But why should we assume that such a premise would be true? Is there any reason to think that the prior level of rational confidence is (or should be) low? Such a premise would need independent support that Freud has not given us.[28] But even if this deficiency could be remedied (an assumption whose truth I would contest), the argument to probable falsehood would still require the no sensitivity premise, which I will evaluate later.

Before I move on it is worth noting that even without the low prior likelihood premise, something akin to a genetic argument to probable falsehood is available, but only if we assume that the other premise, the no sensitivity premise, is true. The

Freudian critique would, given these assumptions, remove any presumption of the truth of the religious worldview that results from the fact that it is believed. There is normally at least some weight (though, admittedly, not much) in arguments from common consent. If a great many people believe something, then their concurrence in this belief needs explanation. One natural explanation stems from the truth of the belief. But if a competing account can be given which is known to be true or is plausible then this would undermine the argument from (or presumption resulting from) common consent,[29] and would therefore seem to lower the epistemic probability of the existence of God.[30] Unfortunately, this is too fast. For while it may succeed in removing all weight from the argument from common consent, the conclusion that the epistemic probability of belief in God is lowered does not follow. It ignores the fact that similar genetic arguments can, as we shall see, be offered against both atheism and agnosticism, which would have the same effect as the argument against belief. The result, then, is that the arguments (considered purely in terms of their effect on the epistemic probability of belief in God) cancel each other out.

But in any case, even to establish only this much Freud's critique would require the no sensitivity premise, which I will consider under the heading of genetic arguments to lack of warrant, which also require such a premise.

... Unjustified?

Here we examine Freud's argument when understood as a genetic argument to lack of justification. I explained earlier that to say that a belief is justified is to say that the believer is justified in holding it. It is primarily an evaluation of the believer. It would appear that if a belief results from wish-fulfilment then the believer has indeed come to that belief irresponsibly. Indeed, this much may even be analytic. However, while Freud claims that religion does result from wish-fulfilment, the best that his arguments show is that religious belief is in some sense 'desire-based'. Freud's conclusion will follow only if all beliefs that are desire-based in this manner are indeed wish-fulfilments.[31] But are they? It is one thing to describe a belief as resulting from wish-fulfilment and quite another to speak of it as the natural outcome of a desire which is essential to human nature. Suppose we describe the religious belief as coming about like that, would it *then* follow that it was unjustified? I cannot see how.

I have no doubt that *some* instances of religious belief are, correctly understood as resulting from wish-fulfilment and are discredited on those grounds. But I don't see why a deep desire for God should not be a legitimate occasion for belief in Him, when the believer has thought long and hard about the issues and can see no reason here to withhold or give up their belief.[32] It seems to me that the only way to guarantee that a reflective person would come to such a negative evaluation of their belief is to assume either (a) that some other type of genetic argument is successful, and they would become aware of this were they to reflect on the matter, or (b) that there are certain other reasons for thinking belief in God unjustified or otherwise intellectually lacking, of which their reflection would (should) make them aware. But this challenge to religious belief is supposed to be independent of others, so (b) is out of court. And given the failure of genetic arguments to falsehood and probable falsehood, (a) amounts to the assumption that the genetic argument to lack of warrant is successful. Such an argument will, in turn, assume the truth of the – as yet unexamined – no sensitivity premise, which we now move to evaluate.

... Unwarranted?

Here we will assume that Freud's argument is intended as a genetic argument to lack of warrant. If the argument is to be sustained, it will require the truth (or plausibility) of a no sensitivity premise. To recap, warrant is the extra thing required to turn mere true belief into knowledge. That a belief is warranted, therefore, requires that it be formed (or sustained) by a cognitive faculty that is sensitive to the facts about which a belief is being formed. It seems plausible to suggest that wish-fulfilment is not such a cognitive faculty and that therefore this type of genetic argument would be successful if Freud is correct in supposing that religious beliefs are the product of wish-fulfilment.

I think, however, that it would be far too hasty to draw this conclusion so soon. At least, it is too hasty when we take into account the remarks made about the pejorative nature of the term 'wish-fulfilment,' as outlined in the previous section. If we suppose that God exists then why couldn't something like wish-fulfilment (only without the negative connotations) be the way in which God intended us to come to believe in Him? Why shouldn't it be the case that God has, in Augustine's words, "made us for [Himself]" so that "our hearts are restless until they find their rest in [Him]"?[33] It must be admitted that desire-based beliefs are in general of dubious epistemic value, but it

cannot be concluded from this that all desire-based beliefs are unwarranted. Consider the following case.

Chris (from the lying scientist example above) has a brother called Frank. He, like Chris, is very knowledgeable about mathematical and scientific matters. But unlike Chris, Frank is an honest person and believes everything he says on these matters to be the truth. However, on matters other than maths and science Frank is singularly unreliable. Since most things he says are outside of his field of expertise, forming a belief on the basis of Frank's testimony will generally be a bad idea. Nevertheless, it does not follow that all beliefs formed on the basis of his testimony are unwarranted. If Bob, that hapless fellow, overhears Frank saying that Andrew Wiles has proved the truth of Fermat's Last Theorem, then this belief would seem (other things being equal) to be warranted.

Couldn't something similar hold for religious beliefs? Why shouldn't belief in God formed on the basis of wish-fulfilment be similar to belief in Fermat's Last Theorem based on Frank's testimony? It seems to me that the situations could be sufficiently similar. There is nothing obviously wrong with the Augustinian view of the matter. Indeed, building on some further thoughts from C.S. Lewis, in the next chapter I shall argue that there is something fundamentally right about the Augustinian view that God "has made us for [Himself] and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in [Him]."[34]

I have not argued that religious belief is warranted, only that Freud's argument hasn't proven that it is not. If God does not exist, then, of course, the Augustinian view of the matter must be wrong. But Freud's argument can hardly assume it is wrong, that would be to beg the question in a most flagrant manner. If Augustine was right, then surely there would be nothing in any way wrong about forming belief on the basis of the desire for God.[35]

In summary, whatever kind of genetic argument we understand Freud to be making, his argument will be unsuccessful. With respect to the argument to falsehood it is obvious that beliefs formed on the basis of our desires need not be false. As an argument to probable falsehood, it would require that the prior likelihood of theism is low, which seems debatable. It would also (due to the use of a common premise) require the success of the argument to lack of warrant, which failed because it is by no means obvious that theistic belief could not legitimately be based upon a desire for

God. On the contrary, this may be just the way that God would have us come to believe in Him. Considered as an argument to lack of justification, Freud's critique seems to be parasitic upon the success of the other readings of Freud's argument. But since these are not available, Freud's critique also fails on this reading.[36] As if this were not enough, Freud's critique faces several further difficulties.

Evaluating Freud III: Whose Illusion is it Anyway?

Thus far we have been allowing that Freud is correct in saying that religious belief is desire-based. While it seems to me that there is something right about this (on which see the next chapter), the situation cannot be as simple as Freud seems to have thought. What reasons does Freud give us to believe that this is the origin of religious belief? I am far from convinced that he gives us any. He tells a quasi-historical story about civilisation and human needs, which offers an explanation of the existence of a desire that God should exist. But that this explanation *would* be a good explanation of the existence of the desire does not entail that we have this desire, nor (supposing we do have such a desire) that our belief in God results, in whole or in part, from it. Freud does attempt a summary evaluation of 'rational' methods of coming to religious belief, and concludes that none of these methods really are rational. But even if Freud's appraisal of these methods of knowing God is accurate (and I don't believe it is), it wouldn't follow that we came to believe in God the way Freud supposed.

Once we ask these questions we realise that all Freud has done is tell us a story, a coherent and compelling story perhaps, about the psychological origins of religious belief. But Freud's is not the only possible story and others may be just as compelling. I offer two such stories, which intertwine closely. According to the first, God is not the kind of being for whose existence one would wish. According to the second, if the world were as we wish it to be, God would not exist at all. Indeed, according to the second story, it is atheism that results from wish-fulfilment.

The Oedipus complex, which Freud saw as the root of religious belief, provides a much more natural explanation of atheistic than theistic commitment. Central to the Oedipus complex is a deep emotional ambivalence towards the father, partly constituted by a desire to take the father's place and so be able to sleep with the mother. According to Freudian psychology, this desire often leads to unconscious wishes to kill the father or to fantasies about doing so. But if our concept of God is

closely bound up with our concept of our earthly father, a natural consequence of such feelings will be a hatred towards God. This hatred would naturally manifest itself in 'killing God' by denying his existence. Atheism, then, would be a form of projective denial. That this thoroughly Freudian argument relies on the general validity of the Oedipus complex is undoubtedly a weakness. However, a few other ideas suggest themselves. The first suggestion comes from Freud himself:

> Psychoanalysis has made us familiar with the intimate connection between the father-complex and belief in God; it has shown us that a personal God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father, and it brings us evidence every day of how people lose their religious beliefs as soon as their father's authority breaks down. (1910: 216)

While Alvin Plantinga takes this as a piece of evidence intended to support Freud's argument against theistic belief and responds to it as such, it seems to me exactly the opposite. If belief in God is made impossible or difficult by the breakdown of the father's authority then (given the close psychological relation between God and 'the father') doesn't this suggest that a poor relationship with their father will explain a person's accepting atheism? Paul C. Vitz in his book *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism* makes very much this suggestion. He writes that in the quote above

> Freud makes the simple and easily understandable claim that once a child or youth is disappointed in or loses respect for his earthly father, belief in a heavenly father becomes impossible ... There are, of course, many ways a father can lose his authority or seriously disappoint his child: he can be absent through death or abandonment; he can be present but obviously weak, cowardly, and unworthy of respect, even if he is otherwise pleasant or "nice"; or he can be present but physically, sexually, or psychologically abusive. I will call these proposed determinants of atheism, taken together, the "defective father" hypothesis. (1999: 136)

Vitz goes on to collect evidence for this hypothesis by comparing prominent atheists and theists with respect to their relationships with their fathers. A pattern emerges. While not all of the atheists which Vitz studies had 'defective fathers' the large majority did. By way of contrast, the theists were found, in nearly every case, to have had good relationships with their fathers. Striking confirmations of the 'defective father' hypothesis occur in the lives of atheists such as Friedrich Nietzsche, David Hume, Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Arthur Schopenhauer, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Sigmund Freud, Madalyn Murray O'Hair and Albert Ellis.

We should also note a few other possible psychological factors that may provide an impetus towards atheism. The first of these is a desire to fit in or to gain the respect of

one's peers. In an environment where atheism is the norm, perhaps especially among 'intellectuals,' there will be a strong pull towards conformity.[37] The second is the desire for personal autonomy. Paul Vitz, analysing his own early atheism wrote

> For me, as presumably for many, becoming an atheist was part of a personal infatuation with the "romance of the autonomous self." ... The fact is that, in the powerful secular neopagan world of today, it is quite inconvenient to be a serious believer. I would have had to give up many pleasures (you may use your imagination) and was unwilling to do so. And besides, religion takes a good deal of time, not just Sunday mornings; the serious practice of any religion calls for much more than that. (1999: 136)

In C.S. Lewis' allegorical tale *The Pilgrim's Regress*, a character by the name of Reason puts three riddles to the Spirit of the Age (which represents Freudian psychology). The second of these riddles (we shall look at the third later) runs as follows.

> Now hear my second riddle. There was a certain man who was going to his own house and his enemy went with him. And his house was beyond a river too swift to swim and too deep to wade. And he could go no faster than his enemy. While he was on his journey his wife sent to him and said, You know that there is only one bridge across the river: tell me, shall I destroy it so that the enemy may not cross; or shall I leave it standing that you may cross? What should this man do? (1933: 82)

Unable to answer this riddle (or the other two) the Spirit of the Age pays with his life, and John, the story's main character, is enabled to continue his pilgrimage. He journeys the next few miles with Reason, who explains the riddles to him. This riddle, she says, has two meanings, only one of which will occupy our attention for the time being. The meaning was that the Spirit of the Age wanted both to allow and to disallow the use of Freudian argument; he wanted to allow Freudian argument against religion, but not against atheism. Reason explains this to John. Their dialogue runs as follows.

> 'Does [the Spirit of the Age] not keep on telling people that the Landlord [God] is a wish-fulfilment dream?'
> 'Yes; surely that is true – the only true thing that he did say.'
> 'Now think. Is it really true that [the various people you have met on your way], are going about filled with longing that there should be a Landlord, and cards of rules [morality], and a mountain land beyond the brook [heaven], with the possibility of a black hole [hell]?'
> Then John stood still on the road to think. And first he gave a shake of his shoulders, and then he put his hands to his sides, and then he began to laugh till he was almost shaken to pieces. And when he had nearly finished, the vastness and impudence and simplicity of the fraud which had been practised came over him all again, and he laughed harder. (Lewis 1933: 93-4)

Reason goes on to suggest that it is all the other way about. If we accept the Freudian rules of argument, then disbelief in the "Landlord" is a "wish-fulfilment dream." Does it really seem plausible to say that belief in God results from wish-fulfilment? Contrary to Freud, it is far from clear that anyone would wish for the existence of a being such as God. Alvin Plantinga:

> Much of religious belief ... is not something that on the face of it, fulfils your wildest dreams. Thus Christianity (as well as other theistic religions) includes the belief that human beings have sinned, that they merit divine wrath and even damnation, and that they are broken, wretched, in need of salvation; according to the Heidelberg Catechism, the first thing I have to know is my sins and miseries. This isn't precisely a fulfilment of one's wildest dreams. A follower of Freud might say: "Well, at any rate theistic belief, the belief that there is such a person as God, arises from wish-fulfilment." But this also is far from clear: many people thoroughly dislike the idea of an omnipotent, omniscient being monitoring their every activity, privy to their every thought, and passing judgement on all they do or think. Others dislike the lack of autonomy consequent upon there being a Someone by comparison with whom we are as dust and ashes, and to whom we owe worship and obedience. (2000: 195)

Making the same point but also contributing a second, J.P. Moreland writes

> [T]he biblical God is holy, demanding, omnipotent, omniscient (thus capable of knowing me through and through even when I do not wish to be known), awesome in wrath and justice, and so forth. If one were going to project a god to meet one's needs, a being much tamer, much more human, much more manageable would be a better candidate. In fact, the Bible recognizes such a style of projection, and calls it idolatry. (1987: 230)

Here Moreland brings out a positive role for the Freudian critique: it explains our tendency towards idolatry, worship directed towards something other than God. People, Christians included, do have a tendency to fashion (their) God in a way that makes Him more manageable. Sometimes they do this by stressing God's transcendence (and, for all practical purposes, become deists), commonly with the result that we properly relate to God not in intimacy but only in obedience. God is a being we relate to in a purely formal way. Religion is thus reduced to a method or system. Another possibility is to stress God's immanence (and, for all practical purposes, become pantheists), commonly with the result that we look for intimacy without obedience. Religion is thus reduced to a panacea, a source of good feelings always to hand. These forms of idolatry, along with many others, are ultimately aimed at getting God to serve our purposes, at moulding God into a form we find more convenient. Freud's critique holds good for such idolatrous ways of thinking and living, and provides a useful corrective. But from a rational standpoint, we must find out what the true God is like before we can label any view idolatrous.

The above constitute reasons not only for thinking that people don't wish that there be such a being as God, but would also *seem* to give reasons for thinking that atheism may result from the wish that there not be such a being as God. Indeed, some atheists have admitted that something like this is indeed the case. I have in mind Aldous Huxley and, more recently, Thomas Nagel. Let's take Huxley first.

> I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently I assumed it had none. ... Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because, for one reason or another, it suits their books that the world should be meaningless ... For myself ... the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claimed that in some way they embodied the meaning (a Christian meaning, they insisted) of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and economic revolt, we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever. (Huxley 1946)

Philosopher Thomas Nagel made the following candid confession.

> I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.
>
> (1997: 130)

I do not intend this as a Freudian argument against atheism; it has (nearly) all the weaknesses of Freud's own argument. Both arguments are, I think, terrible. It may be that they provide insight into the mental lives of some believers and of some unbelievers, but they do nothing to settle the question of who is right or even who is justified or warranted in believing as they do. Even if all the above points are wrong, the fact that there is an argument like Freud's for the exactly opposite conclusion (and which is just as plausible as Freud's own argument) seems to show that Freud's argument cannot be a good one.

Or does it? One might think that these two Freudian arguments would be shown to be poor arguments if they were indeed arguments to opposed conclusions. However, they might be construed as genetic arguments to a lack of justification or to a lack of warrant. Since it is perfectly consistent to hold that both theism and atheism are unjustified (unwarranted), one might think that understood this way both arguments are successful. In other words, it might be thought that the two arguments could both be regarded as successful and that the right conclusion is, therefore, agnosticism.[38] I've

already argued above that understood as an argument to lack of justification or to lack of warrant Freud's critique of religious belief will not succeed.[39] It is important to note that, even if correct, the rejoinder being considered here would only show that the possibility of a Freudian argument against atheism does not (taken on its own) undermine Freud's argument. Furthermore, while this initially sounds a promising response, it has a fatal flaw: a Freudian argument against agnosticism can also be constructed. Perhaps we could (not implausibly I think) diagnose agnosticism as resulting from the fear of commitment, or again the desire for acceptance among our peers, or the desire to appear tolerant of religion while still avoiding the costs of being a committed believer. Many possibilities suggest themselves.

Putting all three Freudian arguments together does yield an inconsistent set; it cannot be true that theism, agnosticism, and atheism are all unjustified (unwarranted). The combination of these three Freudian arguments should lead us to a new kind of agnosticism: agnosticism about the genuine value of Freudian style arguments.[40]

Freud, it seems, has led us up to, if not over, the very brink of coherence. Freudian arguments can be constructed against pretty much anything. They can even be constructed against Freudian arguments. If a Freudian explanation is possible for any belief we have, and if such arguments undermine our reasons for holding those beliefs then a serious question arises: can the Freudian approach avoid undermining itself? The answer to this question must be in the negative. C.S. Lewis was here before us. In the other meaning of the riddle about the bridge, "the bridge symbolises Reasoning. The Spirit of the Age wishes to allow argument and not to allow argument" (1933: 93). If Freudian psychology is to be reasonable, it must be possible to reason without falling prey to a Freudian genetic argument. But if this is possible, then we will have to examine someone's reasoning before we dismiss it with such an argument. To put it another way, the question we must ask is whether rational argument can be given a hearing. It seems that Lewis is right in thinking that Freudian psychology wants it both ways. The Freudian offers what he takes to be rational arguments against theistic belief, but then exactly parallel arguments can be offered against his own position, and indeed against Freudian psychology in general. But these arguments either establish or fail to establish their conclusions. If they fail, they fail. But if they succeed, they still fail. Why? Because they succeed not only in undermining the rationality of the opponent's position, but also in undermining the rationality of their own. Alternatively,

if the Freudian can create for themselves a position that cannot be undermined by a Freudian critique, then there seems no reason why other positions might not be similarly immune. What does this immunity consist in? Simply this: that the Freudian arguments are declared worthless, at least as an attempt to settle whether belief (or disbelief) in a given proposition is rationally acceptable. For these reasons, C.S. Lewis draws what I take to be the right conclusion.

> [Y]ou must show that a man is wrong before you start explaining why he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion that he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became so silly. ... [Y]ou can only find out the rights and wrongs by reasoning – never by being rude about your opponent's psychology. (1941a: 180-1)

When we see that the kind of Freudian dismissal we have been considering is self-defeating, we also realise the possibility of some reasoning being good reasoning, and of being able to tell (at least on some occasions) which reasoning is good and which is not. But that being the case it might be that there is good reasoning on the side of theism, and to show that there is not we will have to examine the reasoning that theists offer. Only after this examination, and only on the assumption that we have found the reasoning to be dubious, is there any adequate motive to delve into the psychology of the situation.

Evaluating Freud IV: Two Final Observations

There remain only a couple of observations to be made. The first concerns the similarity of God and our earthly fathers; the second notes that there are numerous apparent counter-examples to Freud's thesis.

One of the central elements of Freud's argumentation is that the concept of God is psychologically close to the concept of an earthly father. One result of the similarity of the concepts is that a second argument can be seen within or alongside Freud's main argument. The claim now is that the similarity of these concepts shows that the concept of God is an anthropomorphic one, or that it has been arrived at in a way that makes it somehow illegitimate. The thought seems to be: our concept of God is a 'copy' of our concept of our father. But the copy is our creation, and as such we have no reason to believe that the concept is instantiated, that there really is a God.[41] Here the riddles of C.S. Lewis' *Pilgrim's Regress* are again relevant. The third of these riddles was "By what rule do you tell a copy from an original?" (1933: 82) The meaning behind this

riddle was simply that from the similarity of two things you cannot tell which (if either) is a copy of the other. If two things are similar, this may be a coincidence or (supposing we rule this out) the first may be a copy of the second, the second of the first, or both of a third. From the fact that our concept of God is similar to that of an earthly father, it does not follow that God is, in Freud's terms, "nothing but an exalted father." If theism is true it seems sensible to believe that in some sense our earthly fathers are 'copies of' our heavenly father. It isn't that God is similar to a father, but that our fathers are (in some sense) similar to God. Drawing upon Ephesians 3v15, which says that "every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" from our Heavenly Father, H.P. Owen writes

> If it is logically possible that the authority ascribed to God is solely a "projection" it is no less logically possible that the authority of human fathers is derived from that of the divine father. (Owen 1965: 647)[42]

In addition to all the problems with Freud's argument that are outlined above, there is also the problem that Freud's theory faces several apparent counter-examples. Many people have come to believe in God without any desire that He should exist. Indeed, many come to believe in Him despite actually wishing that He *didn't* exist. C.S. Lewis and the poet Francis Thompson are cases in point. In his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis put it this way.

> You must picture me alone in my room at Magdalen, night after night, feeling whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. (1955b: 182)

Thompson's autobiographical poem, *The Hound of Heaven*, includes these words.

> I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
> I fled Him down the arches of the years;
> I fled Him down the labyrinthe ways
> of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
> I hid from Him ... I was sure adread, lest,
> having Him I must have naught else beside.[43]

It is simply untrue that everyone who believes in God wishes that He should exist, for some have wished precisely the opposite. This point may be thought not to count against Freud because the desires or wishes that he posited were unconscious ones. But if the desire is unconscious how can Freud be so sure that these people had that desire?

Freud must have thought there could be evidence for the existence of such an unconscious desire. If some things would count as evidence in favour of the existence of such a desire, some things could surely count against it. But then why think that these two honest and reflective men were self-deceived in this matter? It is possible that they were, but surely not plausible. That they came to the conclusions quoted above is evidence, however weak, that there are genuine counter-examples to Freud's argumentation.[44]

Conclusion

After a lengthy exposition of the Freudian critique of religious belief, we explored various ways in which his argument could be understood. First, we noted that Freud's argument stems from a description of the process through which religious belief is (allegedly) formed. Given this essential feature of Freud's argument it seemed useful to define a *genetic argument* as one which contained, as an essential premise, a description of the process through which a belief came to be held, and which on the basis of this premise went on to a negative evaluation of that belief.

Corresponding to the various ways in which a belief can be evaluated negatively, there were various ways in which Freud's argument could be understood. To evaluate these arguments we examined the conditions under which a genetic argument is a good one. We found that such arguments always require extra premises, and that these premises vary in plausibility depending upon the belief and the belief forming process in question. Applying our findings to Freud's argument we saw that each reading of it required premises whose truth could be plausibly denied.

In addition to this we saw that Freud's main premise, that religious belief is desire-based, was itself questionable and that not only do some people not seem to wish that God exist, some seem to wish that He not exist. Here we saw that a Freudian critique of atheism is also available. We then discussed the import of this finding, discovering as we did so, that a similar argument was available against agnosticism too. Putting the three arguments together, we saw that such Freudian critiques soon get out of hand, and can easily lead to incoherence.

We conclude, therefore, that while a Freudian critique may offer insight into the mental lives of some theists (and some atheists and agnostics) it does nothing to help us evaluate the rational acceptability of theism. As an argument against theism or

theistic belief the Freudian critique must be considered a failure. Having been helped to this conclusion by C.S. Lewis, I close this chapter with one more (rather long) quote from him. In "On Obstinacy in Belief," a fascinating paper on the nature of faith, Lewis wrote:

> Now I do not doubt that this sort of thing [wishful thinking] happens in thinking about religion as in thinking about other things: but as a general explanation of religious assent it seems to me quite useless. On that issue our wishes may favour either side or both. The assumption that every man would be pleased and nothing but pleased, if only he could conclude that Christianity is true, appears to me to be simply preposterous. If Freud is right about the Oedipus complex, the universal pressure of the wish that God should not exist must be enormous, and atheism must be an admirable gratification to one of our strongest suppressed impulses. This argument, in fact, could be used on the theistic side. But I have no intention of so using it. It will not really help either party. It is fatally ambivalent. Men wish on both sides: and again, there is fear-fulfilment as well as wish-fulfilment, and hypochondriac temperaments will always tend to think true what they most wish to be false. Thus instead of the one predicament on which our opponents sometimes concentrate there are in fact four. A man may be a Christian because he wants Christianity to be true. He may be an atheist because he wants atheism to be true. He may be an atheist because he wants Christianity to be true. He may be a Christian because he wants atheism to be true. Surely these possibilities cancel one another out? They may be of some use in analysing a particular instance of belief or disbelief, where we know the case history, but as a general explanation of either they will not help us.
>
> (1955a: 209-10)

Chapter 6
C.S. Lewis' Argument from Desire

If you are really a product of a material universe, how is it that you don't feel at home there? Do fish complain of the sea for being wet? Or if they did, would that fact itself not strongly suggest that they had not always been, or would not always be, purely aquatic creatures? (C.S. Lewis[1])

THIS CHAPTER SERVES as a sequel to the previous one. In the last chapter, we examined the Freudian critique of religious belief. According to that critique, religious belief arises from a psychological need for the protection of a cosmic father figure. From this premise, Freud and his followers inferred that religious belief is false, probably false or in some way irrational or unwarranted. We saw that there is good reason to question both the premise and the inference.

In this chapter, we examine an argument from a very similar starting point to a diametrically opposed conclusion. That argument, now generally labelled "the argument from desire," contends that far from pointing away from His reality, the human desire for God serves as a pointer towards it. Perhaps the most appealing feature of this argument is that, unlike many of the traditional arguments for the existence of God, it seems to connect with the kind of existential considerations that actually lead people to adopt a religious worldview. Although the argument can be traced back to well before him, one of the clearest articulations of the argument from desire is to be found in the work of C.S. Lewis.

Before we begin, let me also say a little about how I conceive the following discussion. My intent is not so much to present a watertight defence of the argument from desire as to motivate, and provide a solid foundation for, further discussion of the argument. I begin with a brief outline of the argument to give the reader some idea of how the argument is intended to work. I then go on to define the argument's key terms and in the process to clarify the structure of the argument. After this, I outline the method(s) by which the argument's premises might be motivated. Although my argumentation at this point is far from conclusive, it should be sufficient to serve my more modest aim as described above. Following suggestions from other writers, I develop an alternative formulation of the argument, the conclusion of which is roughly that life is absurd unless God exists. I then consider several objections, and further

refine the argument in response to them. After showing that (at least one formulation of) the argument from desire survives these objections, I conclude that here we have an engaging argument for the existence of God deserving of more attention from philosophers than it has hitherto received.

Outline of the Argument

Nothing, or at least very little, in the whole of the Lewisian corpus wholly escapes the influence of the argument which this chapter considers. The plain reason for this is that the argument is one that had a profound affect on Lewis personally. It was an argument that Lewis *lived through*. For those unacquainted with the argument this comment will most probably remain obscure until the argument is spelled out. So, what is the argument? For the sake of clarity we will, for the time being, formulate it as follows.

(1) Every natural desire has a correlating object of desire.
(2) We have a natural desire for (communion with) God.
(3) Therefore, God exists.

Once the meaning of these premises is made clear, it will be evident that the argument is a valid one, that if the premises are true then the conclusion must also be true. But what is a natural desire, and what does it mean to say that a desire has a correlating object?

Defining our Terms

Natural Desire

"Natural," as C.S. Lewis was well aware,[2] is a word with many different meanings. Furthermore, in the sense we shall be using the word, I am far from convinced that the term can be defined in any watertight manner. Nevertheless, the word is far from meaningless and the following should go some way towards conveying its meaning to the reader.

In the sense of *natural* that this argument requires, when we ask (for example) what dogs are like, we are inquiring after their *nature*, we are asking what characteristics are *natural* in a dog. The answer to such a question should make reference to the various features that dogs have.

So, it would seem that to ask about the nature of dogs is to ask what characteristics all dogs share. This, however, is not quite right. For while a dog *naturally* has four legs

it would be clearly untrue to say that *all* dogs have four legs. We might, therefore, be tempted to adjust our account by saying that a trait is natural to some kind of creature if, and only if, that trait is possessed by all *normal* creatures of that kind. There are two problems with this suggestion.

Firstly, *normal* seems as problematic as *natural*. The important thing to note, however, is that something's being in the majority is neither necessary nor sufficient for its being normal. Even if, in a rather cruel moment, we took measures to ensure that no dogs had four (or more) legs this would not make a dog with less than four legs a normal dog. Being of the conviction that my readers all have a good intuitive grasp of the concept *normal*, I move to consider our second problem.

The second problem requires a fuller treatment. The problem is that, not all traits that all normal creatures of a particular kind possess are natural to that kind. For example, suppose that no dogs live at the address 43 Dogless Place. Since no dogs live there, all dogs, and therefore all normal dogs, have the feature of not living there, but surely the answer to our question ("what are dogs like?") should not make reference to this fact. Another possible emendation would give us

> (1st Definition of *Natural*): A certain feature, F, is natural in things of kind K if, and only if, F is a feature that all normal things of kind K possess *because* they are things of that kind.

This definition avoids the chief problems of the earlier definitions, and is, I think, workable. But given that, as stated above, *normal* is almost as problematic as *natural*, the reader might like to consider the following alternative.

> (2nd Definition of *Natural*): A certain feature, F, is natural in things of kind K if, and only if, other things being equal, any thing of kind K which does possess F does so *because* it is a thing of that kind.[3]

The *ceteris paribus* clause is necessary because it is possible for there to be a trait natural to a particular kind, but which is artificially produced in some members of that kind.[4] But it is far from clear that this represents any advance on our first definition, since the *ceteris paribus* clause is really an appeal to how things of kind K *normally* come to possess feature F.

One more point needs to be made before we can move on. We noted above that certain traits are natural to certain kinds of thing. With this in mind, it is easy to see that without any suitable qualifications our definition of *natural* will entail that all traits are natural. This is because we can be completely arbitrary in how we fill out K.

a mere placeholder in our definition. Performing dolphins are a kind of animal, and surely a performing dolphin (even a normal one), simply in virtue of being a performing dolphin is able to perform various tricks, like jumping through hoops and (perhaps simultaneously) turning somersaults.

However, it would be wrong to say that a performing dolphin has such abilities *naturally*. The reason, of course, is that no dolphin is *naturally* a performing dolphin. This suggests that we could rule out cases like this by saying that a trait can only be natural to a kind that is itself natural. Thus, modifying our first definition of *natural* we have ...

> (3rd Definition of *Natural*): A certain feature, F, is natural to things of kind K if, and only if, K is a natural kind and F is a feature that all normal things of kind K possess *because* they are things of that kind.

Unfortunately, this introduces a completely new sense of the word 'natural,' with which the above definition does not give us any help. It is tempting to endeavour to provide a definition of 'natural kind.' Fortunately, however, providing such a definition does not seem to be necessary for our examination of the argument from desire. All that we require is that *human* is a natural kind, and that it is therefore legitimate to say that humans have certain traits naturally, and that (theoretically) a desire for communion with God could be among them.[5] Thus, modifying our third definition, the formula in which we are (most) interested could be written as follows.

> A certain feature, F, is natural in humans, if and only if, all normal humans possess F simply in virtue of being human.

In ordinary conversation the closest most of us come to our sense of natural is "that which happens in the usual course of events." Following the ordinary usage we may, therefore, as a kind of shorthand, occasionally refer to a natural trait as one that creatures of the relevant kind have in "the usual course of events."

Correlating Objects

To say a desire has a correlating object is not merely to say that it is a desire *for* something. As John Beversluis points out, that would be true but only trivially so (Beversluis 1985: 16). Interpreting (1) in that manner would make our argument rather too similar to the one below.

(4) All thoughts have correlating objects of thought. That is, all thoughts are
    thoughts about something.
(5) We sometimes think about non-existent things (e.g. unicorns).
(6) Therefore, some non-existent things are not non-existent (but existent).

Something has obviously gone wrong with this argument, for the conclusion is not even so much as false: its nonsense. But since (5) is evidently true, and there is an interpretation of (4) on which it is trivially true, the argument must be invalid (when (4) is so interpreted). The lesson to learn from this is that interpreted in the trivial manner (4) cannot support arguments for what we might call the 'real world existence' of objects of thought. Supposing otherwise leads to nonsense like the above. Something similar goes for (1).[6] So the interpretation of (1) which would make it trivially true cannot be usefully employed in the argument. As a rough first attempt, we might say that (1) makes the startling claim that every *natural* desire is a desire for something that really exists. This seems to be very much the claim the argument requires, but it cannot be quite right.[7]

Consider the plausible claim (which I will make use of later) that humans have a natural desire for happiness. The existence of such a natural desire raises two problems for (1). Firstly, given that we have a natural desire for happiness, the proposed interpretation of (1) would surely entail that happiness *exists*. It would be pleasant if we could avoid any reading of (1) that entails the truth of such a clumsy proposition. After all, this proposition would require that happiness is a kind of substance (in the metaphysicians' sense); and whatever happiness is, it surely isn't a substance of any sort, however peculiar.

Secondly, supposing we can get round this so that the conclusion would be not *happiness exists* but rather *at least one person is in fact happy*, it is my intention that (1) should be consistent with the following set of propositions.

(A) Exactly one human exists.
(B) That human is unhappy.
(C) Humans naturally desire happiness.

But these propositions are obviously inconsistent with the assumption that at least one person is happy, which on our current reading of (1) is entailed by its conjunction with (C). I suggest that we avoid these problems in the following manner. Firstly, we could read (1) as (1').

(1') For any instantiated kind K, and for any type of desire natural to that kind, at least one creature of kind K has a satisfied desire of that type.[8]

This, it seems to me, gets us around our first problem beautifully. However, we still have the problem that (1'), (A), (B) and (C) form an inconsistent set. My suggestion is that we reformulate (1') as (1'').

(1'') For any instantiated kind, K, and for any type of desire natural to that kind, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a creature of kind K should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.[9,10,11]

Now, from (1''), (A) and (C) we can infer that not only are humans the kind of beings that could be happy, but that all of what we might call the 'preconditions' for the truth of *at least one human is happy* are met.[12] Expanding (2) for the sake of clarity, the argument from desire now looks like this.

(1'') For any instantiated kind, K, and for any type of desire natural to that kind, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a creature of kind K should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.
(2.1) Humans naturally desire communion with God.
(2.2) At least one human exists.
(3) Therefore, God exists.

To see that the argument is valid, consider the obvious entailments from (i) *God does not now exist* to (ii) *No-one is now in communion with God*, and from (ii) *No-one is now in communion with God* to (iii) *No desires for communion with God are currently satisfied*. Given the assumption that God cannot come into or out of existence, it follows that if (i) is true at any time, then (iii) will be true for all time. God's current non-existence would secure that no desire for God is ever satisfied. In short, unless God exists, it is inconsistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that some human should (at any time) be in communion with God. The argument is therefore valid.[13]

Supporting our Premises

So the argument is a valid one. But do we have any reason to accept its premises? I believe we do. Since (to paraphrase Chesterton) so many of my readers belong to the human race, I take it that (2.2) is beyond dispute.[14] The following sections explain how I think the argument's other premises should be supported. The reader should be forewarned, however, that a full-dress defence of the premise that humans have a natural desire for communion with God would require much more argument than I

shall here supply. In accord with my aims (as set out in the introduction to this chapter), I shall mostly confine myself to making strategic remarks as to the method by which I would support this premise.

The Desire for God

There seem to be two basic ways of supporting this premise: the experiential route and the metaphysical route. The basic idea behind the experiential method is to infer that the desire for communion with God is natural as the best explanation of the (alleged) fact that it is widespread. For this reason, the main project of the experiential route will be to show that this desire is indeed widespread. The metaphysical route is harder to describe. Following such philosophers as Aristotle, Boethius, and Aquinas, those who take this route would first claim that all humans naturally desire happiness, and then attempt to unpack what happiness might (or must) consist in. Following the example of most previous discussions of the argument from desire, our focus will be upon the experiential route. But we begin with a brief discussion of the metaphysical route.[15]

The Metaphysical Route

As I explained above, the metaphysical route first argues that humans naturally desire happiness, and then attempts to unpack what happiness must consist in. In much this manner Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, argued that happiness consists (chiefly) in the life of study.[16] In his *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius used this method to support the notion that happiness consists in participation in the Divine Life.[17] Aquinas took such a route when, in *Summa Theologica* he endeavoured to establish that happiness consists in the contemplation of God.[18]

The idea is to first identify various features that any candidate for happiness must possess, and then to argue that some particular thing is the only thing with all those features. Two features commonly, and very plausibly, thought to be essential to happiness are (a) happiness is desired for its own sake, not for the sake of something else, and (b) happiness is complete in itself and cannot be supplemented by anything else to make it more desirable.

Some of the arguments in this area are very compelling. The simple argument that happiness cannot consist in wealth because happiness is an end in itself whereas wealth is only valuable as a means to other ends seems unassailable. The argument that

happiness cannot consist in fame seems almost as persuasive: whereas the value of fame hinges upon what one is famous *for*, happiness is always of value.

Between them, Aristotle, Boethius and Aquinas consider the following candidates for happiness: wealth, material possessions, good fortune, high social standing, (political) power, pleasure, fame, the virtuous life, the life of study, participation in the Divine Life, and the contemplation of God.

Aquinas and the others would like us to go on to consider each of these candidates, and any others that should suggest themselves. There are two basic reasons why I shall not be pursuing this route here. Firstly, I am not qualified to do this: being relatively unfamiliar with the arguments of Aquinas, Aristotle and Boethius and knowing nothing of contemporary attempts to defend their argumentation on this matter. Despite this (or perhaps because of this), I am sceptical about the success of such arguments. While I might judge such arguments sound, I see little reason to think that my interlocutors would (or should) agree with this assessment.

The Experiential Route

The main lines of the experiential route will be drawn from the work of C.S. Lewis. Before we come to his work, to help us understand the approach that Lewis – and many who have offered similar arguments (before and since) – took, I shall lay out a few (pretty much) indisputable facts about desires in general. The purpose of these facts is not to generate a fully-fledged philosophical account of desires, and nor should it be. Contrary to the impression given by some philosophers, one does not need a complete philosophical account of some subject-matter in order to be justified in having certain beliefs on that matter: we could – in principle – rationally come to believe that humans have a natural desire for communion with God without being in possession of a complete philosophical account of desires. The following facts, then, are intended as facts that any good philosophical account of desires should be able to accommodate, and facts that are relevant to establishing the premise under consideration.

Fact 1: Desires (can) have Phenomenology

Our first 'pretty much indisputable fact' is that many desires have a characteristic 'feel.'[19] We might put this by saying that there is, or can be, 'something that it is like' to have a desire. It may well be, and it seems plausible to suggest, that in so far as a

desire has a phenomenology, a feel, there will be one or two important features of that phenomenology. Firstly, the feel of desires in general is different from that of other kinds of mental state, such as belief. Second, the feel of one desire-type may, and perhaps must, differ from the phenomenology of other desire-types. The practical upshot of these remarks about phenomenology is that a person can know they have a desire (and perhaps know a little about what it is a desire for) through its phenomenology, its feel, being – for want of a better phrase – present to consciousness.

Fact 2: The Satisfaction (or otherwise) of Desires

Our second fact is about the objects of desire, and arises from the fact that desires are things that can be, and can fail to be, *satisfied*. The basic point I wish to make here is that if the appropriation of some object, event or state does not satisfy a desire, then the desire was not a desire *for* that object, event or state. This point will be qualified later, but we will leave it unqualified for the time being.

There is a sense in which this point is too trivial to do very much work. It is too trivial when we take the satisfaction of a desire for something to consist in nothing more than the appropriation of that something, and infer from this that there is no way to know whether some state-of-affairs satisfies a desire without first knowing what that desire is for.

But, plausibly, we could know that some state-of-affairs fails to satisfy a particular desire even if the object of that desire is unknown. After all, just as desires sometimes have a phenomenology, a desire's satisfaction (or lack of satisfaction) may also have a phenomenology.[20] There seem to be two kinds of desire whose correlative feelings of (lack of) satisfaction arise in slightly different ways. With desires of one type, such as hunger or thirst, the phenomenology of (lack of) satisfaction results directly from the (lack of) satisfaction itself. On the other hand, with desires of the other type, like the desire to do well in an exam, the phenomenology of (lack of) satisfaction arises only when the person with the desire comes to believe (not believe or disbelieve) that the desired state-of-affairs obtains.[21] With desires of the first type, feelings of lack of satisfaction directly reveal that the desire has not been satisfied. In such a case, if we add that a certain state-of-affairs obtains, we will know that the desire was not a desire for that state-of-affairs to obtain.

If we don't know whether a desire is of the first or the second kind, then so long as the person holding the desire has a true belief that some state-of-affairs obtains, the feelings of lack of satisfaction will reveal that the desire was not a desire that that state-of-affairs obtain.

If the reader will allow me to treat desires as propositional attitudes for a moment, we may put the point less long-windedly: feelings of the lack of satisfaction despite the fact that p, and the belief that p, reveal the presence of a desire for something other than that p.

Fact 3: Desires Can (Partially) Explain Action

Our third fact is that desires can play an explanatory role: we can explain a person's actions (partly) by appeal to desires they are said to possess. If the best available explanation of someone's behaviour involves positing that he or she has a certain desire, there is reason to believe that he or she does indeed have that desire. In some cases, this may even be how we come to recognise our own desires.[22]

There are, of course, a great many other things that could be said about desires in general, but (as stated above) my aim is not to exhaust that subject or to produce a philosophical account of desires but to illuminate the argument from desire. We will make use of these three points in what follows.

Lewis has a great deal to say about the 'feel' of the (purported) desire for God. Unfortunately to communicate the feel of this desire (as is the case with many experiences) is near impossible, and so would require much more literary talent than I possess.[23] Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, something (however inadequate) must be said. Lewis often refers to the desire (and sometimes the object of the desire) as *Joy*. As this label suggests, the experience of the desire is felt to be a positive thing. Indeed, Lewis claims that no one who has once tasted Joy would "if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world." It is, he writes a desire "itself more desirable than any other satisfaction" (1955b: 20). However, Joy must still be distinguished from both happiness and pleasure: it is a desire, an "acute and even painful" one (1933: 12). Sometimes Lewis identifies, or at least closely relates, this desire with *Sehnsucht*, a sense, a 'stab,' of nostalgic longing or yearning.[24]

Joy was a desire that Lewis experienced keenly and whose satisfaction he sought in a great many places. But that satisfaction eluded him, and a puzzle arose as to the object of this desire. Looking back over his life it seemed to Lewis that

> if a man diligently followed this desire, pursuing the false objects until their falsity appeared and then resolutely abandoning them. he must come out at last into the clear knowledge that the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given – nay, cannot even be imagined as given – in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience. The Desire was, in the soul, as the Siege Perilous in Arthur's castle – the chair in which only one could sit. And if nature makes nothing in vain. the One who can sit in this chair must exist. I knew only too well how easily the longing accepts false objects and through what dark ways the pursuit of them leads us: but I also saw that the Desire itself contains the corrective of all these errors. The only fatal error was to pretend that you had passed from desire to fruition, when, in reality, you had found either nothing, or desire itself, or the satisfaction of some different desire. The dialectic of Desire, faithfully followed, would retrieve all mistakes, head you off from all false paths, and force you not to propound, but to live through, a sort of ontological proof. (1933: 15)

In other words, Lewis was aware of our second fact, was aware of the principle that if a desire is not satisfied by a certain something then it was not a desire for that something. He sought the object of his desire by a method akin to the process of elimination. Here he writes that the desire is satisfied by nothing within spatio-temporal experience. In his sermon, "The Weight of Glory" he referred to the desire as one "which no natural happiness will satisfy" (1941b: 99). The clear implication is that the desire is for something beyond the physical world. In *Mere Christianity* the point is made (more) explicit: "Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world" (1952b: 117). Lewis' remarks here echo the sentiments of Pascal, who in his *Pensées*, writes:

> All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions ... Yet for very many years no one without faith has ever reached the goal at which everyone is continually aiming. All men complain: princes, subjects, nobles, commoners, old. young, strong, weak. learned, ignorant. healthy, sick, in every country, at every time, of all ages, and all conditions. A test which has gone on so long, without pause or change, really ought to convince us that we are incapable of attaining the good by ourselves. ... This [craving, man] tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help. since the infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.
> (Pascal 1966 edn.: [#]148. 74-5)

While this reads as mere assertion without the backing of argument. Pascal is not someone we can dismiss with a shrug of the shoulders. In case the reader thinks I quote Pascal from a lack of alternative sources, I turn to some contemporary writers. In 1992 the *Forbes* magazine commemorated its seventy-fifth anniversary by inviting

eleven distinguished writers and scholars to contribute articles addressing the question "Why are we so unhappy?"[25] Even in offering the invitation, the editors of *Forbes* were agreeing with Pascal: man is unhappy. This unhappiness is all the more startling in our time when advances in medicine, in science and in technology are putting ever more material goods within our reach. Indeed, it has become something of a cliché, perhaps even a platitude, that the most materially well off are frequently the least happy. But platitudes have at least the virtue of being true. Still more startling than the question itself was the agreement in the answers. "In [this] memorable collection of articles from so diverse a group, they all agreed on one point: we are a troubled civilisation because of the loss of a moral and spiritual centre."[26]

So, Pascal's thought (and that of the contributors to *Forbes*) is that those who do not acknowledge God are unhappy, discontent. This is surely reason to believe that we do indeed desire God. According to Pascal, people attempt to satisfy this craving for God with all manner of other things, but none of these substitutes can satisfy that craving.[27]

A Missing Premise in the Experiential Route

The argument of the empirical route runs as follows: the desire for communion with God is very widespread; the best explanation of this fact is that the desire for God is a natural desire; therefore, the desire for God probably is a natural desire. Until now, I have only explained how the first of these premises is to be supported. But how might we support the second premise? In order to answer this question, we must first ask and answer another: under what circumstances would the naturalness of some feature the best explanation of that feature's being widespread? Our answer begins with another look at the definition of *natural*.

> A certain feature, F, is natural to things of kind K if, and only if, K is a natural kind and F is a feature that all normal things of kind K possess *because* they are things of that kind.

If things of kind K normally possess F simply because they are things of kind K, then one would expect things of kind K to possess F in a way that is very largely insensitive to the environment in which they find themselves. If feature F is widespread among creatures of kind K, and if all (or most) of these creatures have at sometime been in circumstances C, then it may be those circumstances and not the naturalness of F that explain why F is widespread among members of K. In such a case, we will not infer the naturalness of F as the best explanation of F's being widespread.

However, we get quite a different result if we suppose instead that members of K exhibit F in such a wide variety of situations that these situations have nothing in common (that could be reasonably thought relevant) over and above providing the conditions necessary for the very existence of members of K in those situations. On that supposition, it would seem eminently reasonable to conclude that F is indeed a natural trait. What matters, then, is not merely that a trait or feature is widespread among members of the relevant kind, but that these members exhibit F in a very wide variety of situations.

The application of these thoughts to the argument from desire is obvious. We should only infer that the desire for God is natural if humans in a sufficiently wide variety of circumstances exhibit that desire. The truth of this last claim is, of course, a matter for empirical investigation. But the claim is far from obviously false. Indeed, it seems to me that this desire is experienced by those of a religious persuasion and those of none: by those with and by those without a religious upbringing; by both men and women; by people of all historical periods; by both the healthy and the sick; by the rich and by the poor; by people of all ages, races, and cultures; and by the educated and the uneducated alike.

In support of this, I note here that a great many of even the most prominent atheists acknowledge the existence of this desire: Friedrich Nietzsche, who famously proclaimed the 'death of God,' wrote: "All desire wants eternity, wants deep, deep eternity" (Hyatt 1997: 327). Jean-Paul Sartre, whose attempts to work out a consistent atheism led speedily to existentialism and moral relativism, said, "I needed God ... I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself." Albert Camus wrote, "Nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man" (Geisler 1999: 281). Bertrand Russell, writer of *Why I am not a Christian*, said

> Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God, and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion – at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd, isn't it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet ... what is it all for? There must be something more important one feels, though I don't believe there is. (Geisler 1999: 282)

Elsewhere Russell admits that "unyielding despair" is the logical result of atheism (1903: 32). In this connection, philosopher Stephen Gaukroger writes that the need or desire for God is also "found in every continent and in every country, among millions of ordinary, educated people, and is acknowledged by all the world's major religions

and new religious movements" (1987: 14-5). Corbin Scott Carnell, a professor of English, drawing on a wide range of classic literature, persuasively argues that the desire in question "may be said to represent just as much a basic theme in literature as love" (1974: 23).

Given that even the best the material world has to offer leaves many of us deeply unhappy, that even some of the most staunch of atheists admits a desire for 'something more,' that over 90% of the world's population engage in some form of religious practise, and that the longing for transcendence is a recurring theme in both religious and secular literature it would be, at the very least, *reasonable* to posit a natural desire for something beyond this world as an explanation of these facts.

It may be that this last paragraph somewhat overstates my case. I earlier forewarned the reader that I would not be offering a full-dress defence of the premise that humans have a natural desire for communion with God, but – in accord with the aims of this chapter – would rather confine myself to making strategic remarks as to the method by which I would support this premise. Those aims were to motivate, and provide a solid foundation for, further discussion of the argument from desire. So, although the preceding argument is far from conclusive, I trust that this argument has made its proper contribution towards meeting the more modest aims of the current chapter.

The Way of the World with Natural Desires

In one the passages quoted above, Lewis made the claim that "nature makes nothing in vain,"[28] a claim clearly intended to do the work of our premise (1″). There are many ways to interpret Lewis' formula, some making it more and some less like our own. That Lewis means something close to the meaning of (1″) seems obvious from the kind of reasoning he elsewhere offered to under-gird the inference from the desire for God to God himself. In *Mere Christianity* he writes

> Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. (1952b: 118)

It is unclear whether we ought to read this as an inductive argument for (1″), as an argument from analogy, or rather as simply presenting a few illustrations of the principle at stake. As an inductive argument, it seems a weak one, though not entirely without value.[29] I would like to suggest either the second or third reading, but unless

another means of support is available, those who question (1″) are liable to remain unanswered.

A Dialectical Shuffle

While it seems to me that our premise (1″) is entirely reasonable, it would be good if we could find some other means of supporting it, or even a way of doing without it altogether, so long as we could do this without losing the argument's central idea. One such suggestion comes from other contemporary defenders of the argument. Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan, having already argued that we have an existential need for God, write

> People do expect that there are real objects of their needs ... The problem with atheism is that it admits the human need to transcend but allows no object to fulfil this need. This is an existential cruelty ... [Atheism] must assume that one of humanity's most basic needs is being completely mocked by the world, leaving people with the real need for God, but without a real God who can fulfil that need. (Geisler and Corduan 1988: 75-6)

Elsewhere, in a similar vein Geisler concludes that to deny (1″) is "to assume an irrational universe" (Geisler 1999: 279). Peter Kreeft came to a similar conclusion. Examining the argument from desire, he wrote that we might deny that all natural desires have a correlating object of desire, but that we do so "at the cost of a meaningful universe, a universe in which desires and satisfactions match" (1989a: 209). While Geisler and Corduan are talking about needs and Kreeft is taking about natural desires, they are clearly onto the same thing. Before we come to evaluate this idea, allow me to answer a possible worry in a brief aside.

The reader who fears that desire and need are radically different concepts should note that nothing is a *need* in any absolute sense. When a person claims that they need something, it is always sensible to ask *for what* that thing is needed.[30] Some things are basic needs for survival, while others may be needed for psychological health, for the fulfilment of ones purposes or indeed for anything else. Geisler and Corduan would surely admit that communion with God isn't needed in the same sense as food or water (i.e. for physical survival), and would, I guess, be amenable to the suggestion that communion with God is needed for human happiness or wholeness,[31] which brings us very much back to the notion of natural desire.[32] Kreeft, Geisler and Corduan, seem to be suggesting that we amend our argument in something like the following manner.

(1''''') Life is ultimately irrational or absurd unless it is such that, for any instantiated kind, K, and for any type of desire natural to that kind, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a creature of kind K should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.

(2.1) Humans naturally desire communion with God.

(2.2) At least one human exists.

(7) Therefore, unless God exists, life is ultimately irrational or absurd.

The argument could stop here, but has an obvious continuation in

(8) However, life is not ultimately irrational or absurd.

(9) Therefore, God must exist.

This reformulation of the argument is not wholly without anticipation in Lewis' own works, for in *Mere Christianity* he notes that the alternative to thinking that all natural desires could in principle be satisfied is thinking the universe a "fraud" (1952b: 118). I shall offer no argument for (8), but note that is far from obviously false. In any case, if (1''''') is right, we have a straight choice between God and absurdity, and that choice is hardly inconsequential. But what reason do we have to believe (1''''')?

The idea behind (1''''') is that only in an absurd or irrational world would we have natural desires that we simply cannot satisfy. This is not to say that only an irrational person could deny that all natural desires have correlating objects, it is rather to say that if natural desires did not have correlating objects, there would be something fundamentally wrong, awry, disjointed, illogical, unfair, twisted, fraudulent, or out of kilter about reality. We should also note that this absurdity is plausibly *kind relative*: the ultimate irrationality or absurdity of life is relative to the particular kind of creature whose natural desires cannot be satisfied. That *humans* naturally possess a desire that the world cannot satisfy does not render *non-human* life absurd. We could therefore replace (1''''') with (1'''''').

(1'''''') Human life is ultimately irrational or absurd unless it is such that, *for any type of desire natural to humans, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a human should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.*

We shall refer to the italicised portion of (1'''''') as *PHM*, the truth of which is, I claim, a *prerequisite for human meaning*. Now, if PHM is false, then a (normal) human is not so like a fish out of water as a fish in a world without water, for on that assumption each of the following roughly equivalent statements must be true.

(a) There is an inevitable conflict between the value that humans place on something and the value that the world places on it.

(b) There is an inevitable conflict between the way the world is, and the way it would have to be for a 'fully human' life to be appropriate.

(c) There is an inevitable dissonance between the way the world is and the features of a human life that make it, precisely, human.[33]

Any of these could be taken as a definition of what it means to say that human life is absurd. Put another way, if PHM is not true, reality has 'set us up' either for living under an illusion or for being disillusioned. This is because if PHM is not true, then there is some natural desire that the world just cannot satisfy and about which we are therefore doomed to live either ...

(i) under the illusion that fulfilment in this life is possible,[34] or

(ii) with the disillusionment that comes from thinking that fulfilment is impossible.

We hardly need say that many people are indeed disillusioned or living under illusions and that this on its own does not make life absurd. However, life would be absurd if reality had 'set us up' to be in this condition. Surely, if we have a natural desire for communion with a God who does not exist, if in the usual course of events humans have a desire that just cannot be satisfied, that is exactly what has happened. It seems that we may, therefore, replace (1″) with (1‴″) and run our argument accordingly.

One possible objection must be addressed at this point. It may be thought that this line of argument only serves to support (7′) and not (7″), and that whereas (7″) constitutes a genuine dilemma for the atheist, (7′) does not.

(7′) Unless God exists, human life is to some extent irrational or absurd.

(7″) Unless God exists, human life is ultimately irrational or absurd.

To establish the latter, we must show not merely that humans possess some natural desire, but that this desire is in some way *central* to human life. Going back to (a), (b) and (c), the idea here is that the conflict or dissonance in question comes in degrees,[35] and that only a sufficiently large degree of conflict or dissonance would yield the kind of absurdity referred to in (7″). If the desire for communion with God is not merely natural to humans but central to human life, then the argument will go through. But this last claim (about the centrality of the desire for God) is surely a plausible one. Firstly, we can appeal to the desire's phenomenology. It is, according to Lewis, a desire itself "more desirable than any other satisfaction." Furthermore, it seems axiomatic that religious matters are either of no importance or of fundamental importance. However, if the argument for (7′) is valid, then the first option seems

unavailable and we are forced to accept the second, which itself supports the move from (7') to (7"). Moreover, if a fully fledged argument for

(2.1) Humans naturally desire communion with God

could be produced via the metaphysical route, this would also be sufficient to ground (7"). After all, if happiness is the end at which all actions aim, and is the highest good of which humans are capable, and if that happiness must consist in communion with God, then there is no doubting the centrality of this desire. In summary, it seems to me that the desire is not one that can be dismissed as peripheral to human life, but that if it exists at all, must in fact be central in just the manner required for the truth of (7").[36]

Some Objections

In this section I shall outline, and attempt to rebut a number of pressing objections to the argument set out above. Several of these objections come from John Beversluis, whose *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) is one of the few sustained philosophical evaluations of Lewis' work. To see the relevance of the objections it will be helpful to have the argument before us. Before restating its premises, I shall put a first preliminary objection that prompts a revision of the argument.

The objection is that the evidence, which is intended to support the premise that we have a natural desire for God, only supports the weaker claim that we have a natural desire for something beyond the natural realm. The reader who looks back over that evidence, will see that the objection is very much to the point and that there can therefore be no reply without further evidence.[37] Being unsure to what further evidence we could appeal, we shall grant the objection's point and revise our argument accordingly. The two versions of our argument become as follows.

Version One
 (1") For any instantiated kind, K, and for any type of desire natural to that kind, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a creature of kind K should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.
 (2.1') Humans naturally desire communion with something beyond the physical.
 (2.2) At least one human exists.
 (3') Therefore, there exists something beyond this physical realm.[38]

Version Two

    (1*) Human life is ultimately irrational or absurd unless it is such that, for any type of natural desire *central to human life*, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a human should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.

    (2.1″) Central to human life is the natural desire for communion with something beyond the physical realm.

    (7″) Therefore, human life is ultimately irrational or absurd unless there exists something beyond this physical realm.

Again with the obvious continuation in

    (8′) However, human life is not ultimately irrational or absurd.

    (9′) Therefore, there exists something beyond this physical realm.

Objection 1: The Argument Begs the Question

According to John Beversluis, the argument from desire begs the question; it assumes what it attempts to prove. Referring to the desire in question as "Joy," he writes the following.

> How could Lewis have known that every natural desire has a real object *before* knowing that Joy has one? I can legitimately claim that every student in the class has failed the test only if I first know that each of them has individually failed it. The same is true of natural desires. (1985: 19)

There are three important features to this objection. Firstly, the objection only applies to version one of our argument. Secondly, even applied to just version one, it ignores the fact that generalisations can be reached inductively. Thirdly, as I shall demonstrate, the objection is not merely an objection to this argument but to all logically valid arguments.

The objection under consideration has it that the argument from desire begs the question by illicitly assuming what it attempts to prove, namely that the natural desire for God has, to use Beversluis' phrase, a "real object". This assumption is alleged to creep in when the argument claims that all natural desires have real objects. If we assert that we have a natural desire for God, then we must admit that all natural desires have real objects only if the desire for God also has a real object. The truth of our conclusion is therefore a logically necessary condition of the truth of our premises. But this claim entails and is entailed by the assertion that the truth of the argument's premises are logically sufficient for the truth of its conclusion. In other words, the claim entails and is entailed by the assertion that the argument from desire is logically

valid. For this reason, Beversluis' objection could equally be raised against all logically valid arguments. This reduces Beversluis' objection to the following argument:

(10) All logically valid arguments beg the question
(11) The argument from desire is logically valid
(12) Therefore, the argument from desire begs the question

Unless this argument is compelling, Beversluis' objection fails. But we can immediately tell that this argument is either unsound or question begging.[39] The only way to save Beversluis' objection is to free it from its reliance upon (10). To do that he must offer us some way of distinguishing between those valid arguments which beg the question and those which do not. Unfortunately, he has offered us nothing of the sort.

Objection 2: Some Natural Desires Remain Unsatisfied

As Beversluis notes (1985: 18), Bertrand Russell once observed, "The fact I feel a *need* for something more than human is no evidence that the need can be satisfied, any more than hunger is evidence that I shall get food" (Russell 1945: 29). But hunger is evidently a natural desire. This simple observation is, therefore, supposed to show that Lewis' argument will not work. Unfortunately, the objection is entirely beside the point. Lewis responds to exactly this line of thinking.

> A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. (Lewis 1941b: 99)

To this, Beversluis responds that the analogy cannot do the work Lewis requires of it. He claims

> The phenomenon of hunger simply does not prove that man inhabits a world in which food exists ... What proves that we inhabit a world in which food exists is the discovery that certain things are in fact "eatable" and that they nourish our bodies. The discovery of the existence of food comes not by way of an inference based on the inner state of hunger; it is, rather, an empirical discovery. ... The desire in and of itself proves nothing.
> (Beversluis 1985: 18-9)

Again, Beversluis's comments are only pertinent to version one of our argument, and again, even there, the objection is weak. He claims that the desire in itself proves nothing. Although the exact wording of the quote from Lewis suggests otherwise, we

can agree with that. It is only when we add the premise that all natural desires have a correlating object of desire that anything is really proved. We may reject that extra premise, but to make that rejection rational we must either show that we have insufficient reason to believe the premise or positive reason to disbelieve it. Again, Beversluis has given us neither.

Objection 3: Couldn't the Desire be for Mere Belief?

When giving a presentation on the argument from desire some years ago, someone asked whether the argument's conclusion should not be that there is such a thing as *belief* in something beyond nature, rather than that something exists which would make such belief true. My immediate reaction was that the argument as it stood was valid and that this suggested emendation would, in fact, render the argument invalid. However, perhaps this person had something else in mind. They might have been thinking that the evidence for our having a natural desire for something transcendent could be accommodated by the hypothesis that we have a natural desire for *belief* in a transcendent something, and that as a result we have insufficient evidence for (2.1').

Two responses are available to this objection. Firstly, it seems, to me at least, implausible to suggest we have this desire. After all, it is not by merely having a certain set of beliefs that one quiets this inner longing. Many people have had (what are in this context) all the right beliefs but still been haunted by a sense of emptiness. It is not believing in, but being rightly related to, spiritual reality that brings satisfaction. A second response is also available. Suppose we do not have a natural desire for something beyond this world, suppose we only have a natural desire for belief in such things. If we accept this but also hold that there is nothing in reality to make this belief true, wouldn't this just be another way to render the world irrational or absurd? If in the usual course of events nature giving us desires for things that do not exist makes the world irrational, surely the same follows if nature gives us desires to *believe* in things that do not exist. Therefore, even if we ignore our first defence, this objection only finishes version one of the argument from desire, and suggests the following reworking for the second.

> (1*) Human life is ultimately irrational or absurd unless it is such that, for any type of natural desire central to human life, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a human should (at some time) have a satisfied desire of that type.

(1**) Human life is also ultimately irrational or absurd unless it is such that, for any type of natural desire central to human life, where the desire is for some type of belief, it is consistent with the way the world is (or was at an earlier time) that a human should (at some time) have a true belief of that type.[40]

(2.1''') Central to human life is either a natural desire for communion with something beyond the physical realm or a natural desire to believe in something beyond this physical realm.

(7'') Therefore, human life is ultimately irrational or absurd unless there exists something beyond this physical realm.

Again with the obvious continuation in

(8') However, human life is not ultimately irrational or absurd.

(9') Therefore, there exists something beyond this physical realm.

Objection 4: The Influence of Worldview Considerations

Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned that Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan formulate the argument not in terms of natural desire but in terms of existential need. The mention of needs, by suggesting the idea of things needed for survival, motivates the following objection. Suppose a person accepts an atheistic and evolutionary worldview. This worldview may have a deep influence on how they evaluate the argument's premises. Such a person may reason thus:

We can (and perhaps must) understand how a creature acquires its natural traits in evolutionary terms. Evolution will encourage those traits that are an aid to survival and reproduction. If the possession of a particular desire would be an aid to these, then evolution will favour it. In this manner the trait will become one prevalent in, and perhaps therefore natural to, the descendants of creatures in which it arose. But many desires would not be at all useful to survival or reproduction unless they are desires for things that can really be obtained. For want of a better example, in an environment that contains lakes or is near to the sea the desire to go swimming might (for some reason) confer an evolutionary advantage. But in an environment void of such expanses of water, the desire might only encourage a fruitless search for places to swim, which would be a waste of time and energy and would therefore be no aid to survival or reproduction. In this way, we come to see why it is that so many natural desires have correlating objects, but we do so in a way that need not require that they *all* do. Suppose a desire for communion with God (or for proper relationship with extra-physical realities) does confer an evolutionary edge, why would its doing so require the existence of God (or other extra-physical beings)?

This objection is probably the most sophisticated of those we have so far considered. It should be noted, however, that the objection is motivated by the internal logic of an atheistic evolutionary view. While the atheist appears compelled to accept evolution, the evolutionist need not be an atheist and so needn't see the evolutionary story as 'the whole story,' which is precisely what this objection seems to require. What, then, if the argument from desire is directed not towards the committed atheist but rather towards the inquiring agnostic? In such a case, while the objection may lessen the person's confidence in the premises it need not undermine that confidence altogether.

Furthermore, it would seem that the objection is most effective against, and perhaps only effective against, version one of the argument. Nothing in the evolutionary position described above suggests that we couldn't have a natural desire for communion with God, and perhaps elements of the Freudian story outlined in the previous chapter, or of other similar stories, could help explain why such desires may be 'selected for.' So the objection really amounts to saying that an atheistic and evolutionary worldview gives us a good way to make sense of the fact that so many natural desires have real 'correlating objects' but without admitting that they all do. In other words, the objection offers a way of motivating the denial of (1″). However, version two of the argument does not depend upon this premise, and is therefore wholly untouched by this objection. Rather than helping the atheist avoid the conclusion that the world is ultimately irrational, this objection simply offers us a way of understanding how it is that the world came to be so absurd.

Objection 5: The Object of Desire and the Satisfaction

Perhaps Beversluis' most forceful objection is that from the fact that a desire is not 'ultimately satisfied' by some object, event or state it does not follow that the desire was not a desire for that object, event or state. Beversluis writes

> The claim *anything that does not ultimately satisfy us cannot be what we really wanted* may sound plausible when stated in so general a way, but it cannot survive the test of concrete examples. Would anyone seriously want to argue that the fact that Sam is hungry again four hours after breakfast proves that it is not food that he really wanted? Or the fact that Jill is tired by 10:00 A.M. proves that it was not sleep that she wanted? How, then, can such a conclusion follow in the case of our experiences of Joy? Why say that the failure of [say] music or poetry to satisfy us fully proves that they are not really what we want? (1985: 16)

Unlike the previous two, this objection applies to both versions of our argument. It attempts to show that our lack of satisfaction with material goods offers no support for

the conclusion that we desire something non-material. While there were other lines of support for the relevant premise, it would be a severe blow to the argument to concede this objection's point. Beversluis' examples clearly undermine the general principle *all desires will permanently remain satisfied if their proper object is even once appropriated.* We must ask, however, whether the argument, or the evidence for its premises, depends upon that claim. It is far from obvious that it does.

Robert Holyer suggests an interesting response to this objection. According to Holyer (1988a), we can accommodate Beversluis's basic point while still defending something sufficiently close to the principle he denies. Holyer's idea is that we can defend the argument from desire even while admitting the following two points: (i) Beversluis is right in saying that to be satisfied a desire needn't be permanently satisfied, and (ii) Beversluis is also right in saying things other than God do sometimes temporarily satisfy the desire in question. This is possible, according to Holyer, because even if we grant these points we can still hold that the length of time for which some appropriated object satisfies a desire is (sometimes) pertinent to the question of what that desire is a desire for. If a generally well-nourished person finds themselves 'wanting to eat' only shortly after a (fair-sized) meal it is questionable whether this 'wanting' is really hunger. Generally, we might argue that if a person finds himself or herself with an unsatisfied desire only shortly after some experience, it is questionable whether this desire is a desire to repeat that experience. To complete the response it needs only to be added that this principle is capable of doing all that could have been done by the one rightly rejected by Beversluis. However, the revised principle is problematic, not least because "shortly" is terribly vague.[41] Being unsure whether this response to Beversluis will succeed, I turn to my preferred response.

Advocates of this preferred response claim that although some desires are temporarily and to some degree satisfied by music or poetry, these things do not even temporarily satisfy the desire in which we are interested. It seems to me that Beversluis' objection is motivated by an over-simplified view of what it means for a desire to be satisfied. To satisfy a desire is not necessarily to remove it, and to remove a desire is not necessarily to satisfy it. Furthermore, we can also cease to be conscious of a desire without ceasing to possess that desire. Consider the following examples.

Anita is very tired and wants to go to sleep. Needing to complete an assignment, she takes a couple of caffeine tablets to help her stay awake. In this situation, Anita's desire to sleep may be temporarily removed, but it is surely not temporarily satisfied.

Bobby is a committed husband who wants his marriage to be a happy one. If his marriage is indeed a happy one, then the desire is satisfied, but is not – on that account – removed.

Charlotte wants to start a family with her partner, Derek. However, because of their financial situation they have decided it would be best to wait. Charlotte is more conscious of her desire at some times than at others. But even when she is not conscious of the desire at all, it is still there; it has been neither removed nor satisfied.

Now the defender of the argument from desire will say that Beversluis is right in claiming that we are sometimes temporarily unaware of the desire that we are interested in. But this does not imply that the desire has been temporarily satisfied. Poetry and music (or whatever else) may distract us from the relevant desire, but they do not satisfy it. Indeed, this seems to be exactly what Pascal thought: he had much to say about diversion.[42] I think this was also Lewis' position. He states, for instance, that the satisfaction offered by sexual pleasures is entirely irrelevant to the desire in question. According to his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, the subsequent reflections of someone given sexual satisfactions when experiencing the desire with which we are concerned could be expressed thus: "Quite. I see. But have we not wandered from the real point?" (1955b: 137-8).

The distinction between satisfying a desire and distracting ourselves from it is an intuitive one. When we distract ourselves from something we cease to be conscious of that something because we have filled our consciousness, or because our consciousness is filled, with something else. We may then cease to be conscious of the desire we are interested in, not because it has been satisfied but, for example, because other desires have (and we are conscious of this satisfaction).

With the satisfaction/distraction distinction in hand, we could point out the class of things that might satisfy a desire is considerably more unified that the class of things that might distract us from that desire. Almost any activity might distract, but only few will satisfy. This being the case, the defender of the argument from desire need only point out the disparate nature of the things with which people 'satisfy' the desire in question. Alternatively, he could claim that if the desire in which Beversluis is interested is temporarily satisfied by music and poetry, then that merely goes to show that Beversluis is not talking about the desire in which the defender of the argument is interested.[43]

Objection 6: Isn't a Parallel Argument for Atheism Possible?

In the previous chapter, we noted that one weakness of Freud's critique, as an argument against theism was that an exactly parallel and equally plausible argument could be offered against atheism. Freud argued that religious belief has its origin in wish-fulfilment. We argued that wish-fulfilment and/or the defective father hypothesis could provide a similar account of atheistic belief. Here the objection to the argument from desire is that we might replace the hypothesis of a natural desire for God or the existence of something beyond nature with that of a desire for (something requiring) the non-existence of God. Perhaps we might think of this as a natural desire for autonomy.

While the argument would indeed be logically parallel to the one defended here, it does not follow that it would be equally plausible. Firstly, there is a problem about just how autonomy is to be understood, and whether autonomy requires the non-existence of God. If autonomy consisted in mere lack of interference then since theism does not entail such interference, the argument would therefore fail. Perhaps there is some other way of understanding this alleged desire which would ensure that the argument was valid[44] – though I have to say that I can't see anything very promising, especially when we keep in mind that even if some people do possess this desire – it wouldn't follow that the desire is a natural one. This, just as in the case of the desire for God, requires additional evidence. But as far as I can tell this additional evidence simply isn't there. The claim can be made, but (as far as I am aware) it cannot be substantiated. Further, and perhaps most significantly, in the case of a desire for God there is a natural background theory which would make good sense of the desire for God. Augustine said it best, "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."[45] In the case of naturalism or atheism, we search for such a background theory in vain.[46] Atheism could make sense of there being no natural desire for God, but a natural desire for autonomy is a different matter altogether. It would seem to be like a natural fear of drowning in a world void of the liquids in which drowning is possible.

I shall not pretend that there are no other possible objections to the argument, there are several.[47] But those dealt with here are those that either seem especially pressing, or have not been addressed by other writers. None of the objections considered here has revealed an insurmountable problem with the argument. Each could be countered or accommodated, in either case the essentials of the argument remaining intact.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the foregoing discussion is not intended as a watertight defence of the argument from desire. My aim has been to encourage further discussion of this engaging and yet little noticed theistic argument. This project began with an outline of the argument from desire. After defining the argument's key terms and demonstrating the validity of the argument, I then went on to explain the kind of considerations that might motivate the argument's premises. The argument was modified in response to several objections, none of which finally succeeded in undermining the argument's central thrust.

At the end of this discussion, only one premise remained without any kind of evidential support; the argument as I have set it out has a built in escape route, but an expensive one. Peter Kreeft puts it well:

> Of course, one who wants to refuse to admit the conclusion at all costs will deny the premise – at the cost of a meaningful universe, a universe in which desires and satisfactions match. In other words, God can be avoided. All we need to do is embrace the 'vanity of vanities' instead. It is a fool's bargain, of course: everything is exchanged for nothing – a trade [that no-one should be] fool enough to make. (1989a: 209-10)

I strongly suspect that how any individual reader responds to the argument will chiefly depend upon the extent to which they are themselves aware of an inner ache that cannot be silenced by anything this world has to offer. Even those aware of such a desire within them may question the argument built upon it, but the argument may still have done some significant work. If we are hungry, we will listen to a man who claims to know where we can find food. The philosopher or apologist who employs the argument from desire would surely be happy, if, after considering this argument, someone really began to listen to those who claim to have found (or been found by) the One who can satisfy their deepest inner longings.[48]

Chapter 7
Conclusion

The regenerate science which I have in mind would not do even to minerals and vegetables what modern science threatens to do to man himself. When it explained it would not explain away. When it spoke of the parts it would remember the whole. While studying the *It* it would not lose what Martin Buber calls the *Thou*-situation. ... Its followers would not be free with the words *only* and *merely*. (Lewis 1943a: 47)

"In our world," said Eustace, "a star is a huge ball of flaming gas."
"Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of."

(Lewis 1952c: 353)

ALTHOUGH C. S. LEWIS POSSESSED a profound vision of Christianity, this vision was not primarily intellectual. Nor are Lewis' various arguments the expression of some overarching rational system, for Lewis had no such system. Nevertheless, there are some general unifying themes in Lewis' philosophical and apologetic work. The most obvious of these is the relation to Christian belief, and this factor will be explored briefly. The main aim here, however, is to reveal a philosophic theme which is present not only in Lewis' approach to each of the topics addressed in this dissertation, but also in his approach to several issues that I have not addressed here. That theme is Lewis' opposition to various forms of what we might label 'reductionism'.

After exploring the notion of reductionism in its relation to all things Lewisian, I also go on to show how the topics addressed in this dissertation are, in a fashion, representative of many of Lewis' wider concerns. We begin, then, with a brief discussion of the relationship between Lewis' philosophical writings and his defence of Christian belief.

C.S. Lewis as Champion of Orthodoxy

Believing that the public discussion of interdenominational controversies does more harm than good, Lewis set himself to defend 'Mere Christianity'.[1] This Lewis defined as the set of beliefs "that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times." (1952b: 6). Far from being a watered down and insipid version of the real thing, this

essential core of Christian doctrine is something "positive. self-consistent and inexhaustible" (Lewis 1944c: 32). This comes out most obviously in *Mere Christianity* (1952b) itself, in which Lewis seeks to defend, among other things, the Atonement, the Trinity, and – using the Trilemma – central elements of orthodox Christology.

Since Christianity claims to be true in a universal and non-relative sense, an essential element in any defence of Christian orthodoxy is the rejection of moral and conceptual relativism. In *The Abolition of Man* (1943a) and in such essays as "The Poison of Subjectivism" (1943b) and *"De Futilitate"* (1967a) Lewis launches an uncompromising attack on conceptual relativism. *Mere Christianity* opens with an attack on moral relativism and then a version of the moral argument for the existence of God. But for Lewis this was not just an exercise in rational apologetics, it was also an attempt to awaken a sense of sin, so essential to understanding and receiving the Christian message.

> Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need any forgiveness. (1952b: 37)

The argument from desire, which we examined in Chapter 6, also makes an appearance in *Mere Christianity*. But the argument is not merely an exercise in natural theology, it is also an attempt to excite a desire and hope for heaven. Similar themes are present in *The Problem of Pain* (1940a). This affective side of Lewis' work ties in neatly with his concept of faith, and his general approach to the faith/reason interface, both of which are explored in Appendix B.

Elsewhere we find Lewis using his skills as a literary critic to defend the historicity of the Gospel accounts against the attacks of 'Modern Biblical Critics' (1959b). He was particularly critical of the liberal theologians' attempt to 'demythologise' Christianity by purging it of its miraculous elements:

> One is very often asked at present whether we could not have a Christianity stripped [of] ... its miraculous elements ... [Y]ou cannot possibly do that with Christianity, because the Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle, the Christian assertion being that what is beyond all space and time, what is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe, and rose again, bringing nature up with Him. It is precisely one great miracle. If you take that away there is nothing specifically Christian left. (1945b: 3)

As this quote indicates, Lewis placed particular emphasis on the Incarnation, calling it "The Grand Miracle," and identifying it as the central episode of history. Lewis also defended the sacraments, especially Holy Communion, as real means of God's grace

(and not merely symbolic) by arguing that they, like the most basic forms of causation, have an "objective efficacy which cannot be further analysed" (1964b: 100).

As this discussion illustrates, many of Lewis' arguments – even those that could easily be categorised as natural theology – were not offered to support a generic theism but rather to defend distinctively Christian doctrines.

Much of Lewis' lasting appeal must be credited to his concern to defend these core Christian beliefs. While theological fashions have come and gone, orthodox Christianity remains very much alive, and is still worthy of serious thought and discussion. In Lewis' words: "all that is not eternal is eternally out of date" (1960a: 125)

But what does it mean to say that Lewis' *defended* mere Christianity? Who did he defended it to, and what did he defend it against? To defend a doctrine is both to support it with arguments and to rebut the charges against it. Lewis did both. But who did he expect to persuade? Did Lewis give non-believers good reasons to convert to Christianity, or did he merely reassure believers by showing that the arguments of non-Christians do not give Christians any reason to surrender their beliefs? Whether we can sensibly judge Lewis' work a 'success' is in large part determined by the answers to these questions.

Lewis' basic approach was, I believe, to spread his net as widely as possible. He did seek to provide ration reassurance for the believer and, on the whole, Lewis seems to have done this well. But Lewis also addressed the dissenter – and with some success. Although we cannot hope to quantify the conversions that resulted directly or indirectly from his work, his writings have been important in many peoples' journey to faith. Better known among the conversions in which Lewis' writing played a role are those of Charles Colson, former Special Council to Richard M. Nixon; C.E.M. Joad, a professor of philosophy at the University of London; and Joy Davidman Gresham, who would later become Lewis' wife. Joad's conversion notwithstanding, we should remember that Lewis was not an academic philosopher and did not write for academics. While his arguments may provide food for thought, Lewis does not answer all the questions that a trained philosopher might want to ask. (It would be rather surprising if he did.) For such readers, Lewis' arguments are an invitation to further thought. In this dissertation, I have argued that such further thought vindicates Lewis' basic position on at least some of the issues he addresses. I see no reason to suppose he will not be vindicated elsewhere too.

Explaining and Explaining Away

So C.S. Lewis' apologetic and philosophical works are unified by the fact that they all attempt some sort of defence of the Christian worldview. This claim is too simple for our purposes here. It would be true of almost any Christian apologist or philosopher, and it gives us no further insight into the specific arguments that C.S. Lewis marshalled in favour of Christianity.

My own view is that much – though admittedly not all – of Lewis' philosophical and apologetic work can be seen as attacking or resisting various preferred explanatory schemes, commitment to which would require one to explain away 'facts' that are either logically undeniable, well evidenced, or at least merit our consideration. Indeed, I claim that this approach can be found both in Lewis' treatment of each of the topics addressed in this dissertation and also in his treatment of several topics besides these. These claims invite two obvious questions: (1) *What do we mean by a "preferred explanatory scheme"?* and (2) *In what way does commitment to such a scheme lead us to explain away these 'facts'?* The explanatory schemes that I see Lewis as resisting may be called *reductionist*, a term that I define as follows.

> (R) Reductionism about a domain claims that facts in that domain may be 'reduced to' – that is *construed to be* – facts within an apparently different, more basic, domain or domains.[2]

The philosophical issues surrounding reductionism (and the related concept of supervenience) are notoriously complex, and we will not be getting to the bottom of them here. Nevertheless, the following account of reductionism and related matters should be adequate for our purposes here. Although my focus will be on reduction as defined above, the reader should note that on this definition reductionism is compatible with at least some versions of supervenience. Indeed, it is compatible with the forms of supervenience that I find most plausible, according to which "upper-level properties [and facts] are really nothing but lower-level ones differently described" (Blackburn 1998: 235).

Reductionism, then, may be applied either locally to a single domain or, at the other end of the spectrum, endorsed on a worldview level and applied to reality as a whole. We may distinguish, then, between global and local reductionism Examples of local and global reductionisms are (R_1) and (R_2).

(R₁) All mental items can be reduced to non-mental items.
(R₂) All apparently non-physical states and events can be reduced to physical states and events.

The claims (R_1) and (R_2) are implications of metaphysical naturalism, which is essentially a form of global reductionism. But there are other forms of global reductionism. The obvious example is idealism, which may be described as the view which reduces all other facts to mental facts, so claiming that the physical world exists only as an appearance to or an expression of some mind or minds.

Those who advocate varieties of reductionism may have any combination of the following aims: (i) ontological or conceptual economy; (ii) legitimisation of facts in the 'reduced' domain; (iii) consistency with some favoured theory. The benefit of the third of these should be obvious, we explore the first and second briefly.

Ontological and conceptual economy are normally taken to be virtues in any philosophical and/or scientific account of things. Reductionism contributes to such economy by showing that one domain is identical to or is a subset of some seemingly different domain. The reduced domain need no longer be countenanced over and above the reducing domain.

Many philosophers and scientists find certain kinds of fact more problematic than others, normally because they do not sit well within their own worldview. Take modal facts as an example. We would like to have some account of modal facts that makes them seem less mysterious; that gives us some idea of how we come to know such facts, and how such facts relate to other more ordinary facts. Absent such an account, the continuing mystery might tempt us to reject modal facts as a mere fiction. Accordingly, we may legitimate modal facts by reducing them to non-modal facts, so removing the impulse to treat them as a fiction.

To relate reductionism to explaining away, we must first give some account of what it is to explain away. To explain something away is simply to offer an account of something which is incompatible with understanding that thing in a particular way, normally a way that is natural or common. To explain away fairies is not to give a special, rather negative, account of fairies, but to propound a view of the world that has no room for such creatures. On the other hand, to explain away *belief* in fairies is not to give an account of the world according to which there are no such beliefs, but to explain the beliefs in a manner incompatible with endorsing them oneself.

But before we examine the ways in which reductionism and explaining away are related, it will be well to explore a particular way in which they are not, or should not be, related. Suppose, for example, that someone offers the following local reduction:

(R₃) The quality of a football team is reducible to the skill and fitness of its individual players.

The claim, as formulated, is almost certainly false, but it would be no great surprise if something quite like it were true. Now, someone who asserts (R₃) is therein asserting that there is no need to countenance the existence of good (or bad) football teams over and above the existence of good (or bad) football players. But they should not, on that account, be taken as asserting that there is no such thing as a good football team. They should not, simply on account of advocating (R₃), be taken as *explaining away* the brilliance of say Barcelona (or anyone else) as a football team. The person who advances (R₃) is advocating a claim about what being a good football team consists in, and is not attempting to do away with the idea of good football teams altogether. However, someone who endorses (R₃) will typically think that there is a sense in which all talk of 'good football teams' is strictly redundant. Anything we could explain by saying that a football team is a good one could equally be explained by the fitness and skill of the individual players. If these were the only grounds on which to decide the matter, it would seem a mere matter of taste as to whether or not we say there are such things as good football teams. But note, the matter is not decided simply by noting the truth of something like (R₃).

Despite this, it should be clear that all forms of reductionism will quite inevitably result in explaining away. After all, it seems plain that for any given reductionism there will be many alleged facts that will resist reduction in the proposed terms, and any alleged fact that resists accepted modes of reduction will be a prime candidate for elimination, for explaining away. Another response to such recalcitrance would be to be expand our reductive base, but this will have its costs in terms of ontological or conceptual economy. So, in deciding whether to accept some form of reduction one of the key issues will be finding an appropriate balance between the two desiderata of economy and explanatory adequacy. And in general, it seems that the better evidenced some phenomenon, the more we should be willing to sacrifice in terms of economy in order to accommodate that phenomenon.

Eliminative materialism provides a particularly striking example of explaining away resulting from a commitment to (a form of) reductionism. This variety of reductionism claims that for reduction to be possible, there must be a relevant isomorphism between the reduced and the reducing domains; whether a new theory reduces or eliminates an old one is a matter of how well the categories of the new theory 'match up' with those of the old. And of course this is a matter of degree, with pure elimination and pure reduction being at opposite ends of the spectrum. Now according to eliminative materialism, such concepts as *belief*, *desire* and *intention* belong to a 'radically false' theoretical framework; there are no such things as beliefs and desires. The main argument for eliminativism is that a thorough-going scientific view of the mental will fail to vindicate these concepts; explanations of human behaviour in terms of belief and desire are (or will be) so structurally different from explanations in the vocabulary of this imagined mature neuroscience that it will be impossible to reduce the former to the latter. (Churchland 1985). We shall not be evaluating this argument here; it is introduced merely as an illustration of how a reductive stance can lead to elimination ... or in other words, to explaining away.[3]

The example highlights an important issue. If explanations of two different forms can be given for all facts in a certain domain, and if these explanations are consistent with one another, then either the facts of that domain are systematically over-determined or the items invoked in one of the explanations are reducible to the items invoked in the other (or again the items of both explanations are reducible to a those of a third). Since systematic over-determination seems implausible at best, in such a situation we would be required to affirm the possibility of some such reduction. And if the reduction is not possible, and yet we wish to endorse some relevant form of reductionism, we must reject as false the explanations which appeal to items that cannot be reduced to those in our proposed reduction base. Such a reductionism would therefore explain away these rejected forms of explanation.

We may come at the issue from another direction, noting a certain implication of global forms of reductionism. Global reductionism carries with it a commitment to what we might call *explanatory monism* or *restrictivism*. No state or event can explain any other unless that state or event obtains. And if nothing exists over and above the items of the proposed (global) reduction base, then nothing can play any explanatory role that does not appear in that reduction base or is not reducible to something that does. It clearly follows that all forms of global reductionism are committed to

repudiating any forms of explanation which require us to countenance the existence of something 'over and above' the items in our reduction base.

Application within the Dissertation

It discussing how the issues addressed in this dissertation connect with the concepts of reductionism and explaining away, it will be useful to have before us the definition of Naturalism, one of the reductive worldviews that Lewis found so problematic. Naturalism may be roughly defined as holding that nature is all that exists. Making use of the above discussion of reductionism, Naturalism may be more precisely defined as a global reductionism whose reduction base includes only impersonal, non-purposive, non-mental items embedded within the spatio-temporal framework of 'this world'.

Chapters 3 and 4 focussed upon C.S. Lewis' discussion of the philosophical status of miracles. It should be immediately clear that Naturalism is inconsistent with the occurrence of miracles as defined in Chapter 3. The argument for this conclusion could be elaborated by bringing in the whole machinery of reductionism and explaining away as introduced above, but to do so would be overkill, the thing is obvious. A miracle, you recall, is (at least) an event that would not have occurred had nature been left to itself. But if nature is all that exists, then nature must be left to itself. It immediately follows that adherents of Naturalism must either explain away the miraculous or give up their Naturalism.

While not wishing to get embroiled in the debate for a second time, perhaps Lewis' most philosophically significant remarks in this context were these:

> The ordinary procedure of the modern historian, even if he admits the possibility of miracle, is to admit no particular instance of it until every possibility of "natural" explanation has been tried and failed. That is, he will accept the most improbable "natural" explanations rather than say that a miracle has occurred. Collective hallucination, hypnotism of consenting spectators, widespread instantaneous conspiracy in lying by persons not otherwise known to be liars and not likely to gain by the lie – all these are known to be very improbable events: so improbable that, except for the special purpose of excluding a miracle, they are never suggested. But they are preferred to the admission of a miracle. Such a procedure is, from the purely historical point of view, sheer midsummer madness unless we start by knowing that any Miracle whatever is more improbable than the most improbable natural event. (1960b: 105)

Drawing on our earlier remarks, we may Lewis' point another way. We noted above that in deciding whether to adopt some form of reductionism one of the more important issues is the balancing of the criteria of economy and explanatory adequacy, and that the better evidenced some phenomenon the more we should be willing to give

up in terms of economy in order to accommodate that phenomenon. The principle clearly applies here. Contrary to Hume, if the evidence for a miracle continues to accumulate, it must at some point become unreasonable to persist in explaining that evidence away.

On Naturalistic principles, if religious belief has any explanation at all, it has a naturalistically acceptable explanation. Such an explanation was offered by Freud. The critique of religious belief based upon that explanation was examined in Chapter 5. After showing that there is good reason to doubt the truth of this explanation, we went on to show that even if the Freudian explanation of religious belief is correct, nothing whatever follows about the epistemic status of religion. It is only when interpreted within the framework of Naturalism that that explanation will discredit religious belief. The fundamental failing of the Freudian critique, which seeks to explain (away) religious belief as wish-fulfilment, is that it commits the genetic fallacy by failing to consider the possibility that "the common human longing for the Transcendent may reflect [the fact] that we have been divinely designed for such longing" (Copan and Moser 2003: 5). The Naturalist's view excludes such a possibility through its rejection of the supernatural and its inherent commitment to explanatory restrictivism. It would appear, then, that only a prior commitment to the reductive view would allow us move from *explaining* religious belief in Freudian terms to *explaining it away*. But since it is just such a commitment that the Freudian critique is arguing for, the argument begs the question. Alternatively, if Naturalism is well supported by evidence independent of the Freudian critique, that critique becomes superfluous.

In Chapter 6 we set out to explore the very possibility that the Freudian critique had overlooked. While Freud claimed that its root in the desire for God discredits religious belief, Lewis argued that the desire for God might be an indication of God's real existence. According to Lewis' argument from desire, since humans have a natural desire for communion with God, and reality is such that natural desires can always be satisfied, God must exist. This desire for God is exactly what we would expect if God had, in Augustine's words, "made us for Himself." This non-reductive approach to the desire for God provides a welcome counter-perspective to the Freudian position. The reductive approach turns the desire into a fact about us, but the non-reductive approach finds in the desire

a road right out of the self, a commerce with something which, by refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses, or anything whereof we have biological or social need, or anything imagined, or any state of our own minds, proclaims itself sheerly objective. (1955b: 176)

But it was not only these forms of naturalistic reduction that Lewis opposed. He also opposed various religious reductionisms. Here we seek to apply our machinery to Lewis' treatment of the Euthyphro dilemma, discussed in Chapter 2. Following Lewis, our discussion of these issues led us to reject certain varieties of Divine Command Theory. These objectionable forms of DCT hold that moral goodness and obligation can be reduced to the *arbitrary* command of God. That is, according to these forms of DCT, moral facts can be construed to be facts about the arbitrary commands of God.

We note first that this reduction is indeed motivated by the desire for consistency with a favoured theory, namely the sovereignty of God over the moral realm. The theory may also be advanced in an attempt to make moral facts appear less puzzling (and therefore as a legitimisation of those facts).

It seems wrong to suppose that these forms of DCT explain away morality itself. But in Chapter 2, I explained how Lewis saw the rejection of standard forms of Divine Command Theory as essential to the defence of both religious belief and of the Moral Law itself. In short, standard DCTs necessarily explain away the modal-status of moral truth, and as a result make morality objectionably arbitrary. But not only this, they also explain away God's essential moral character; according to standard DCTs, *God is necessarily good* is only true in the thin sense that *whatever* God is, does or commands will count as good. As Lewis says, "God may be more than moral goodness: He is not less" (1940a: 52), and if the content of morality has "no shadow of contingency" (1943b: 256), the same must also be said of God's moral character.

Application beyond the Dissertation

Looking to Lewisian themes other than those addressed in this dissertation, the most obvious application of the machinery of reductionism and explaining away is to Lewis' argument from reason against Naturalism. The topic is of fundamental importance in Lewis' writings and is listed among Lewis' 'Key Ideas' by Walter Hooper (1997: 599-605) and among Lewis' central concerns by James Como (1998: 168-9).

The matter is also of biographical interest, for some have claimed that Lewis' encounter with Elizabeth Anscombe over these matters was an important turning point in Lewis' career as an apologist.[4] We however, will concern ourselves only with

philosophical issue. Lewis' argument against Naturalism took various forms (see Lovell 2003), the most central these contends that Naturalism is self-defeating because it cannot accommodate what Lewis called "the validity of rational thought" (1947: 26). In general terms, we might formulate the argument as follows.

(1) Unless P_X, no belief can be held for (good) reasons.
(2) If naturalism is true, then P_x is false.
(3) Therefore, if Naturalism is true no belief can be held for (good) reasons.
(4) Therefore, if Naturalism is true, Naturalism is not believed for (good) reasons.
(5) Therefore, either Naturalism is not believed for (good) reasons or Naturalism is false.
(6) Therefore, Naturalism should be rejected.

Where P_X is replaced by any precondition of the existence of good reasoning, such as one of the following.

P_1) States of mind are capable of truth and falsity, which itself requires that they are capable of being 'about' things.
P_2) Logical laws exist.
P_3) We are capable of apprehending logical laws.
P_4) The apprehension of logical laws plays an explanatory role in the acceptance of the conclusion of the argument as true.
P_5) The state of accepting the truth of a proposition plays a crucial explanatory role in the production of other beliefs, and propositional content is relevant to the playing of this role.
P_6) Our reasoning processes provide us with a systematically reliable way of understanding the world around us.[5]

For ease of reference, when P_X is replaced by P_2, we shall refer to the resulting premise as (1_2), and likewise for the other suffixes. While there may be possibilities for an argument based on P_2 or P_3, Lewis' own arguments seemed to have focussed upon P_1, P_4, and P_5. Lewis offered little argument in favour of (1_1), but he clearly thought it true, or at least highly plausible. He writes that the admission that our thinking can be rational

> rules out any materialistic account of thinking. We are compelled to admit between [our thoughts and the world] that particular relation we call truth. But this relation has no meaning at all if we try to make it hold between the matter in [our brains and that in the world]. The brain may be in all sorts of relations to [the world] no doubt: it is in a spatial relation, and a time relation, and a quantitative relation. But to talk of one bit of matter being true about another bit seems to me to be nonsense. (1967a: 267)

> No model yet devised has made a satisfactory unity between our actual experience of sensation or thought or emotion and any available account of the corporeal processes which they are held to involve. We experience, say, a chain of reason; thoughts, which are 'about' or 'refer to' something other than themselves, ... but physical events, as such, cannot in any intelligible sense be said to be 'about' or to 'refer to' anything.
> (1964a: 165-6)

Lewis is not alone here. The phenomenon of intentionality continues to puzzle philosophers. It is far from clear that mental states exhibiting intentionality could possibly arise in a world whose fundamental constituents are non-intentional. The main attempts to understand intentionality within the Naturalistic scheme endeavour to *reduce* the intentional to functional, causal, or computational interactions. But it is far from clear that such accounts can succeed. It seems, at least to some. that whatever functional, causal or computational interactions are present they will never be sufficient to generate intentionality, or at least not sufficient to determine the specific content of any mental state that may be present. I do not expect these brief comments to persuade the reader that naturalism is inconsistent with P_1; after all, I have only sketched the outlines of the argument. While I shall later hint at one way this argument might be developed (pp. 159-61), the interested reader is encouraged to turn to better-qualified authorities.[6] But if the Lewisian thought is right. if the intentional cannot be reduced to the non-intentional, Naturalism is in serious trouble. For as the argument from reason shows, we explain away the intentional at the cost of cognitive suicide.[7]

Turning our attention to P_4 and P_5, we noted in the introduction to this dissertation that the key remark in Lewis' argument against naturalism was this

> But even if grounds do exist, what exactly have they got to do with the actual occurrence of the belief as a psychological event? If it is an event it must be caused. It must in fact be simply one link in a causal chain which stretches back to the beginning and forward to the end of time. How could such a trifle as lack of logical grounds prevent the belief's occurrence or how could the existence of grounds promote it? (1960b: 20)

The puzzle here is that if Naturalism is true, then the state of the world with respect to items in the reduction base is sufficient to fix the state of the world with respect to everything else, including our beliefs. But the behaviour of items in the reduction base is governed by physical laws without any regard to what occurs on any other level of description. From this we cannot, at least not without further argument, infer that our beliefs are not in accord with reason, and nor may we deduce that our beliefs are not held for good reasons.[8] It would seem to follow, however, that it is a monumental coincidence that the two systems of causal and rational explanation run together in a systematic manner. As Lewis puts it,

> When logic says a thing must be so. Nature always agrees. No one can suppose that this can be due to a happy coincidence. A great many people think that it is due to the fact that Nature produced the mind. But on the assumption that Nature is herself mindless this provides no explanation. To be the result of a series of mindless events is one thing: to be a kind of plan or true account of the laws according to which those mindless events arose

is quite another. Thus the Gulf Stream produces all sorts of results: for instance, the temperature of the Irish Sea. What it does not produce is maps of the Gulf Stream. But if logic, as we find it operative in our own minds, is really a result of mindless nature, then it is a result as improbable as that. The laws whereby logic obliges us to think turn out to be the laws according to which every event in space and time must happen. The man who thinks this an ordinary or probable result does not really understand. It is as if cabbages, in addition to resulting from the laws of botany also gave lectures in that subject: or as if, when I knocked out my pipe, the ashes arranged themselves into letters which read: 'We are the ashes of a knocked-out pipe.' But if the validity of knowledge cannot be explained that way, and if perpetual happy coincidence throughout the whole of recorded time is out of the question, then surely we must seek the real explanation elsewhere.

(1967a: 267-8)

There are two main responses to this line of reasoning, the evolutionary response (Flew 1958) and the psychologistic response (Aach 1990). The evolutionary response has it that creatures inveterately wrong in their inferences "have a pathetic but praiseworthy tendency to die before reproducing their kind" (Quine 1969: 126). The response is of dubious value, for it entails that the reliability of our cognitive faculties is a *logical* accident. But even if I'm wrong in seeing this as a fault in the evolutionary response, that response still fails, for truth and good inferential practice are at best instrumentally connected with survival and reproduction. And as Christopher Hookway points out

> that a faculty was necessary for the commonsense inquiries which facilitate survival and reproduction is no guarantee that it will help us to describe reality. Science has no survival value, and we have to rely upon our [ability to reason] in areas remote from the vital concerns of everyday practice. (Hookway 1984: 6)

And commitment to Naturalism seems remote from the concerns of everyday practice in just this manner. Lewis saw the possibility of a psychologistic response, one which reduces logical truths to truths about the kinds of arguments we happen to find persuasive (or something of that sort), but found it simply incredible.

> If one kept (as rock-bottom reality) the universe of the senses, aided by instruments and co-ordinated so as to form "science," then one would have to go much further – as many have gone since – and adopt a Behaviouristic theory of logic, ethics, and aesthetics. But such a theory was, and is, unbelievable to me. I am using the word "unbelievable," which many use to mean "improbable" or even "undesireable," in a quite literal sense. I mean that the act of believing what the behaviourist believes is one that my mind simply will not perform. ... Unless I were to accept an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*. (1955b: 167-8)

The arguments against psychologism are well known and will not be rehearsed here. I only point out that unless this position on reason is conjoined with a similarly relativising position about truth it is difficult to see how reason and truth can have

anything to do with one another, and so how reasoning can provide us with a systematically reliable way of understanding the world around us. That is, we fail to accommodate P_6 unless we endorse such a position about truth. But if we do endorse a relativism about truth, what is left of the assertion of Naturalism?

> A still humbler position remains. You may, if you like, give up all claim to [objective] truth. You may say simply "Our way of thinking is useful" – without adding, even under your breath, "and therefore [objectively] true." It enables us to set a bone and build a bridge and make a Sputnik. And that is good enough. The old, high pretensions of reason must be given up. ... We will be humbler in future. Good-bye to all that. No more theology, no more ontology, no more metaphysics. ...
>   But then equally, no more Naturalism. For of course Naturalism is prime specimen of that towering speculation, [divorced] from practice and going far beyond experience, which is now being condemned. (Lewis 1960b: 26)

If we are not to undermine human reason in this way, human reason cannot be understood as *merely* human. Naturalistic reductionism must be rejected. In Lewis' view "the human mind in the act of knowing is illuminated by the Divine reason," (1960b: 26-7) fully rational thinking is seen as participation in the Divine reason itself.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I also introduced the reader to Lewis' paper "Meditation in a Toolsheld" (1945e). Here Lewis distinguished between *looking at* and *looking along*.[9] The experience of *looking at* a beam of light as it shines through a crack in the shed door is quite different from the expierence of stepping into the beam and looking *along it*. (See p. 6 for more examples.) As explained earlier, the modern mind naturally gives priority to looking *at*, seeing it as more objective. In the introduction, I showed that the attempt to diminish the epistemic value of looking along yields a quick route to scepticism. Here I note that any attempt to reduce *looking along* to, or eliminate it in favour of, *looking at* must lead to contradictions. The important thought in each case is that to look *at* something is necessarily to look *along* something else. Elimination therefore leads to the absurd denial of the possibility of experience. Reduction, on the other hand, would require that each act of looking *along* consists of an ordered infinity of acts of looking *at*, a series of acts with which the subject could never become engaged: the series contains no *first* act.

Lewis' concept of transposition reveals other problems connected with reductionism. Lewis argues that a phenomenon which seems of little importance when seen 'from below' may yet reveal itself as possessing deep significance when viewed 'from above'. Transposition involves an "adaptation from a richer to a poorer medium" (1962: 271). The lower medium is taken up into the higher, so that the higher is

incarnated in the lower. Lewis illustrates the concept by exploring the way in which a two-dimensional drawing may represent a three-dimensional world. In Lewis' terms, such pictures constitute an incarnation of the three-dimensional within the two-dimensional. However, if a creature knew only a world of two dimensions and yet was somehow able to see such a picture, they would get no hint of the third-dimension 'present' on the canvas. They would think it very suspicious that all the elements alleged to convey the three-dimensional are just the ordinary elements of the two-dimensional with which the creature is already familiar. The flatlander is faced by an epistemic problem precisely because there is nothing present which cannot (in certain respects) be reduced to the world of two dimensions. But the flatlander is nevertheless wrong in thinking the two-dimensional cannot represent, or incarnate, the richer three-dimensional world. In the course of exploring the possibility that some passages of scripture possess more than one level of meaning, Lewis provides another example of transposition.

> For what is required, on all these levels alike, is not merely knowledge but a certain kind of insight; getting the focus right. [The arguments of] those who can see in each of these instances only the lower [level of meaning] will always be plausible. One who contended that a poem was nothing but black marks on white paper would be unanswerable if he addressed an audience who couldn't read. Look at it through microscopes, analyse the printer's ink and paper, study it (in that way) as long as you like; you will never find something over and above all the products of analysis whereof you can say "This is the poem". Those who can read, however, will continue to say the poem exists. (1958: 98)

As the language of this section suggestions, Lewis thought the concept of transposition might provide a useful model of the Incarnation. He also believed the concept might shed light on such diverse topics as the sacraments, the inspiration of scripture, the phenomenon of 'speaking in tongues,' the language used in communicating religious experience, the resurrection of the body, and the relationship between mind and brain. Each of these issues can be approached 'from below,' in a reductive frame of mind, but the inevitable result is not to explain or give legitimacy to the view 'from above' but to explain it away completely. While a reduction of the richer to the poorer medium may be possible, it cannot be motivated unless the richer medium is acknowledged, and it will not be acknowledged if the reductionist refuses to lift his eyes from a reduction base that only includes the poorer medium. Those who do not already recognize the presence of a 'richer medium' can never be brought to recognize it merely by examining the 'poorer medium' which into which it has been transposed.

Moreover, the very richness of the richer medium makes reduction difficult, since identical situations in the poorer medium may correspond to different situations in the richer. (This is just what we mean be saying that one medium is richer than the other.) For example, two qualitatively sets of marks on a piece of paper (words or sentences) may 'incarnate' two quite different statements, may have two quite different meanings. If it is complained that the difference depends upon the context of the marks, we may reply that only a context involving other *meaningful* items could make the required difference. But to attribute meaning to items in the context is to endorse another case of transposition in which the same problems will arise. A vicious infinite regress looms. Elaborate examples of this kind have been constructed to raise problems for reductive accounts of intentional states by suggesting that two different mental states could be underwritten by physically identical brain-states, and that the context would not (or not always) decide the matter unless it contained other mental items (Baker 1987: Chapter 5). While we cannot settle the matter here, it is interesting to see just how naturally the arguments arise out of Lewis' work.

Within and Without

Above I have explored how the idea of reductionism and its connection with explaining away serves to unify various themes within the work of C.S. Lewis, and in particular the themes addressed in this dissertation. In this section I shall argue that the themes that this dissertation addresses are, in a sense, representative of Lewis' wider philosophical concerns. In particular, I shall show that (i) his interest in the Euthyphro dilemma stems from his more general concerns in moral theory and in its relation religious doctrine; (ii) his interest in the miraculous is integrally connected with his defence of a thoroughgoing supernaturalism and his rejection of 'chronological snobbery'; (iii) his interest in the Freudian critique of religious belief is an expression of a wider interest in the relationship between the causes and the grounds of belief; and (iv) that the argument from desire not only serves as a contrast for the Freudian critique but is in itself a pervasive theme in Lewis' work. We begin, then, with Lewis on morality.

Moral Theory and Religious Belief

As mentioned above, Lewis often addresses issues in moral theory, defending what he called *the natural law* and exploring its relation to religious belief. Indeed, Walter Hooper classifies 'natural law' as one of Lewis' 'Key Ideas' and includes Lewis' discussion of the Euthyphro dilemma under this heading. James Como lists the objectivity of natural law as among the ideas that "inform Lewis's entire world of discourse" (1998: 168-71). This defence of natural law is multi-faceted. Some aspects of this defence were outlined in the introduction to this dissertation. Probably the central element is Lewis' rejection of moral relativism and subjectivism; a rejection motivated by consideration of the implications of such views, among them the impossibility of both moral development and the relative evaluation of different moral codes.

Lewis also argued that it is impossible to choose between competing moralities from an initially amoral stance. For there would be no compulsion to accept any moral stance except on *amoral* grounds. And what might these grounds be?

> Supposing we can enter the vacuum and view all Ethical Systems from the outside, what sort of motives can we expect to find for entering any one of them? One thing is immediately clear. We can have no *ethical* motives for adopting any of these systems. ... How does it then come about that men who talk as if we could stand outside all moralities and choose among them ... nevertheless exhort us ... to make some particular choice? They have a ready answer. Almost invariably they recommend some code of ethics on the ground that it, and it alone, will preserve civilisation, or the human race. What they seldom tell us is whether the preservation of the human race is itself a duty or whether they expect us to aim at it on some other ground. (1967b: 306-7)

Lewis considers the idea that we have an 'instinct' to preserve the species. But Lewis not only thinks it doubtful that we have such an instinct, he argues that it would not help if we did. Our instincts are at war and "There is none of our impulses which the Moral Law may not sometimes tell us to suppress" (1952b: 21). Moreover,

> This thing that judges between ... instincts, that decides which of them should be encouraged, cannot itself be [one of those instincts]. You might as well say that the sheet of music which tells you, at a given moment, to play one note on the piano and not another, is itself one of the notes on the keyboard. (1952b: 20)

> On what conceivable ground, in an ethical void, on the assumption that the preservation of the species is not a moral but a merely instinctive end, can I be asked to gratify [that instinct] by adopting a moral code? Why should this instinct be preferred to all my others? It is certainly not my strongest (1967b: 308)

We have grounds for endorsing one instinct over another only if we have already endorse some moral claims. And from where have we derived the maxim that

humanity ought to be preserved? Not, Lewis argues, from this moral code or that, but from a 'general' moral tradition. Here Lewis challenges the popular idea that different cultures in different times have endorsed widely different moralities (1943a Appendix: 49-59 and 1952b: 17-8, 23-5). According to Lewis, all civilizations endorse moral codes that are but variations on a theme.

> If a man will go into a library and spend a few days with the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* he will soon discover the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man.
>
> (1943b: 253-4)

There is a single traditional morality, the *Tao*.

> There never has been, and never will be, a radically new judgement of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems ... all consist of fragments of the *Tao* itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the *Tao* and to it alone such validity as they possess. ... The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in. (1943a: 29-30)

No moral system has any authority unless it at least borrows from the *Tao*, and we should not arbitrarily exalt one element of this morality over any other. All developments of (our grasp of) the *Tao* must be internally motivated, they must be organic developments of the traditional morality. According to Lewis, the core elements of this traditional morality are the self-evident principles of practical reason:

> We have only two alternatives. Either the axioms of traditional morality must be accepted as axioms of practical reason which neither admit nor require argument to support them ... or else there are no values at all. (1943b: 252)
>
> If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all. (1943a: 28)
>
> We "just see" that there is no reason why my neighbour's happiness should be sacrificed to my own, as we "just see" that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. If we cannot prove either axiom, that is not because they are irrational but because they are self-evident and all proofs depend on them. Their intrinsic reasonableness shines by its own light. (1960b: 38-9)

But such basic moral intuitions are not all there is to moral epistemology. Moral reasoning also requires (i) knowledge of the 'non-moral' facts related to the case in hand, (ii) the application of basic moral intuitions to these facts in the development of arguments for or against the practise in question, and (iii) recognising the moral authority of those better and wiser than ourselves (1940b: 281-4). In addition, Lewis notes that in any sensible moral epistemology there will be an ongoing mutual

adjustment between the moral dictates that a person accepts and the moral theory (and moral authorities) that they endorse (1967b: 304).

How, then, is the Moral Law related to religious doctrine? Lewis suggests that there are two basic worldviews: the materialistic view and the religious view.[10] According to the first "matter and space just happen to exist," and there is no purposeful agency behind the world we inhabit. But on the religious view "what is behind the universe is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know" (1952b: 30). Lewis' case is hard to summarise, but in essence he argues that – due to the limits of mere observation – the easiest way for such a mind to reveal its existence would be through something like the Moral Law. In a classic piece of understatement. Lewis concludes that the presence of such a Moral Law "ought to arouse our suspicions" (1952b: 32).

Lewis goes further in the fifth chapter of *Miracles*. Applying the same reasoning that he used to show that naturalism cannot account for human reason, Lewis argued that naturalism cannot account for morality either. Here Lewis is. in effect, arguing that the naturalist cannot account for how moral facts can play any role in explaining our moral convictions, that on the naturalist's assumptions all our moral convictions must either be unjustified or mere expressions of personal taste:

> If the fact that men have such ideas as *ought* and *ought not* at all can be fully explained by [non-]rational and non-moral causes, then those ideas are an illusion. ... [The Naturalist's] account may (or may not) explain why men do in fact make moral judegments. It does not explain how they could be right in making them.
> (1960b: 39-40)[11]

Still in the sphere of ethics and religion, Lewis applied this thinking in moral theory to the problem of evil. He contended that since, on atheistic premises, our moral standards are merely subjective we cannot condemn anything as evil, unjust or plain wrong unless we reject atheism:

> In a word, unless we allow ultimate reality to be moral, we cannot morally condemn it.
> (1967a: 272)

> My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak. why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it? ... Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying that it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, my argument against God collapsed too – for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust. not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies. (1952b: 42)

Lewis also considered questions about the relationship between religious belief and moral motivation. In *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), he has Vertue wonder whether lands to the East and West (i.e. Heaven and Hell) could be anything but either a bribe in the one case and a threat in the other. For Lewis, God is to be obeyed not because of the threat of punishment or the promise of reward but out of love for goodness itself, out of love for God Himself:

> God is such that if (*per impossibile*) his power could vanish and His other attributes remain, so that the supreme right were forever robbed of the supreme might, we should still owe Him precisely the same kind and degree of allegiance as we now do.
>
> (1955b: 185)

So morality and its relation to religion were among Lewis' central concerns, and yet

> Mere morality is not the end of life. You were made for something quite different from that ... '[A] decent life' is mere machinery compared with the thing we men are really made for. Morality is indispensable but the Divine Life ... intends for us something in which morality will be swallowed up. We are to be re-made. [And the result:] a thing we have never yet imagined: a real man, an ageless god, a son of God, strong, radiant, wise, beautiful and drenched in joy. (1946b: 355)

Lewis consideration of the Euthyphro dilemma is but an extension of this rich treatment of morality and of the relationship between morality and religion. The dilemma is no minor theme in Lewis work; and is addressed, or at least raised, in no less than four separate places: *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), *The Problem of Pain* (1940a), "The Poison of Subjectivism" (1943b) and *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958). Chapter 2 was littered with quotes from the third and fourth of these works. The treatment in the first is lengthy and cryptic, but from the second we have this:

> It has sometimes been asked whether God commands certain things because they are right, or whether certain things are right because God commands them. With Hooker, and against Dr. Johnson, I emphatically embrace the first alternative. The second might lead to the abominable conclusion (reached, I think by Paley) that charity is good only because God arbitrarily commanded it – that He might equally well have commanded us to hate Him and one another and that hatred would then have been right. (1940a: 80)

It is interesting to note when these pieces were written. The passage from *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933: 161-2) has it that the Landlord, i.e. God, is a meaningless addition to the problem of where the rules (moral obligations) come from and why they ought to be obeyed. Admittedly, it is not entirely clear whether these are Lewis' own thoughts or only the thoughts of Wisdom, who represents Idealist Philosophy. In the passage quoted above, from 1940, Lewis "emphatically embrace[s] the first alternative". This seems not only at odds with the position defended in Chapter 2, but

also with Lewis' own later position. And yet the change of position was accompanied by a fixed opinion that neither God nor morality are in any sense arbitrary, for it is clearly this that Lewis is worried about in the passage above.

Miracles and the Supernatural

Lewis was what we may call a 'thoroughgoing Supernaturalist'. Indeed, he described himself as a "Christian ... untinged with Modernist reservations and committed to supernaturalism in its full rigour" (1967b: 303). He had little or no sympathy with those who attempt retain what they see as the core of Christian doctrine while rejecting such traditional Christian tenets as Heaven, Hell, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and even the existence of God. As indicated earlier, Lewis believed that "Christianity is precisely the one religion from which the miraculous cannot be separated" (1945a: 156). Speaking to those he believed might be tempted to make just this separation, Lewis said

> A theology which denies the historicity of nearly everything in the Gospels to which Christian life and affections and thought have been fastened for nearly two millennia – which either denies the miraculous altogether or, more strangely, after swallowing the camel of the Resurrection strains at such gnats as the feeding of the multitudes – if offered to the uneducated man can produce only or other of two effects. ... If he holds to what he calls Christianity he will leave a church in which it is no longer taught and look for one where it is. If he agrees with your version he will no longer call himself a Christian and no longer come to church. In his crude, coarse way, he would respect you much more if you did the same. (1959b: 243)

It seems obvious that Lewis' would have sided with this imagined 'uneducated man' and against such liberal theologians. The stance is illustrated by a fictional exchange in *The Great Divorce* (1946a). In this brilliant theological fantasy, Lewis has a party from the Grey Town, Hell, make an excursion to the Country, Heaven.[12] Although each visitor is invited to stay, all but one finds reasons to return 'home'. One character who makes the journey is an Anglican Bishop. Dick, the Bright Spirit sent to welcome him to Heaven, had been his friend on Earth.

> 'Ah, Dick, I shall never forget some of our talks. I expect you've changed your views a bit since then. You became rather narrow-minded towards the end of your life: but no doubt you've broadened out again.'
> 'How do you mean?'
> 'Well, it's obvious by now isn't it, that you weren't quite right. Why, my dear boy, you were coming to believe in a literal Heaven and Hell!'
> 'But wasn't I right?'
> 'Oh, in a spiritual sense, to be sure. I still believe in them in that way. I am still, my dear boy, looking for the Kingdom. But nothing superstitious or mythological ...'

'Excuse me. Where do you think you've been?'

'Ah, I see. You mean that the grey town with its continual hope of morning .... with its field for indefinite progress, is, in a sense, Heaven, if only we have eyes to see it? That is a beautiful idea.'

'I didn't mean that at all. Is it possible you don't know where you've been?'

'Now that you mention it, I don't think we ever give it a name. What do you call it?'

'We call it Hell.'

'There is no need to be profane, my dear boy. I may not be very orthodox. in your sense of the word, but I do feel these matters ought to be discussed simply. and seriously. and reverently.'

'Discuss Hell *reverently*? I meant what I said. You have been in Hell: though if you don't go back you may call it Purgatory.'

'Go on, my dear boy, go on. That is *so* like you. No doubt you'll tell me why, on your view I was sent there. ...'

'But don't you know? You went there because you are an apostate.' (1946a: 35-7)

As the conversation goes on, we learn that the Bishop has also rejected belief in the Resurrection and indeed in the very existence of God, and will always defend himself by saying that these are his honest opinions. But the Spirit calls his bluff:

'At College, you know, we just started automatically writing the kind of essays that got good marks and saying the sort of things that won applause. When, in our whole lives, did we honestly face ... the one question on which all turned: whether the Supernatural might not in fact occur? When did we put up one moment's real resistance to the loss of our faith?' ...

'You know that you and I were playing with loaded dice. We didn't want the other to be true. We were afraid of crude Salvationism. afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule, afraid (above all) of real spiritual fears and hopes.' ...

'Of course. Having allowed oneself to drift, unresisting, unpraying, accepting every half-conscious solicitation from our desires, we reached a point where we no longer believed the faith. ... The beliefs are sincere in the sense that they do occur as psychological event's in the man's mind. If that's what you mean by sincerity they are sincere, and so were ours. But errors which are sincere in that sense are not innocent.'

(1946a: 38-9)

As these quotes illustrate, Lewis was especially opposed to any liberal theology motivated merely by the desire to accommodate Christianity to the sensibilities of the age. His attitude is nicely summarised by a comment from his preface to what was then a new translation of St. Athanasius' *The Incarnation of the Word of God*.

[Athanasius] stood for the Trinitarian doctrine. 'whole and undefiled,' when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius[13] – into one of those 'sensible' synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen. It is his glory that he did not move with the times, it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have moved away. (1944c: 34-5)

This reluctance to 'move with the times' does not come from a prior commitment to Christianity and certainly not from a commitment to Fundamentalism.

I have been suspected of being what is called a Fundamentalist. That is because I never regard any narrative as unhistorical simply on the ground that it includes the miraculous. Some people find the miraculous so hard to believe that they cannot imagine any reason for my acceptance of it other than a prior belief that every sentence of the [Bible] has historical or scientific truth. But this I do not hold ... The real reason why I can accept as historical a story in which a miracle occurs is that I have never found any philosophical grounds for the universal negative proposition that miracles do not happen. I have to decide on quite other grounds (if I decide at all) whether a given narrative is historical or not. (1958: 92)

Lewis' philosophical defence of the miraculous was examined in Chapters 3 and 4 and was briefly summarised above; we need not say any more here. We simply conclude that this defence was an essential part of Lewis' 'thoroughgoing supernaturalism'.

Bulverism and the Reasons/Causes Distinction

There was a method of 'refutation' that Lewis encountered so frequently that he felt he ought to give it a name. Bulverism, named after its fictional inventor Ezekiel Bulver, consists in dismissing a person's claims as psychologically tainted at source, as in "Oh, you say that *because you're a man*" (1941a: 181). The Bulverist's thought is that if a person's convictions can be fully explained as a result of non-rational factors then we need not bother about those convictions. Lewis deplored this sort of attack on our beliefs, seeing it as an illegitimate tactic which shortcuts the reasoning process. I argued in Chapter 5 that such 'genetic arguments' are often, but not always, fallacious. In general, we should find out whether or not a person *is wrong* before we start explaining *how they came to be wrong*. And of course the Bulverist's game is very easy to play. If illicit motives may operate on one side of a debate, they may equally operate on the other. We do not (at least not always) clarify an issue by delving into psychology or personal history but rather by reasoning about the subject in hand.

> If you try to find out which [thoughts] are tainted by speculating about the wishes of the thinkers, you are merely making a fool of yourself. You must find out on purely logical grounds which of them do, in fact, break down as arguments. Afterwards, if you like, [you may] go on and discover the psychological causes of the error.
>
> In other words, you must show *that* a man is wrong before you start explaining *why* he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion *that* he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became so silly. ... [Y]ou can only find out the rights and wrongs by reasoning – never by being rude about your opponent's psychology. (1941a: 180-1)

In attacking Bulverism, Lewis distinguished between reasons and causes:

> Causes are mindless events which can produce other results than beliefs. Reasons arise from axioms and inferences and affect only beliefs. Bulversism tries to show that the other man has causes and not reasons and that we have reasons and not causes. A belief which can be accounted for entirely in terms of causes is worthless. (1941a: 182)

It is unclear how this last quote fits with the general critique of Bulverism. On the one hand we have Lewis saying that we can only find out the rights and wrong by reasoning and not by explaining (away) our opponents beliefs as the product of non-rational causes, and on the other Lewis appears to claim that the presence of such causes is incompatible with the presence of reasons. Is the problem with Bulverism that it fails to distinguish between reasons and causes and so presumes that one must exclude the other? Or is it that Bulverism is too quick to attribute beliefs to non-rational causes in the first place?

The question is interesting in its own right, but it is also interesting for the light it may (or may not) cast upon Lewis' argument against naturalism. For if the presence of a non-rational cause for a belief *does not* exclude the presence of reasons, it is hard to see how the naturalist's commitment to the presence of such causes can discredit the naturalist's beliefs. On the other hand, if these two kinds of explanation are really incompatible, we cannot claim that the Freudian critique of religious belief commits the genetic fallacy but merely that it assumes too easily that religious belief is brought about by non-rational factors. If religious belief may have non-rational determinants (may be 'desire based') and yet still be warranted, then surely the naturalist's general commitment to the presence of such determinants cannot undermine his claims to knowledge. In terms of the reasoning presented in Chapter 5, we may wonder whether Lewis' argument against naturalism cannot be rejected on the same grounds as we rejected the Freudian critique of religious belief, that it commits the genetic fallacy. If the one argument commits this fallacy, then so too does the other. Or so it would appear.

But to commit the genetic fallacy is to take the origin of a belief to be relevant to its evaluation and then illegitimately fault the belief because of its origin.[14] A clear entailment is that if any arguments commit this fallacy, there must be a meaningful distinction between the causal origins of a belief and the grounds of that belief. But it is at just this point that Lewis attacks naturalism. To argue that a worldview cannot accommodate the reasons/causes distinction is not to commit the genetic fallacy but to

contend that within that worldview the accusation of making that fallacy would cease to have meaning. Lewis is not only not committing the fallacy, he is arguing against a view which (if his argument is correct) entails that there is no such fallacy to commit. Alan Gerwith puts the point in strikingly Lewisian terms.

> [The naturalist] thesis is unable to account for the difference between the relation of physical or psychological cause and effect and the relation of logical or evidential ground and consequent. (1978: 36)[15]

Bulverism also connects with several other aspects of Lewis' work. In *The Personal Heresy* (Lewis and Tillyard 1939), Lewis argues against E.M.W. Tillyard's view that poetry, and literature more generally, is first and foremost the "expression of the poet's personality", that "All Poetry is about the poet's state of mind" and that, therefore, "the end we are supposed to pursue in reading ... is a certain contact with the poet's soul" (quoted in Schultz and West Jr. 1998: 318). According to Lewis, to read a poem as it should be read "I must look where he [the author] looks and not turn around to face him; I must make of him not a spectacle but a pair of spectacles" (quoted in Duriez 2000: 162).

> I look with his eyes, not at him. He, for the moment, will be precisely what I do not see; for you can see any eyes rather than the pair you see with, and if you want to examine your own glasses you must take them off your own nose. The poet is not a man who asks me to look at *him*; he is a man who says 'look at that' and points; the more I follow the pointing of his finger the less I can possibly see of *him*. (Quoted in Hooper 1997: 599)

If we are to treat a person's opinions fairly we cannot treat them as facts to be explained merely as episodes in their biography, we must consider the belief in question on its own merits. This in turn means thinking about the content of the belief and not about the belief itself. In a similar manner, to read a poem 'fairly' we cannot treat it merely as an expression of the poet's personality, we must attempt to see what the poet sees and not merely to see the poet.

Lewis' assault on Bulverism is noted by Como (1998: 170), by Hooper (1997: 552) and by Burson and Walls (1998: 160-1) as among Lewis' most important ideas, and its relevance to Lewis' rejection of the Freudian critique of religious belief is obvious. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, that attempt to discredit religious belief is no more (and is perhaps less) convincing than the attempt to discredit atheistic belief in the same manner.

Joy and the Dialectic of Desire

In Chapter 6 we explored the argument from desire. The argument contends that humans possess a natural desire that cannot be satisfied by anything in this world, and which therefore serves as a pointer to something beyond this world which *can* satisfy this thirst for something more. Lewis called this desire *Joy* or *Sehnsucht*.

Unlike other themes that this dissertation has addressed, this one is difficult to see as exemplifying some wider Lewisian concern. The reason for this is that Joy is itself one of Lewis' fundamental concerns and that related concepts appear in a very large proportion of Lewis' works.

The concept of Joy as a desire for God and/or Heaven appears in almost every aspect of Lewis' work; including not just his theological writings, essays and sermons but also his fiction (both for children and adults), his letters, his poems (including several that were written before his conversion) and of course his autobiographical works. In relation to the argument from desire, the more philosophically important of these works are *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), "The Weight of Glory" (1941b), *Mere Christianity* (1952b) and *Surprised by Joy* (1955b). The reader already has a wide range of quotes from these works. I now illustrate the theme from three other books, beginning with *The Problem of Pain*.

> There are times when I think we do not desire heaven; but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else ... Are not all lifelong friendships born at the moment when at last you meet another human being who has some inkling (but faint and uncertain even in the best) of that something which you were born desiring, and which, beneath the flux of other desires and in all the momentary silences between the louder passions, night and day, year by year, from childhood to old age, you are looking for, watching for, listening for? You have never had it. All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it – tantalizing glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest – if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself – you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say, "Here at last is the thing I was made for." ... The Brocken spectre "looked to every man like his first love", because she was a cheat. But God will look to every soul like its first love because He is its first love. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it – made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand. (1940a: 116-8)

In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*, the fifth instalment of the Chronicles of Narnia,[16] King Caspian sets out in search of seven Lords, friends of his father who had been sent to explore the Eastern Seas by the usurper Miraz. Among others – including Eustace Scrubb and Lucy and Edmund Pevensie – Caspian is accompanied by Reepicheep, the inestimably gallant talking mouse. Although Reepicheep would have

accompanied Caspian simply out of valour and loyalty, Reepicheep's main reason for joining the crew was something quite different. When Caspian had explained his intentions to Edmund and Lucy, he said ...

"But Reepicheep here has an even higher hope." Everyone's eyes turned to the Mouse.
"As high as my spirit," it said. "Though perhaps as small as my stature. Why should we not come to the very eastern end of the world? And what might we find there? I expect to find Aslan's own country. It is always from the east, across the sea, that the great Lion comes to us."
"I say, that *is* an idea," said Edmund in an awed voice.
"But do you think," said Lucy, "Aslan's country would be that sort of country – I mean, the sort you could ever *sail* to?"
"I do not know, Madam," said Reepicheep. "But there is this. When I was in my cradle, a wood woman, A Dryad, spoke this verse over me:

"Where sky and water meet,
Where the waves grow sweet,
Doubt not Reepicheep,
To find all you seek,
There is the utter East.

"I do not know what it means. But the spell of it has been on me all my life."
(1952c: 214-5)

As the story unfolds, it transpires that the Lords Revilian, Argoz and Mavramorn will not awake from their enchanted sleep unless one of the company sails into the east and does not return. Reepicheep was that one: "That is my heart's desire" (1952c: 351).

Till We Have Faces is arguably both Lewis' best piece of fiction and his least read. The story, a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, is set in the city of Glome, which has been all but devastated by plague, drought and famine. The Priest of Ungit tells the King that for the sake of the city he must sacrifice the most beautiful of his three daughters, Psyche, to Ungit's son (the "shadow-brute") by leaving her exposed on a mountain, tied to a tree. Psyche's sister Orual is naturally distressed, and begins to think that the God's must either be malevolent or unreal. But Psyche herself has been with the Priest and will have heard him explain the ceremony has he had earlier done to her father the King:

The victim must be given to the Brute. For the Brute is, in a mystery, Ungit herself or Ungit's son, the god of the Mountain; or both. The victim is led up the mountain to the Holy Tree, and bound to the Tree and left. Then the Brute comes. ... In the Great Offering the victim must be perfect. For in holy language a man offered is said to be Ungit's husband, a woman is said to be the bride of Ungit's son. And both are called the Brute's Supper. And when the Brute is Ungit it lies with the man, and when it is her son it lies with the woman. And either way there is a devouring ... Some say the loving and the devouring are all the same thing. For in sacred language we say that a woman who lies with a man devours the man. (1956b: 36-7)

Hearing this, Psyche feels that things may not so bad as they appear. Countering Orual's suggestion that maybe the gods are unreal or are "viler than the vilest man," she says

> Or else ... they are real gods but don't really do these things. Or even – mightn't it be – they do these things and the things are not what they seem to be? How if I am indeed to wed a god? (1956b: 53)

Psyche further explains her feelings, saying

> 'I have always – at least, ever since I can remember – had a kind of longing for death.'
> 'Ah, Psyche,' I [Orual] said, 'have I made you so little happy as that?'
> 'No, no, no,' she said. 'You don't understand. Not that kind of longing. It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine ... where you couldn't see Glome or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance? And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn't (not yet) come and I didn't know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home.' (1956b: 55)

The story goes on from there, but as the reader will have guessed Psyche was ultimately right. Her heart's deepest longings were to be satisfied, she was indeed to wed a god.

For further quotes and other material related to Lewis' concept of Joy, the desire for God, the interested reader should consult Corbin Scott Carnell's excellent *Bright Shadow of Reality: Spiritual Longing in C.S. Lewis* (1974). We conclude by noting that Hooper (1997: 577) lists "Joy" among Lewis' Key Ideas, as does James Como (1998: 168). Indeed, so prevalent a theme is Joy in Lewis' works that *The Quotable Lewis* (Martindale and Root 1989) contains more entries under "Joy: As Sehnsucht or Longing" than under any other heading.[17]

IN THE MAIN BODY of this dissertation we explored four philosophical issues through the writings of C.S. Lewis. Those issues were the Euthyphro dilemma, the philosophical status of miracles, the Freudian critique of religious belief, and C.S. Lewis' argument from desire. Although I have disagreed with Lewis in a few of the details, I have attempted to defend a broadly Lewisian (and therefore broadly

Christian) stance on each of these issues. Indeed, I have attempted to defend these Lewisian positions using, so far as possible, Lewis' own methods.

In Chapter 2, on the Euthyphro dilemma, my initial contention was that the dilemma is not so easily avoided as has been commonly assumed. In response to this dilemma, I replaced Lewis' endorsement of the doctrine of divine simplicity (through his claim that God is goodness) with the assertion that God possesses His perfect moral attributes essentially. Like Lewis' own position, this claim, if true, would secure a strong modal status for morality while still allowing that morality is rooted in God. I argued that the resulting position, Divine Nature Theory, was immune to the Euthyphro dilemma.

Chapters 3 and 4 were concerned with the philosophical standing of miracles. Chapter 3 began with a brief discussion of the logical character of the laws of nature. Against the background of this discussion, we assessed various arguments for the impossibility of miracles. These arguments were shown to depend upon an inadequate conception of the miraculous. Building upon certain suggestions from C.S. Lewis we offered the following definition of *miracle*: an event that would not have happened had nature been 'left to itself'. This definition was then refined in response to objections. The chapter closed with a tentative exposition of a Lewisian cosmological argument based upon the inherent limits of explanation via laws of nature.

Chapter 4 addressed the Humean argument against miracles. Hume claimed to have demonstrated that there could never be sufficient evidence to justify belief in a miracle. Lewis' own response to Hume was shown to be incomplete. We remedied this incompleteness by drawing on and developing other elements of his writing (and that of G.K. Chesterton).

Chapter 5 sought to evaluate the Freudian critique of religious belief. That critique contends that religious belief is rooted in wish-fulfilment and is therefore irrational. Had he been aware of the term "genetic fallacy," it seems clear that Lewis would have used it to describe the Freudian critique. The main work of the chapter was, therefore, to discover general principles to help us decide which arguments commit this fallacy. The principles discovered led us to judge the Freudian case against religious belief a failure. As if this were not sufficient, following Lewis we saw that atheistic belief is also explicable in Freudian terms.

In Chapter 6, we examined a related argument from C.S. Lewis. While Freud claimed that its root in the desire for God discredits religious belief, Lewis argued that the desire for God might be an indication of God's real existence. According to Lewis' argument from desire, since humans have a natural desire for communion with God, and the world is such that natural desires can always be satisfied, God must exist. After explaining the concept of *natural desire*, this argument was developed and defended against various objections. I freely admit, however, that further thought on this argument is required before a full evaluation can be reached.

I argued above that these four themes are (in a fashion), representative of Lewis' wider philosophical concerns. His interest in the Euthyphro dilemma grew out of a general interest in moral theory and its relation to religious belief. His defence of the miraculous is a key component of his general commitment to a thoroughgoing supernaturalism. His opposition to the Freudian critique of wish-fulfillment stems from a general antipathy towards 'Bulverism.' Lastly, his use of the argument from desire and his interest in the desire itself pervade the whole Lewisian corpus.

And yet as demonstrated in the introduction to this dissertation, these are just a few of the philosophical themes and arguments to be found in the work of C.S. Lewis. Several themes not addressed in this dissertation would benefit from further attention from philosophers and from those interested in the general shape of Lewis' thought. To put the matter in Lewisian terms, there are several areas of Lewis' thinking where we would profit from going "further up and further in."[18] Some of these projects would belong to the history of thought and others to philosophy and theology 'proper'.

In the first category would be exploration of Lewis' views in the philosophy of science, views which clearly go beyond his well documented opposition to Scientism (Aeschliman 1998). Relatively little has been done to sort out Lewis' views on the relation between faith and reason, and in particular his views on the project of Natural Theology.[19] It should be obvious that Lewis was not averse to the use of argument in support of faith, but he had a general antipathy towards many apologetic arguments (such as the argument to/from design) and he clearly distinguished between a fully Christian faith and mere intellectual assent. We might also ask whether Lewis' reflections on the concept of faith could be appropriated by Reformed Epistemologists such as Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff.[20]

In terms of philosophy and theology 'proper', several themes stand out as worthy of further discussion, some of which were mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation. There are the distinctions between *looking at* and *looking along* and between that which *violates* and which *transcends* our categories of thought. Though a few relevant pieces exist, Lewis' famous Trilemma has still received only scant attention.[21] It is pleasing that Lewis' argument against Naturalism (restyled as the Argument from Reason) is now receiving the discussion it deserves.[22]

That argument, along with each of the topics addressed in this dissertation (and a few others besides) was above shown to manifest Lewis' general opposition to reductionist positions, to positions which explain away where they ought rather to explain. Such reductionism is typically naturalistic and sees science as the model of rationality and the final arbiter of truth. But other forms of reductionism also come under attack, particularly the theological reductionism of voluntarism, which seeks to reduce moral categories to the *arbitrary* command of God, uninformed by the Divine nature.

Where the reductionist views that he attacks typically divest reality of significance, Lewis' Christian views seek to reveal the inherent dignity and value of humanity and of nature in general. Nature is impoverished by setting it up as an autonomous existence, but when put in its proper place, under God, the created order reveals itself as abundant with meaning.[23]

Appendix A
Short Biography of C.S. Lewis

One regarded him as a lively independent thinker, but not specifically as a philosopher.
(Basil Mitchell in Walker 1990: 14)

He is among the great men of letters in the English-speaking world, not only of this century but ever; he is one of the most nourishing, relevant, and effective religious thinkers of this century. (Como 1998: x)

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEF SKETCH of Lewis' life and work is to give the reader a more rounded appreciation of these than could possibly be gained by even the closest reading of what precedes it. While such information could be easily found in other more expert sources, I feel obliged to say something myself.[1] This sense of obligation springs from the obvious fact that the reader may have read nothing else either by or about C.S. Lewis, and that this dissertation, taken on its own, would give a rather one-sided impression of the man.

The principal error that one could fall into on reading this dissertation is of thinking that C.S. Lewis was a philosopher, or was *just* a philosopher. Indeed, even if he had read some of Lewis' books, had these been only *Miracles, The Problem of Pain*, or *The Abolition of Man* the reader could still find himself under this impression. Lewis *was* schooled in philosophy and for a short time taught philosophy at Oxford,[2] but Lewis was not a philosopher by profession, despite his ambitions at one time being very much in that direction. His first permanent academic post was as a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was a tutor and lecturer in English Language and Literature from 1925 until 1954. Following this, and taking a position created with him in mind, Lewis became Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English, at Cambridge where he also held a fellowship at Magdalene College.

To avoid confusion between the various members of his family who could be called Lewis, it will help to point out that for some reason, from around the age of four, C.S Lewis liked to be referred to as "Jacksie" or "Jack" and would answer to no other name. The name stuck, and he was ever after known as Jack to his friends.

Clive Staples Lewis was born in a suburb of Belfast in 1898 to Albert Lewis and Florence ("Flora") Hamilton. Jack seems to have inherited from them many of the traits that made him such an able scholar. Albert shared with his son an exceptional

memory and a sharp wit, while Flora was like Jack in being an avid reader with a great ability in logic. Unfortunately, Jack seems not to have inherited his mother's considerable mathematical skills. Indeed, his lack of talent in this area nearly prevented him studying at Oxford.[3] Jack also had an older brother, Warren, who as well as being his brother was one of his closest friends. At an early age, Jack was fond of reading, writing and drawing. Many of these activities were shared with his brother. Together they created an imaginary world called Boxen, of which they wrote many stories and drew many pictures. Warren took charge of "Indai" (= India) and Jack, "Animal-land." Jack later remarked that Animal-land combined what were (at the time) his two chief literary pleasures: "dressed animals" and "knights in armour." I've never read any of the Boxen stories, plays and histories, or seen any of the maps that Jack and Warren produced, but the mere outlines provided in *The C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* make them sound an impressive achievement for such young boys.[4] Jack enjoyed books, and before he was fully ten years old (on 5th March 1908) he recorded in his diary "Read Paradise Lost, reflections thereon."[5]

It was a few months after Jack made this entry in his diary that disaster struck: his mother died of cancer on August 23rd. This was to be a double blow to Jack, who effectively lost his father at the same time; he was soon sent away to boarding school in England.

Albert's choice of schools left much to be desired, and Jack was deeply unhappy through his school years. He was not, however, quite so unhappy as is suggested in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* ... and he later admitted as much. He had a couple of inspiring teachers, continued to enjoy his books, took an increasing interest in music (especially Wagner), engaged in many stimulating conversions and regularly took a good walk. The last of the boys' schools was Malvern, and after "only one year [there], Jack was very unhappy and physically exhausted ... but it was only when he threatened to shoot himself that Albert took his complaints seriously" (Schultz and West, eds. 1998: 23). In September 1914, Jack was sent to complete his schooling with Albert's old (and retired) headmaster William T. Kirkpatrick.

Kirkpatrick was more than a little eccentric, as were his teaching methods. In an almost machine like manner, he would stop a person mid-sentence and ask them to clarify their terms, or to justify their claims. Indeed, Jack soon discovered Kirkpatrick's eccentricity when only shortly after stepping off the train to meet him for the first time, in an attempt to "make conversation" Jack remarked something to the

effect that the "scenery" of Surrey was much "wilder" than he had expected. Jack's own description of the event cannot be beaten.

> 'Stop!' shouted [Kirkpatrick] with a suddenness that made me jump. 'What do you mean by wildness and what grounds had you for not expecting it?' I replied I don't know what, still 'making conversation.' As answer after answer was torn to shreds it at last dawned upon me that he really wanted to know. ... I was stung into attempting a real answer. A few passes sufficed to show that I had no clear and distinct idea corresponding to the word 'wildness,' and that, in so far as I had any idea at all, 'wildness' was a singularly inept word. 'Do you not see, then,' concluded [Kirkpatrick], 'that your remark was meaningless?' I prepared to sulk a little, assuming that the subject would be dropped. Never was I more mistaken in my life. Having analysed my terms, [Kirkpatrick] was proceeding to deal with my proposition as a whole. On what had I based (he pronounced it *baized*) my expectations about the Flora and Geology of Surrey? Was it maps, or photographs or books? I could produce none. It had, heaven help me, never occurred to me that what I called my thoughts needed to be 'baized' on anything. [Kirkpatrick] once more drew a conclusion ... 'Do you not see, then, that you had no right to have any opinion whatever on the subject?'
> By this time our acquaintance had lasted about three and a half minutes; but the tone set by this first conversation was preserved without a single break during all the years I spent at [Great] Bookham. (1955b: 109-10)

To Kirkpatrick even the most casual remark was a "summons to disputation." Jack loved such arguments, and soon began to put on "intellectual muscle." Before long, he could hold his own in argument with Kirkpatrick, who in the end complimented Jack by warning him against the dangers of "excessive subtlety". Kirkpatrick had put in place the foundation in logic and argument that would later enable Jack to become a master dialectician.

Under the tutelage of Kirkpatrick and his wife, Jack was to become fluent in Greek, Latin, French, and Italian, and competent in German. Indeed, such was his mastery of languages that in later life he would play scrabble allowing words in all known languages. More importantly, while at Great Bookham, Jack learned skills and acquired (good) habits that stayed with him the rest of his life: the habits and method of study.

Jack's involvement in the First World War began only shortly after sitting the exams for entrance to Oxford, when in May 1917 he joined the Officer's Training Corps. He shared a room with "Paddy" Moore, who after a rocky start became a good friend. In fulfilment of a promise to look after his family should Paddy die in the war, Jack became a lifelong friend of the Moores. Jack spent a few months on the front line in France, and twice found himself in hospital. He passed much of his leave in the home of Mrs Moore, who was separated but not divorced from her husband. The nature of Jack's relationship with Mrs Moore has been the subject of much speculation, the chief question being whether they were lovers. They were certainly close and following the

war, as indeed during it, she was like a mother to him, and he a son to her. In 1921, after two years back in Oxford, Jack had completed his residency requirement and moved in with the Moores.

Jack never revealed this last fact to his father who would have been outraged. Indeed, even knowing what little he did, Albert was jealous of Jack's friendship with Mrs Moore. He wanted Jack to spend his holidays with him in Ireland. But Jack desired far more privacy than Albert would allow, and regarded his father as meddlesome, and not without reason: he often insisted on reading Jack's mail, with the consequence that Jack and his correspondents had to be very careful about what they wrote. Aside from the earlier traumas of being sent away to school. Jack was also deeply hurt when Albert failed to visit him in hospital or when on leave. Jack's time at university also put strain on Albert's already stretched financial resources, which could not have helped matters. Despite this it is clear that Albert cared deeply for his son and on Jack's appointment to his Oxford fellowship Albert made a touching entry in his diary: "I went to his room and burst into tears of joy. I knelt down and thanked God with a full heart. My prayers had been answered." Although they were on somewhat better terms when Albert died in 1929, Jack always felt badly about how he had treated his father.

At about the time that Lewis came back to Oxford following the war, his collection of poems *Spirits in Bondage* was published. These had been written from 1915 onward, many when he was just sixteen or seventeen. "The theme of *Spirits in Bondage*, according to its author, is that nature is malevolent and that any God that exists is outside the cosmic system" (Sayer 1997: 144).

He had come a long way from his earlier (albeit nominal) Christianity. At one of his schools, it had been compulsory to go to church twice every Sunday. It was then that Jack made his first concerted effort to obey his conscience, to pray and read the Bible regularly. However, by the time he was at Malvern these activities had evidently become a burden to him. His first contact with other religious options coupled with the feeling that his prayers were in vain, quickly led Jack to a firm atheistic commitment. Once Jack began to reason about such things, he soon found that two sides of his personality were at war with one another. On the one side was his imagination, with a love of epic poetry and the mythological. On the other side was his reason, which denied reality to all the things he loved. This tension was to remain with Jack until he became a Christian in 1931.

In the meantime, Jack was an undergraduate of University College, Oxford, where he excelled in all his studies. By 1923, Lewis had gained a triple first in Honour Mods (Greek and Latin texts), Greats (classical philosophy) and English Language and Literature. Despite such academic prowess it was another year before Jack had an academic post, and the first was only temporary ... he lectured, as mentioned earlier, in place of University College's philosophy tutor E.F. Carritt, who was going on leave. Having applied for all the fellowships in philosophy and English that were offered by Oxford colleges Jack was beginning to despair. The last such post he applied for was to teach English at Magdalen. He did not hold out much hope of securing the position because many more experienced men, including his old tutor, had also applied. Lewis put his success down to the fact that he was probably the only candidate qualified in both English and philosophy, an attractive combination because English was at the time a relatively new subject and it wasn't clear how many would choose to read it. Thus, if Jack found himself with spare time he could "help out" in philosophy. Given that he had struggled to find work for so long, and was using much of his income (some of which at that time still came from his father) to support the Moores it is no surprise to find Jack writing to Albert, "I need hardly say that I would have agreed to coach a troupe of performing blackbirds in the quadrangle."

According to all reports, Jack was a gifted lecturer and an excellent tutor. Tutorials generally had the conventional format: the student would read an essay he had been asked to prepare, and then the two would sit and discuss it. Some found Lewis' argumentative style difficult, but most of his tutees seem to have enjoyed and appreciated their weekly meetings.

Under the influence of such friends as Owen Barfield and J.R.R. Tolkien (famous as the author of *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, but also professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford), Jack was beginning his journey toward Christian belief. He had met Barfield when they were both undergraduates, and they were ever after engaged in one long argument (the "Great War" as they came to call it). Under the influence of Barfield (himself a convert to Anthroposophy) Lewis came to see that since the present is a 'period of history' like any other and is subject to its own characteristic illusions; one couldn't reject some view simply because it was 'outdated.' Barfield also seems to have been largely responsible for Lewis' move from atheism to Idealism/Pantheism: it was he who brought Lewis to the belief that knowledge could not be accounted for within a naturalistic world-view.[6]

According to his own account, there was one major factor in his next philosophical development, his move from Pantheism to Theism. This was his inability to give coherent expression to his belief, either in word or in deed. Whenever he took his belief seriously, Lewis found himself referring to God with personal pronouns, and praying; activities that were flatly inconsistent with his belief. These may sound like weak reasons, and might lead one to suspect that Jack would simply rather have been a theist than a pantheist. Nothing could be further from the truth. Pantheism made a much greater appeal to his imagination, and seemed to be less morally demanding. Moreover, pantheism did not involve a God who could 'interfere'.

Various factors combined to bring about the final step to Christian belief. Firstly, Lewis found that all, or nearly all, of his favourite authors were Christians. One of these was G.K. Chesterton, whom Lewis enjoyed "for his goodness." He read Chesterton's classic *The Everlasting Man*, and found, for the first time, that a Christian outline of history could make sense. Around the same time, in 1926, one of his colleagues, the "hardest boiled of all the atheists [he] ever met" (Lewis 1955b: 178) made the (to Lewis) astonishing remark that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was in fact surprisingly good. If even *he* wasn't safe, thought Lewis, where was he to turn?

It took a lengthy conversation, lasting until after 3am, with Tolkien and another friend Hugo Dyson, before Lewis would be ready to accept Christianity. This conversation revolved around the nature of myth, a literary genre that fascinated Lewis. There were, he realised, mythic themes in Christian thinking ... but where he was attracted to myth in other forms, he found the mythic element in Christianity distasteful. Until then he had thought no myth could be true and defined a myth as "lies breathed through silver." Tolkien and Dyson led him to reconsider. A few days later (October 1, 1931[7]) he wrote to his long standing friend Arthur Greeves: "I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ ... My long night talk with Dyson and Tolkien had a great deal to do with it."

Jack's conversion brought reconciliation between his reason and imagination.[8] Under the influence of George MacDonald,[9] Lewis' imagination had already been, as he termed it, "baptised," but now he could embrace the mythical, the poetic and the epic in a way that he had previously found impossible. That there was one central 'myth,' much like the others, except that it was actually true, gave legitimacy to the meaning he had always felt to be there in other myths and legends.[10]

Lewis, Tolkien and Dyson were also members of a group that became known as the Inklings.[11] The important years of this writing group were from the mid 1930s to the end of the 1940s. This was "a group of male friends, all people of talent, who met together at least once a week to talk about ideas, to read to each other for pleasure and criticism pieces they were writing, and to enjoy a good evening of 'the cut and parry of prolonged, fierce, masculine argument.' [The group] in fact embodied C.S. Lewis' ideals of life and pleasure" (Duriez 2000: 96). Since the academic climate in which the Inklings lived and worked was largely unsympathetic to their ideals, the group gave its members support and encouragement that was not to be found elsewhere. Between them, this group published a huge amount of work, and much of it had gained something from being read to the Inklings in draft form. It was here that the majority of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* ("the New Hobbit") had its first airing, the same goes for Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* and, I am sure, many of his other writings.

Through the 1930s and '40s, Lewis was incredibly busy. He continued to lecture and tutor at Magdalen, and wrote voluminously. His recognition as the author of such classics of popular theology as *The Problem of Pain* and *The Screwtape Letters* only served to increase his already large correspondence. Warren, by then retired, became Jack's secretary, looking after his appointments and much of his mail. But Warren's presence was no unalloyed blessing: he had become an alcoholic. Further, Mrs Moore was still living with him at their home, the Kilns. Due to illness, she required much looking after, which inevitably fell to Jack. In 1949, this overwork put Jack in hospital. He was sorely in need of a break. Lewis' workload would have been significantly decreased had he been offered a professorship. But this was never to happen at Oxford; perhaps partly because of his success as a popular author, which other academics saw as unbecoming in a scholar. It was not until 1951, when Mrs Moore died, that Lewis was able to consider either a long holiday or a job outside of Oxford, and it was 1954 before he took the newly created chair of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University, where he also became a fellow of Magdalene College. He kept his home in Oxford and still saw many of his friends, though soon gave up commuting to attend the meetings of the Oxford Socratic Club, a debating society devoted to open discussion of questions relating to Christianity, of which he had been the president since its founding in 1942.[12]

The most important event of the next few years was surely his marriage to Joy Davidman Gresham. She had been converted from Marxism to Christianity at least partly through Lewis' writings. Jack and Joy exchanged many letters, and when she moved to England, and subsequently to Oxford, they became close friends. She was intelligent, a match for Lewis. She was an accomplished writer (publishing works of poetry, fiction, and theology), and it was against her that Jack played Scrabble allowing, as I mentioned before, words in all known languages. The marriage was a deeply happy one. Lewis confessed to a friend, "I never expected to have, in my sixties, the happiness that passed me by in my twenties." This happiness was to be short lived. Cancer reared its ugly head again and Joy died in 1960. They had only been married for three years and four months.

Lewis himself died on November 22, 1963, the same day as President John F. Kennedy and Aldous Huxley. Of all the writings he left us, Lewis is probably best known as the author of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, one of seven children's stories, all written between 1950 and 1956, which together comprise *The Chronicles of Narnia*.[13] He also wrote stories for 'grown-ups,' a science-fiction trilogy and a reworking of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, *Till We Have Faces*. His scholarly works include *The Allegory of Love*, *The Personal Heresy*, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, *Studies in Words*, *An Experiment in Criticism*, *The Discarded Image* and his contribution to the Oxford History of English Literature, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*. His works of popular theology and philosophy include *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Abolition of Man*, *The Great Divorce*, *Miracles*, *Reflections on the Psalms*, *The Four Loves*, and *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. Besides this Lewis wrote some 153 essays, many of which are now available in various collections of his writings. He preached many sermons. During the war he spoke on Christianity to the R.A.F. and gave the radio talks that were become *Mere Christianity*. Indeed, during World War Two his was arguably the second best known voice in country (the best known being that of Winston Churchill). By 1947, Lewis had become so well known as to appear on the cover of *Time Magazine*.

His influence has been immense, and C.S. Lewis has often – with justification – been called the most influential Christian apologist of the 20th Century.[14] He was a thickly built man, with a rather ruddy complexion, and often thought to have the look of a farmer. *Shabby* seems to be the word most commonly used about his appearance.

His brother commented that Lewis' clothes were a matter of complete indifference to him. One writer, commenting on Lewis' appearance even compared him with a scarecrow, but added that to compare Lewis with a scarecrow would be unkind – to the scarecrow! (Dundas-Grant 1979: 230). As this suggests, while Lewis was a man of remarkable learning he was very down-to-earth, and was once referred to by a truck-driver as "a real nice bloke." (C. Morris 1979: 198) According to Walter Hooper, Literary Advisor to the C.S. Lewis Estate, Lewis was "the most thoroughly converted man [he] ever met".

Appendix B
C.S. Lewis on Faith and Reason[1]

I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. (Lewis 1939a: 157)

IN MY SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS, I addressed a misconception that could arise through reading this dissertation. There I stressed that although his work contains much philosophy, Lewis was not – or not primarily – a philosopher. Here I wish to address a second possible misconception. That misconception would have it that Lewis was an out-and-out rationalist. As the epigraph reveals, Lewis did sometimes call himself a rationalist, but it seems evident that in so doing he was using the term rather loosely – as we shall see.

Given that Lewis' apologetic works make extensive use of reason it is unsurprising to find him saying, in *Mere Christianity*, that "I am not asking anyone to accept Christianity if his best reasoning tells him that the weight of evidence is against it" (1952b: 121). Lewis clearly believed that "the weight of evidence" is in favour of Christianity. Although Lewis thought there was ample evidence available in support of Christian belief, he did not think that the evidence is logically conclusive.

I do not think there is *demonstrative* proof (like Euclid) of Christianity, nor of the existence of matter, nor of the good will and honesty of my best and oldest friends. I think all three are (except perhaps the second) far more probable than the alternatives. ... As to *why* God doesn't make it demonstratively clear: are we sure that He is even interested in the kind of Theism which would be a compelled logical assent to a conclusive argument? Are we interested in it in personal matters? I demand from my friend a trust in my good faith which is *certain* without demonstrative proof.[2]

[T]here is evidence both for and against the Christian [position] which fully rational minds, working honestly, can assess differently. (1955a: 210)

[Our reasons for accepting Christian belief do not] amount to logical compulsion. At every stage of religious development man may rebel, if not without violence to his own nature, yet without absurdity. (1940a: 20)

Lewis' task as an apologist was to present the Christian vision of reality in a compelling way. Reason was only one of the tools that he used to achieve this. He made vivid appeals to the imagination through the use of well-chosen illustrations and analogies and, in his fictional works, by weaving Christian imagery and ideas into his stories. Although reason was only one of the tools used here, it was an essential tool.

However, if a view does not recommend itself to our intellect, it should be rejected no matter how much it appeals to our imagination or moves our will. Lewis' writings engage our minds by connecting the Christian vision of reality with our experience of life, and doing so in ways that enable each to illumine the other.

> Let us suppose we possess parts of a novel or a symphony. Someone now brings us a newly discovered piece of manuscript and says, "This is the missing part of the work. This is the chapter on which the whole plot of the novel really turned. This is the main theme of the symphony." Our business would be to see whether the new passage, if admitted to the central place which the discoverer claimed for it, did actually illuminate all the parts we had already seen and "pull them together." (Lewis 1960b: 113)

By illuminating and pulling together the diverse and seemingly disparate facets of our lives, Christianity reveals itself as the truth. Lewis offers many lines of argument; lines of argument that combine into a single and compelling cumulative case for Christian belief.[3] Lewis was convinced that becoming and remaining a Christian did not amount to intellectual suicide. God wants us to worship Him with our minds as well as with our hearts: "If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all" (Lewis 1952b: 72). However, we must be wary of reducing Christianity to intellectual assent to a particular set of doctrines. "[W]e must admit that Faith, as we know it, does not flow from philosophical argument alone" (Lewis 1952a: 57). Indeed, Lewis warns us that philosophical argument can sometimes become inimical to faith.

> There have been men before now who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself ... as if the good Lord had nothing to do but *exist*! (Lewis 1946a: 65-6)

If faith does not flow from reason alone, and if reason can sometimes be inimical to faith even while being used in support of Christian doctrines, one must ask why Lewis was so keen to use reason in defence of faith. He answers that

> To be ignorant and simple now – not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defence but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. (1939b: 176)

Austin Farrer, who often spoke at the Oxford Socratic Club, defended Lewis' method:

> It is commonly said that if rational argument is so seldom the cause of conviction, philosophical apologists must largely be wasting their shot. The premise is true, but the conclusion does not follow. For though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows

the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish. (Farrer 1965)

To my mind, one of Lewis' greatest achievements was to bring reason to religion without reducing religious questions to intriguing matters of metaphysics. It is not uncommon to find a philosopher discussing the existence of God in just the same way as he would discuss the liar paradox: as an intellectual game. Lewis was well aware of the temptation but he seldom, if ever, gave into it.[4]

There comes a moment when the children who have been playing burglars hush suddenly: was that a *real* footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion ("Man's search for God"!) suddenly draw back. Supposing we found Him? We never meant it to come to *that*! Worse still, supposing He had found us? (Lewis 1960b: 98)

Notes

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. It is interesting to compare Lewis' arguments here with those that Antony Flew (1993: 293-302) presents against Skinner's behaviourism. See also Carl Paul Ellerman (1990) and the reply from Stephen R.L. Clark (1990).

2. In a similar vein, I remember being struck by the resemblance between these passages from John McDowell and Lewis. McDowell: "[Something of moral value] is conceived to be not merely such as to elicit [a certain] 'attitude' ... but rather such as to *merit* it" (1985: 118). Lewis: "Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it – believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval" (1943a: 14).

3. Such as Peterson *et al*, eds. (1996). The original version appears in Lewis (1952b), book one.

4. For more on the similarities between Lewis and MacIntyre, see Walker (1990).

5. See Thomas Talbott (1987) and his entry on *The Problem of Pain* in J.D. Schultz & J.G. West Jr., eds. (1998: 339-41).

6. For a little more on the argument see Chapter 7, pp. 155-9. The argument, or hints of it, appears in many of Lewis' writings. See especially Lewis (1946c), (1947), (1960b). Useful commentary includes A. Flew (1955), (1958); E. Gellner (1957); V. Reppert (1989b); and of course G.E.M. Anscombe (1948) and the introduction to Anscombe (1981). More contemporary material offering similar arguments includes R. Talyor (1974: 112-20); W. Hasker (1973), (1998); V. Reppert (1999), (2000), (2001), (Forthcoming); J. Aach (1990); A. Plantinga (2000: 227-40, 280-4); and J. Beilby, ed. (2002).

7. For this strategy, see Peter Kreeft (1982: 53ff) and S.R. Burson and J.L. Walls (1998: 241).

8. Another route would be to take the first of these alternatives for some NT passages and the second for others.

9. Lewis made his own contribution to these arguments in Lewis (1959b). For an introduction to these issues from a Christian viewpoint, see Lee Strobel (1998).

10. He clearly taught, for example, that God is personal, and endorsed the doctrine of Hell. Neither fits well with the assumption that Jesus' teaching was pantheistic. One might suppose that He was misunderstood here too, but if this strategy is applied in every case it can hardly be used as a defence of the claim that Jesus was a good teacher, for it would clearly imply the precise opposite. For this and other relevant data, see P. Kreeft and R. Tacelli (1995: 165-70).

11. Another relevant piece by C.S. Lewis, not referred to in the main text, is Lewis (1950).

12. On religious language see C.S. Lewis (1944a), (1945c) and (1967c). On prayer, Lewis (1942d: Letter 27); (1945d); (1945g); (1953a); (1959a); (1960b: Appendix B); and (1964b). On punishment, Lewis (1949) and (1961b).

Chapter 2: C.S. Lewis and the Euthyphro Dilemma

1. There are also various ways in which the 'because' could be filled out. It must denote some asymmetric dependence relation, but this could be a broadly causal relation, a constitutive relation, or something else entirely.

2. There are complications here that ought to be mentioned. First, there probably is not a one-to-one correlation between God's commands and moral truths; it seems plausible to suppose that God often commands (or forbids) not particular actions but particular kinds of action. Second, and connectedly, it often happens that there is a set of actions of which we are obliged to perform at

least one, without there being any one action that we are obliged to perform. Third, it seems possible for a person to be obliged to perform an action not because God has commanded that action but because performing that action is the only available way of performing an action of a type that God *has* commanded. I see no reason to think these points cannot be accommodated within revisions of (DCTa) to (DCTc), but I do not attempt such revisions here. For a start on these issues, see Edward Wierenga (1983).

3. Philip L. Quinn labels this proposition the "Karamazov Thesis" in his *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements* (1978: 30). The name derives from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

4. Plato's *Euthyphro*, 10a1 (1969 edn.: 31).

5. A general form of this question, which could be asked of all formulations of DCT, runs: *Do things have moral status M because they stand in relation R to God, or do they stand in relation R to God because they have moral status M?*

6. Richard Joyce has pointed out to me that if the 'because' in (ED2) does not indicate God's reasons, then (depending on just what it *does* indicate) it may be possible to endorse both (ED1) and (ED2).

7. Or, if "God is good" is analytic, then for "God" substitute "the creator" throughout the argument.

8. Though there are certain affinities between this argument and Plato's, Nielsen seems to be taking his inspiration here from Kant. A good article on the Kantian argument is Mark Linville (1990a).

9. Richard Joyce (2002) points out that such a conclusion would be "wildly overstated".

10. This is because I also suspect that if someone performs action A for reason B, then B is in some good sense a cause of A, that (Arb5) may also use this broadly causal sense of 'because,' and because such a 'because' seems to me to be transitive. See the references in the following note for more.

11. See Stephen J. Sullivan (1993) and (1994).

12. Joyce (2002) gives an elaborated version of this response.

13. Paul Rooney (1995) offers a response to the arbitrariness objection based upon the conditions of the rationality of ends and of the rationality of means.

14. This reformulation of the arbitrariness objection was inspired by Thomas B. Talbott (1982).

15. I suspect that more than anyone else, the theologian Lewis had in mind here was William Paley. Lewis explicitly links Paley with DCT in the *Problem of Pain* (1940a: 80), which I quote in Chapter 7, p. 165.

16. See the interesting response made to this in Hanink and Mar (1987).

17. This, in broad outline, is the response to the Euthyphro dilemma offered by Richard Swinburne (1974). For more on Swinburne's position see T.J. Mawson (2002).

18. Essentialism here contrasts with Voluntarism, according to which God could have issued commands radically different from those He has in fact issued. William Ockham famously endorsed voluntarism.

19. God's *de dicto* necessary goodness consists in the fact that something that is less than perfectly good could not be appropriately called God. His *de re* necessary goodness consists in the fact that God (where "God" functions as a rigid designator) is essentially good.

20. This approach is taken in Thomas Morris (1987b) and in Mark D. Linville (1990b).

21. The formulation of (DCTf) to (DCTh) owes much to Linda Zagzebski (1998).

22. Three roughly formulated possibilities suggest themselves: (1) For any moral attribute God possesses, does God possesses that attribute because it is a moral virtue, or is that attribute a moral virtue because God possesses it? (2) Does God count His being, for example, *loving* among the reasons for approving of Himself because being loving *is* good, or is His being loving good because God counts it among the reasons for approving of Himself? (3) Is an action in accord with the nature of God because it is good, or is it good because it is accord with the nature of God?

23. This line of thinking occurs in William Alston (1989b) and Paul Rooney (1996).

24. This move is, of course, available to defenders of the unmodified DCT. But that is only to say that the unmodified DCT can avoid certain forms of the arbitrariness objection. I have argued that such a position cannot avoid all forms of this objection.

25. See Mark Linville (1990b) and David Basinger (1981).

26. Wittgenstein denied this (1953: #50, 24-5), presumably for reasons connected with the Lewisian maxim about measuring rods quoted earlier. Despite this, it seems obvious (to me) that the distance between the two marks on the rod in Paris is one metre. If this remark is to be consistent with the Lewisian maxim, then the rod must be a metre long in a different sense than other things. Providing this sense is not difficult. The rod has that length with a necessity unique to itself.

27. I also point out here that these same problems would seem to affect any response to the Euthyphro based upon the doctrine of Divine Simplicity.

28. In this context, one interesting development is Peter Geach's rejection of God's omnipotence in favour of His almightiness. Omnipotence is understood as the power *to do* all things (of a certain sort), almightiness is rather power *over* all things. See Peter Geach (1977: Chapter 1).

29. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I q. 25 a. 3, quoted in Charles Taliaferro (1998). Richard Swinburne has argued that God's omniscience and omnipotence jointly entail His goodness. The idea seems to be that since God knows the moral standard, and the moral standard provides reasons to act which override any competing reasons, God could only fail to act according to the moral law if He suffered from weakness of will, an assumption which is incompatible with God's omnipotence.

30. Indeed, powers to exercise our powers in certain ways are generally dubious. If such powers exist, then it seems reasonable to suppose that there are also powers to exercise these meta-level powers. In short, we are off on an infinite regress.

31. This response is inspired by Thomas V. Morris (1987c).

32. The general approach here is that offered in George N. Schlesinger (1987b). See also Wes Morriston (2001).

Chapter 3: C.S. Lewis and the Possibility of Miracles

1. Rudolf Bultmann quoted in Plantinga (2000: 403).

2. Max Planck quoted in Strobel (2000: 58).

3. Consequently where I give 'definitions' of *miracle* they will all take the form "event E is a miracle only if ..." and it will be understood that the missing component of the definition is bound up with the event's religious significance as described in the main text.

4. As presented here, this theory is hopelessly underdeveloped and vulnerable to several well-known counter-examples (see Armstrong 1983). Nothing in my argument hinges on the (un)availability of a more sophisticated version of regularity theory.

5. At least this is how things would seem, but see Dretske (1977).

6. In what follows, it will be fairly clear that G.K. Chesterton adopts a regularity theory of laws, while C.S. Lewis seems to prefer the more-than-regularity approach. I say only "seems", for some passages in Lewis suggest otherwise.

7. He writes, "Natural laws ... exert no opposition or resistance to anything, not even to the odd or exceptional. They are simply highly generalised shorthand descriptions of how things do in fact happen" (McKinnon 1967: 309).

8. Naturalism may be roughly defined as the view according to which nothing exists besides the material world, or that the only stuff there is is the stuff that can be investigated by the sciences.

9. We might for instance think that a person being dealt a perfect hand in bridge is an exceptional or striking event. But while some people might call such an event miraculous, they surely wouldn't mean this in any way that would spell trouble for the atheist, not even if they thought that God was involved in the occurrence of that event in some way.

10. This last point has been put rather schematically and may seem weak. However, it can be defended (see the following chapter) and is in any case superfluous to the defence of the *possibility* of the miraculous.

11. One could equally well draw the conclusion that we have misunderstood the words "violation" and "suspension". Indeed, this seems just another way of drawing the same conclusion. However, to avoid misunderstandings, I will distance myself from these terms as far as possible.

12. Flew (1967): "a miracle is something which would never have happened had nature, as it were, been left to itself". Mackie (1982: 20): "A miracle occurs when the world is not left to itself, when something distinct from the natural order as a whole intrudes into it".

13. Strictly, an extra clause is necessary, for there is a kind of miracle that this definition excludes. The kind of miracle I have in mind is God's making a certain event happen earlier or later than it would otherwise have done, or making it occur in a different place. Thus, the final clause should read, "together imply either that E does not occur, or that E occurs at time and place (T,P)" where E in fact occurs at (T_1,P_1) and $(T_1,P_1) \neq (T,P)$. See Hughes (1992).

14. The analogy between (a deistic) God and a watchmaker became prevalent following the publication of William Paley's book *Natural Theology* (1836). Paley began with the observation that were we to stumble upon a watch in a field, even if we could not fully understand it, we would know that it had at some point been designed, and that there must therefore have been a designer. He went on to argue that much of nature is in relevant respects similar to the watch and that therefore we should

also infer the existence of a designer in this case. Dawkins' book, about the nature and potency of evolutionary explanation, is basically a modern day response to Paley.

15. Stuart Judge (1991) seems to be making the same point.

16. It is precisely this view of God which is best labelled by the phrase "God-of-the-gaps," for within semi-deism God is only active in the events which are unexplainable in terms of (current?) science, and thus his sphere of activity shrinks with every advance in science. The worry, of course, is that things cannot go on shrinking forever. They eventually disappear. However, not being a naturalist I see no good reason to say that everything will one day be explainable in naturalistic terms. Indeed, it seems to me that many advances in science, while undeniably adding to our knowledge, only reveal that there is more left to explain than we previously thought. See for example Michael Behe (1996) and Betty with Cordell (1987).

17. See, for example, Brian Hebblethwaite (1988: 9).

18. One of my reasons for being reluctant to identify these 'two' distinctions is my suspicion that it would lead to seeing the Bible as the result of a kind of 'automatic writing,' in which the canonical writers must be envisaged as writing while in some kind of trance. This seems to me an unacceptable consequence, but if that consequence can be avoided (and maybe it can, but I cannot see how) then perhaps these 'two' distinctions can be thought of as the same distinction.

19. It should be noted that even if the points made below do not succeed in showing that regularity theory is mistaken, I have nevertheless provided a coherent definition of the miraculous and have therefore shown that miracles are not logically impossible. The imagined regularity theorist does not accept the definition because it clashes with his regularity theory, not because the definition is internally contradictory or otherwise unacceptable.

20. The argument is, I believe, just as potent against the combination of little-more-than-regularity and naturalism but since my concern is more with the possibility of miracles than with the correct account of the laws of nature this is of little importance here.

21. The reader may think that the argument fails because while the regularity theorist doesn't think that the law "all elephants have trunks" explains the regularity, it doesn't follow that they should also think nothing (natural) explains this regularity. However, such an objection misses the generality of Chesterton's point. Any proposed naturalistic explanation of this regularity would involve appeal to further laws and therefore to further regularities, which would in turn require explanation. Unfortunately this regress is vicious, and therefore unacceptable, for at no stage does it remove the element of coincidence which prompted the search for explanation.

22. For more on this passage see Ravi Zacharias (1994: Chapter 8).

23. Readers who are concerned as to whether (Def$_4$) fits with the Biblical understanding of the miraculous (assuming that there is such a thing) are referred to C. John Collins (2001).

24. A similar line of thought can be found in Lewis (1964b: 100).

25. As the earlier Chestertonian argument testifies, the laws of nature themselves are a second example.

26. On the philosophical side of that problem, see the following chapter.

27. Historically, many variations of the cosmological argument have required the inference from something like *every event requires a cause outside of itself* to *an infinite causal chain requires a cause outside itself*. Those wishing to deny that the universe has a cause are very quick to point out that such an inference commits the fallacy of composition. It is interesting to note, however, that a great many are so keen to do this that they cannot help committing the same fallacy themselves. David Hume, for instance, argues thus: "Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable should you afterwards ask me what was the cause of the whole twenty. This is sufficiently explained in explaining the cause of the parts" (Hume 1779: 59-60).

28. To the mathematically astute, this may seem dubious, since an infinite series of numbers can have a finite sum. (For example, $\frac{1}{10} + \frac{1}{100} + \frac{1}{1,000} + \frac{1}{10,000} + \ldots = \frac{1}{9}$.) This suggests that, even taking the whole series of them into account; the series of earlier and earlier events (with no earliest member) might nevertheless occupy only a finite period. The aim of this move is presumably to have both the advantages of an infinite past (having no earliest member) and those of a finite past (being in accord with scientific theory). However, this would seem not to remove any of the features of a real beginning which make it so problematic. As William Lane Craig (2000: 226-7) has pointed out, "having a beginning does not entail having a beginning point. Even in the standard [big bang] model, theorists sometimes "cut out" the initial singularity point without thinking that therefore space time no longer begins to exist and the problem of the origin of the universe is thereby solved. Time begins to exist just in case for any finite temporal interval, there are only a finite number of

[non-overlapping] equal temporal periods earlier than it." Given what follows in the main text, the naturalist seems to be in a dialectical bind.

29. Some might claim that a complete 'Big Bang' theory would include an explanation of how something can come from nothing. It would therefore include what are sometimes called "laws of initial conditions." Even if we ignore the dubious nature of such laws, they would not solve the naturalist's dilemma. After all, we must ask what makes the statements of such laws true, since by definition it could not be anything within the natural world. See Paul Davies (1993: 87-92).

30. G.K. Chesterton (1933: 139). Where I have the word 'atheist', Chesterton had 'evolutionist'. Chesterton's remarks here seem particularly appropriate in a world so taken with the 'Big Bang' theory ... which seems remarkably similar to the Christian idea of creation *ex nihilo*.

Chapter 4: C.S. Lewis, David Hume and the Credibility of Miracles

1. See Hume (1777). It is worth noting at the outset that the only kind of evidence for the miraculous that Hume explicitly considers is the evidence of testimony. Since I will be assuming that it is perfectly possible to have other kinds of evidence it is important to notice that, whatever Hume's argument actually is, it easily generalises so as to take other kinds of evidence into account.

2. I take my cue here from Beckwith (1989: 24).

3. The way Lewis has put his objection here is, it must be admitted, a little sloppy and seems to contain some rather odd assumptions. However, Lewis is surely correct that for Hume to assume our experience is totally uniform is to beg the question. See also the following note.

4. C. Stephen Evans sees the possibility of interpreting Hume as Lewis has done and agrees that such an argument would beg the question. However, like me, he thinks it is possible to interpret Hume's argument so that it does not commit this error. See Evans (1996: 153-4).

5. This is not to deny that the opponent of miracles sometimes (and sometimes in perfect rationality) not merely suspends judgement but positively disbelieves in the occurrence of a particular miracle (or class of miracles). This is compatible with what I have said in the main text, not least because Hume could adopt the 'suspension of judgement' strategy merely for the sake of argument, while in fact disbelieving.

6. "In principle" because in any particular case the sceptic may think that there was not even experience *as of* a miracle. The inclusion of an experience as of a miracle in our evidence base may well, and probably will, have to be argued for. But, in principle, such an argument could be successful.

7. This is important for, as we shall see, Hume refers to both the first stage of his *In Principle* argument and to this argument as a whole as his "proof." This is clearly because the argument's first stage is so much more important and so much more contentious.

8. The infinitesimal may be roughly defined as the infinitely small. But this is not technically correct, since it entails that if $x = 0$, then x is infinitesimal.

9. For the sake of argument, I accept this assumption. However, certain examples make me a little uneasy. Consider a random number generator, whose output could be any positive integer, and which on each use is as likely to 'give' any one number as it is any other number. Obviously, the prior probability of some specified number being 'given' on a specified occasion is infinitesimal. However, it would seem that we *could* have sufficient evidence to believe that that number was the output on that occasion. But perhaps there is something wrong with examples like this.

10. See Mackie (1982) especially p. 25.

11. This is because that assumption would not be true (or at least we've no reason to believe it to be true), as was demonstrated in the previous chapter. But even if the last chapter was ultimately wrong, Hume and Mackie are not best understood as relying upon this assumption, for that would make all their subsequent argument superfluous.

12. As a model for how scientific laws are confirmed this is surely mistaken. Not every event that happens as a law/theory would have predicted serves to offer (any?/equal?) confirmation to that law/theory. I don't know quite how the model should be changed. *Perhaps* we should adopt the Popperian sounding suggestion that only a *sufficiently novel prediction* turning out correct offers confirmation to the theory/law, which made that prediction. In any case, it is the account of confirmation outlined in the main text that Hume and his defenders seem to adopt.

13. This criticism of the Humean argument is put forward well by Richard Otte (1996). See also George Schlesinger (1987a) and Alvin Plantinga (1986).

14. These examples are due to Steve Makin.

15. Chesterton seems to be onto a similar point when in his short article called "Miracles and Modern Civilisation," he writes, "The philosophical case against miracles is somewhat easily dealt with. There is no philosophical case against miracles. There are such things as the laws of nature rationally speaking. What everybody knows is this only. That there is repetition in nature. What everybody knows is that pumpkins produce pumpkins. What nobody knows is why they should not produce elephants and giraffes. ... There is one philosophical question about miracles and only one. Many able modern Rationalists cannot apparently even get it into their heads. ... The question of miracles is merely this. Do you know why a pumpkin goes on being a pumpkin? If you do not, you cannot possibly tell whether a pumpkin could turn into a coach or couldn't. That is all ... What Christianity says is merely this. That this repetition in Nature has its origin not in a thing resembling a law but a thing resembling a will ... and therefore [Christianity] believes that other and different things might come by it" (1904a: 386-7).

16. Since a miracle has been defined (in the previous chapter) as an event that would not happen but for the special activity of God, it is unclear how an event can be more or less of a miracle. Either it is the result of God's special activity or it isn't. The most charitable way to read *Event e_1 is more miraculous than event e_2* seems to be something like *Without the special action of God, event e_1 would be less likely to occur than would event e_2* or (equivalently?) *Event e_1 is more likely to be a miracle than event e_2*. But there is a clear logical difference between these statements and *Event e_1 is less probable than event e_2*. Thus, Hume's 'argument' here (see the following note) fails.

17. To be fair, I should say that this is not really an argument that Hume is presenting here, but simply his conclusion. The point in the main text is therefore that the conclusion is not self-evident, and needs support. My other observations are an attempt to show that this support is not forthcoming.

18. For more on the subject see the following: Norman Geisler (1999: 459); C.D Broad (1916/7: 86-8); J.A. Cover (1999: 340).

19. I have in mind Andrew Rein (1986).

20. I've included the word 'fair' here to prevent it from being claimed that the event, E, can be replicated when in fact what has occurred (though similar), occurred under conditions so different from those in which E was believed to occur that we cannot legitimately infer that the same factor brought the events about in both cases. In this context, looking again at the definition of the miraculous I gave in the previous chapter, it becomes evident that Mackie's clause "given some actual earlier ... state of the world," is not always redundant. To illustrate this point consider the following scenario. Imagine that someone holds that the origin of life on Earth must have been a miracle. If someone then discovers that they can 'create' life in the laboratory, have they disproved or undermined the claim that the origin of life on Earth was a miracle? The answer to this question depends upon how similar the way in which life arose on Earth can reasonably be believed to be to the way life was 'created' in the laboratory. If to get it to happen in the laboratory the scientist had to engineer special circumstances which we have no reason to believe were (or which we've reason to believe were not) present on Earth when and where life arose then the claim that the origin of life was a miracle may still stand. This example is not a merely theoretical one; for an introduction to this issue see Chapter 3 (an interview with Walter L. Bradley) of Lee Strobel (2000) and/or Chapter 8 of Michael J. Behe (1996).

21. Evans (1996: 157) makes much the same remark.

22. In a letter to John Stewart, Hume wrote, "But allow me to tell you, that I never asserted so absurd a Proposition as that any thing might arise without a Cause." This is quoted in Beckwith (1989: 58).

23. What I label 'incredible' here is the idea of a *natural* faculty of seeing the future. The Christian holds that while some people have 'seen' into the future, they did not do so by the exercise of a natural faculty.

24. At least this is true on one interpretation of the principle. On others, the non-uniformity of nature would be equally damaging to belief in miracles, for without a background of uniformity no event could seem in anyway exceptional. Given that I reject the following complaint against Hume from Lewis, this is no way counts against my overall thesis.

25. The same argument can be found in many of Flew's other writings on this subject.

26. Strictly, the second half of this quote is a response to Michael Root (1989) who offers very much the same argument as Flew.

27. Because I have simplified the reasoning involved here, the argument given is, strictly speaking, fallacious. The universe could go on getting smaller and smaller (as you look further and further into the past) but never disappear. For the argument to succeed you would have to add something about the rate of expansion. But the general point still holds.

28. Another promising strategy against Flew's argument would be to claim that, given the evidence, the assumption that nature is uniform self-destructs. For if nature is uniform, the evidence points to an event (or to events) which does not (do not) fit the overall pattern of nature.

29. Much the same point is also made in Broad (1916/7: 82).

30. It may be that a rather more simple third reason can be added to these two. Namely, that some religions are themselves rightly regarded with more suspicion than others. There are presumably many reasons why such suspicion might be justified: that the religion faces overwhelming philosophical difficulties; that some of its central doctrines conflict with well confirmed historical or scientific facts ... the list could go on indefinitely.

31. The only clear suggestions that Mohammed did perform miracles come in the Islamic tradition (known as the *hadith*).

32. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1 d. 6 n. 4.

33. See Suras 29:50, 13:27-31, and 17:90-3.

34. Isma'il Frauqi, *Islam* (Niles, Illinois: Argus, 1984), quoted by D.K. Clark (1997: 204).

35. The same point can be found in the final chapter of Chesterton (1908).

36. Michael Martin (1990: 198) puts it this way, "[A]lleged miracles may ... be due ... to a misperception based on religious bias. People full of religious zeal may see what they want to see, not what is really there. ... It would not be surprising that religious people who report seeing a miraculous event have projected their biases onto the actual event."

37. One might interpret Hume's comment that "such events never happen in our days" as an attempt to discredit not miracles in general but the miracles which Christians tend to be interested in: those occurring in the life of Jesus. The point would be roughly that temporal proximity to an event allows higher levels of certainty and that the large time lapse in the case of Jesus' miracles should push us towards scepticism. A full response to this objection will not be given here (and in any case I'm not the best qualified of people to attempt that response). Suffice it to say that the objection seems to reduce to one about the reliability of the Bible and other ancient texts. Such texts are not rendered unreliable simply through age. Unreliability is an issue if either (a) the texts as they were originally written were unreliable (which is to say the original writers were unreliable), or (b) the transmission of the texts has led to corruption which cannot be detected and corrected. But there are genuine tests that can be applied to ascertain the truth in such matters. For an introduction to this issue from a Christian viewpoint see Lee Strobel (1998), Part I.

38. See Winfried Corduan (1997: 110). We would be committing the same fallacy were we to argue that since we have not conclusively proved that a certain event has a cause, we can be perfectly rational in thinking it has no cause.

39. This label is used by Beckwith (1989: 37 and 2003: 226).

Chapter 5: C.S. Lewis and the Freudian Critique of Religious Belief

1. On this point, see Bishop, L.C. and Thielman, S.B. (1992). For a general comparison of the views of Lewis and Freud see Armand M. Nicholi Jr. (2002) which, through an exploration of their writings, assesses the relative merits of atheism and Christianity.

2. The status of psychoanalysis – that is, whether it really is a science – is, to understate the point rather dramatically, a matter of some debate: hence the scare-quotes. For an introduction to this subject, see Frederick Crews ed. (1998).

3. Also useful is Freud (1933).

4. However, even this latter point is not straightforward. As we shall see, Freud always associates religion with the father figure and the Oedipus complex. However, in females the Oedipus complex is directed towards the mother. The idea behind the Oedipus complex is that a child quite inevitably has ambivalent feelings towards the parent of their own sex. This is because the parent is not only a model and ideal for the child but also stands in the way of satisfying the desire for sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex. Freud nearly always explains the theory via an example, and the example is nearly always a young male. Thus, if only in the examples, the ambivalent feelings are directed towards the father who is therefore both loved and hated, feared and admired. But clearly, such negative feelings towards the father must be repressed, and normally are. All these attitudes become a part of the subconscious mind, and retain a subtle power over the individual. But these feelings are always lurking under the surface and could erupt into a full-blooded neurosis at any time.

5. This is one of the reasons for which we will be focusing upon *The Future of an Illusion*, which makes no such assumption.

6. For an evaluation of Freud's work as an attempt at serious science and history see Schmidt (1935).

7. Though on this point see Chapters 3 and 4, on the miraculous.

8. Though it is an obvious fact that non-genetic arguments could be offered for the same conclusions, I shall – so as to avoid unnecessarily long sentences – sometimes drop the word 'genetic'. Thus, for example, I will sometimes refer to a *genetic argument to falsehood* simply as an *argument to falsehood*.

9. A particular premise is essential to an argument if (the argument's supporters believe that) without that premise the argument would give us no reason to believe the conclusion. That premise describing how the belief came to be held is essential to the argument therefore prevents an argument (containing a superfluous premise about how a belief arose) counting as a good genetic argument through its being a good argument of some other kind.

10. Although see Crouch (1993), which quotes from Salmon (1973).

11. This formulation is an adapted combination that of Crouch (1993) and J.P. Moreland (1987). Crouch: "The genetic fallacy is said to be committed when the source or origin of a proposition is taken to be relevant to its evaluation" (p. 229). Moreland: "The genetic fallacy is the fallacy of confusing the origin of a belief with its epistemological warrant, and faulting the belief because of its origin" (p. 229). The most important difference from Crouch's formulation is that she allows that the fallacy has a positive form too: that you can commit the fallacy by arguing from a belief's origin to its truth, probable truth, justification or warrant. She is surely right that there is such a fallacy, but many wouldn't include it under the genetic fallacy and, in any case, for our purposes these cases are irrelevant.

12. Jeffrey Gordon (1991) offers a spirited defence of Freud against the accusation of committing the genetic fallacy. He would, I think, admit the truth of much that is said here. See notes 28 and 34 for his points of disagreement.

13. Though the actual falsehood of this belief is not required for my example to make sense, this belief would indeed be false: the Sun is roughly 93 million miles from the Earth.

14. This is not to endorse the following unsound argument: Arguments A and B share the logical form F, but since argument A is invalid any argument of form F is invalid, and so argument B must be invalid. This would be to confuse the presence of a possibly relevant similarity with the absence of all possibly relevant differences.

15. From here on, I will ignore the distinction between introducing a new premise and changing the old premise. The same distinction would be appropriate in the other types of genetic arguments too.

16. The only reason to think that such a belief is likely to be false would be if people who suffer from hypochondria (or have beliefs that result from it) are much less prone to cancer than others.

17. Actually, this formulation is too strong. It would entail the conclusion without the need for (15). Nevertheless, the idea is right. If we qualify the phase "relevant physical characteristic" so as to exclude possible symptoms of cancer and take in only Alice's more general physical characteristics (such as age, weight, height, gender, and lifestyle) the argument will run through as intended.

18. The motivation for this name is brought out by the point in the previous note. The prior probability of a belief is the probability it (that is, its truth) can be assigned independently of (prior to) consideration of the factors that brought that belief about.

19. While I am stipulating the meaning of these terms, I believe that my definitions of justification and warrant are sufficiently close to concepts discussed in contemporary epistemology to make my discussion of genuine interest to those working in this field.

20. To ensure this we would probably have to add to the example somewhat, but such additions are certainly possible.

21. See Gettier (1963).

22. How to formulate this point is also a matter of much debate, partly due to the 'generality problem': the difficulty of explaining which of the many true descriptions of a belief (forming process) are pertinent to deciding whether the belief was formed in a reliable manner, and why. Another difficulty is that of preventing Gettier problems appearing in a different place. See Zagzebski (1996: 300-8).

23. Given my definitions of justification and warrant, and the stipulation that warrant includes justification, any genetic argument to lack of justification would also be an argument to lack of warrant. Technically, therefore, the best genetic argument to lack of warrant would include a premise more like: *beliefs produced via method M are either formed in an intellectually irresponsible way, not sensitive to the truth-value of their contents or both.* This however, is of little interest. We focus on the distinctive element in arguments to lack of warrant.

24. This is not technically correct. Were it the case that these extra premises are necessarily true, the arguments would be valid without these premises; not because the conclusion would follow even if the extra premises were false, but because they couldn't be false. But since we will have no reason to think such arguments valid unless there is reason to think these extra premises true (necessarily or otherwise), this technicality can be safely ignored here.
25. An alternative would be *All beliefs relevantly similar to religious belief which result from wish fulfilment are false.*
26. Actually, Freud may not be arguing or concluding anything here. He may simply be making an observation about the likely effect of his critique upon its audience. Of course, we could admit that Freud was right in that respect without thinking his critique of religious belief a good one.
27. More *is* required to establish coincidence. If ten coins were tossed simultaneously and all came up heads, then this would be a coincidence. But if only, for example, coins 2, 3, 6, 9 and 10 came up heads this would not. However, the two scenarios are equally improbable. The difference may be that we could imagine a good explanation of the first situation (e.g. the coins are biased or double-headed) that would remove the element of improbability but can imagine no equally good explanation of the second situation.
28. This could, and possibly should, be questioned. Freud does attempt to evaluate various kinds of argument for theism. But even if his evaluations were correct, the proposed conclusion would seem not to follow. Jeffrey Gordon (1991) seems to think that Freud's evaluation is right, and that it does give us reason to adopt this conclusion.
29. For a little more on why concurrence in belief needs an explanation see Chapter 4, the section headed "An Insufficient Number of Good Witnesses".
30. Of course, to make the epistemic probability of some belief *lower* than it would otherwise have been is not necessarily to make that probability *low.*
31. In what follows, I shall refer to religious belief as "desire-based". There are many ways in which a belief could be based upon a desire, many of which are unproblematic. The interesting case is where I base a belief that *p* upon a desire which is unlikely to be satisfied unless *p*. By "desire-based" beliefs, I mean only to refer to beliefs formed in this manner.
32. To say that my seeming to remember that *p* can be a legitimate occasion for belief that *p* is not to say that we can produce a good (rightly persuasive) argument from that 'seeming' to the truth of the belief. Indeed, it seems to me (and to many others) that we cannot. Similarly, to say that the experience of a deep and characteristically human desire for God is a legitimate occasion for belief in God is not to say that there is a good argument from this desire to the existence of God. Although, of course, there may be such an argument ... see the next chapter.
33. Augustine, *Confessions*, I.i.1.
34. The possibility described here is overlooked by Jeffrey Gordon (1991). This oversight weakens his arguments considerably. However, as the remainder of the chapter endeavours to show, Freud's argument (and consequently Gordon's) has several other weak points.
35. Of course, to say that the desire is a legitimate basis of (or occasion for) the belief is not to say that there is a good argument from the desire to the truth of the belief. See note 32.
36. To my knowledge, there is only one other (remotely plausible) reading of Freud. This reading supplements the Freudian explanation of the origins of religious belief with Occam's razor: the principle that a good theory does not postulate more entities than are necessary to explain the phenomena in question. This version of Freud's argumentation is dealt with by Alvin Plantinga (2000: 367-73). I have nothing to add to his discussion.
37. Paul Johnson writes, "Taken as a group, they [intellectuals] are often ultra-conformist within the circles formed by those whose approval they seek and value" (Johnson 2000: 342).
38. Professor Peter Carruthers suggested the possibility of this response.
39. It is unclear whether there is a response to the genetic argument to atheism's lack of warrant which parallels the response I give to that version of the argument against theism.
40. This only shows that such Freudian reasoning cannot be used to undermine the rationality of theism, atheism or agnosticism *as such*. This is clearly consistent with allowing that some individual cases of theistic belief, atheistic belief and agnostic unbelief may be irrational for the reasons suggested in the main text.
41. Both Angus L. Menuge (1997) and Stephen M. Smith (1998) have pointed out that C.S. Lewis, in Chapter 12 of *The Silver Chair* (1953b), puts a parody of this argument into the mouth of the evil Queen of Underland. She attempts to brainwash the story's heroes, Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum into believing that the "Overworld" is illusory. In particular, she attempts to persuade them that their belief in a sun, which illumines the Overworld, is nothing but a copy of a lamp, which

illumines the underworld. *The Silver Chair* is the sixth of seven childrens' stories written by C.S. Lewis. For slightly more on these books see Appendix A, note 13.

42. Angus J.L. Menuge (1997a) goes further than this and argues for the conclusion that the idea of our earthly fathers is in some way secondary to the idea of God.

43. Francis Thompson (1996: 3). Francis Thompson lived from 1859 to 1907.

44. Another problem is that Freud's argument only applies to religious systems, which posit the existence of personal deities. Certain forms of pantheism, for example, are totally untouched by Freud's critique.

Chapter 6: C.S. Lewis' Argument from Desire

1. C.S. Lewis in Sheldon Vanauken (1977: 93).

2. See C.S. Lewis (1960c).

3. I am sure some will be uneasy about these definitions because they employ a kind of explanation that (some believe) does not sit well with scientific models of explanation. Such uneasiness would, I believe, be based on a mistake: the mistake of believing that we could, in principle, give reductive explanations of all causal relations. If this is a mistake, then some things must possess intrinsic causal capacities simply in virtue of being the kind of thing that they are. In any case our definitions could be replaced with ones based upon the following schemas (which seem to capture the same basic idea), the first of which makes explicit the problem just outlined while the second attempts to avoid the problem altogether. *Alternate Definition 1*: A certain feature, F, is natural to a (natural) kind K if, and only if, creatures of kind K have an inbuilt disposition (a tendency) to possess F, and that therefore, other things being equal, any particular member of K will possess F. *Alternate Definition 2*: A certain feature, F, is natural to a (natural) kind K if, and only if, a creature's being a member of K (or those features of it which make it a member, or which explain those features that make it a member) would, other things being equal, be sufficient to explain its possession of F.

4. For instance, some creatures' abnormalities (both congenital and acquired) can be surgically corrected.

5. This is not strictly true: making the general premise *all natural desires have a correlating object of desire* plausible requires illustrating the premise, and the illustrations require that various other creatures belong to certain natural kinds. Nevertheless, any good account of natural kinds should allow that the creatures in question do indeed belong to natural kinds.

6. Indeed, combining (1) with the fact that we sometimes desire things that do not exist (as we plainly sometimes do) would give us material for another argument for (6) with all the vices of that from (4) and (5).

7. For considerably more on the purely intentional objects of desire as against real objects see Ermanno Bencivenga (1988).

8. I have included the "instantiated" clause, because it seems to me that there could be desires natural to creatures of various imaginary (natural) kinds, like dragons, but which there is no reason to suppose could be satisfied in this world (as it is).

9. The time references here are important due to the possibility of past creatures foreclosing the possibility of present creatures satisfying their desires. They are also important because if everything is made present tense, then we would not have achieved consistency with (A), (B), and (C).

10. Of course, "the world" does not refer only to the material world of spatio-temporal experience but rather, to use Wittgenstein's phrase, encompasses *everything* that is the case. Everything: whether it be temporal or eternal, necessary or contingent, creature or creator, human or divine.

11. In plain English, a near equivalent would be *The world is such that all natural desires could be satisfied*.

12. More accurately: the preconditions for the truth of *at least one human is happy* (at some, not necessarily present, time) are met at some (past or present) time.

13. Should it turn out that the desire for communion with God cannot be (fully) satisfied in this life, an adjusted form of the argument could be used to demonstrate the possibility of life after death.

14. The opening words of Chesterton's *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904b) are "The human race, to which so many of my readers belong ..." (220).

15. Another interesting line of argument in favour of the existence of a desire for God comes from Augustine, who puts forward a thought experiment to attempt to draw out this deep desire. Peter

Kreeft puts Augustine's experiment thus: "He asks you to imagine that God appeared to you and said that He would make a deal with you, that He would give you everything you wished, everything your heart desired, except one thing. You could have anything you imagine, nothing would be impossible for you, and nothing would be sinful or forbidden. But, God concluded, "you shall never see my face." Why, Augustine asks, did a terrible chill creep over your heart at those last words unless there is in your heart a love of God, the desire for God? In fact, if you wouldn't accept that deal, you really love God above all things, for look what you just did: you gave up the whole world, and more, for God." (Peter Kreeft 1989a: 224)

16. I should point out that in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle seems to provide other accounts of happiness; accounts not obviously consistent with the account I mention in the main text.

17. The reader may be interested to know that Lewis listed *The Consolation of Philosophy* among the ten books that most shaped his philosophy.

18. Interestingly, Aristotle's conclusion that the life of study (i.e. the life of a philosopher) is the truly happy life is not nearly so far removed from the conclusions of Boethius and Aquinas as it might seem. A significant part of Aristotle's argument rests upon the assumption that contemplation (the main element in the life of study) is the primary activity that the gods are involved in, and that the life of study is therefore the life most similar to that lived by the gods. Aristotle also claimed that the gods would be most pleased with those humans that took interest in the same things as the gods, and that this would make the life of study still more truly blessed.

19. It may be that my claim should be limited to token desires, with the assumption that a desire of any type could have a phenomenology and will if the desire is a conscious one. The likely truth of this remark, however, does not make it an especially pertinent one ... hence its confinement to the notes.

20. Notice, however, that a desire's satisfaction is not the same as the termination of that desire, so that the phenomenology of satisfaction is not just the phenomenology of lack of desire. This point will be illustrated and exploited later.

21. I would vehemently contest the claim that each desire of the second type is really a desire to have a particular belief and not really for the particular state-of-affairs that would make that belief true.

22. Note, however, that desires do not just partially explain action. They can also serve to justify actions or to make them rational. This itself entails that only things that can be properly said to behave rationally (or irrationally) in the light of their desires can be said to possess such desires. Thus, the inherent tendency of heavy objects to fall is not a desire. After all, though the tendency *explains* the behaviour, we would be mistaken to suppose that it could ever *justify* it.

23. For those interested in the matter, and wanting to go beyond the various passages from Lewis, I recommend Corbin Scott Carnell (1974) and Curtis and Eldredge (1997). The former explores this desire primarily as a theme in literature, while the latter takes it as a central element of the Christian life.

24. One such reference to *sehnsucht* occurs in the first chapter of *Surprised by Joy*.

25. *Forbes*, 14th September 1992. The contributors included Nobel laureate Saul Bellow, historian Paul Johnson, novelist John Updike, journalist Peggy Noonan.

26. Ravi Zacharias (1994: 303) and (1996: 132).

27. Augustine wrote, "Seek what you seek, but it is not where you seek it" (quoted in Peter Kreeft 1990: 399). A quote along these lines, often attributed to G.K. Chesterton, but perhaps not correctly, reads: "Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God" (quoted in Curtis and Eldredge 1997: 136). Lewis writes something similar in *Surprised by Joy*: "Joy is not a substitute for sex; sex is very often a substitute for Joy. I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy" (1955b: 138).

28. Since Lewis takes this to be a pertinent point here, he also implies that he thinks that the desire is indeed a natural one. The same implication is present when in a footnote in *The Problem of Pain* (1940a: 117) he refers to our "immortal longings" as things we have "because we are men, ... because we are human."

29. Its value could be multiplied by increasing our inductive base, by adding further 'illustrations'.

30. By saying that the question "is always sensible" I do not mean that asking such a question is always advisable, but rather that asking this question is never a sign of conceptual confusion.

31. Indeed, as mentioned in the text, they argue that the need is 'existential.' This is not, of course, to say that God is needed 'for existence,' but that life without (belief in or communion with) God generates 'angst'.

32. The reader who fears that this is far too quick, and that the whole notion of need as opposed to desire suggests a neat way to avoid the argument is encouraged to wait. We will consider an objection based on this thought later.

33. These three 'summaries of absurdity' were inspired by Manfredi and Summerfield (1990).

34. In this condition, we find ourselves thinking either that we are fulfilled or that we will be if only we can find the thing in life that brings fulfilment.

35. Correspondingly, illusions can be of varying severity and disillusionment can be of varying depth.

36. Compare the thoughts of this section with those of Francis Schaeffer (1968: 95-6).

37. Actually there are elements within that evidence which would not be best accommodated by such an adjustment. Pascal, for instance, claims that only an *infinite* 'object' could satisfy the desire. Furthermore, several of the atheists' confessions of this desire make explicit reference to God. What seems clear is that the 'something more' must be one of religious significance. For example, neither the Platonic Forms nor Cartesian souls could satisfy the desire in question. The same could be plausibly argued for the finite gods of polytheism. Taking up Lewis' thought that the argument is like a lived ontological argument, perhaps the desire could only be satisfied by *that than which no greater can be conceived.*

38. One problem that arises here, and with all subsequent formulations of the argument, is that while it is not possible that the God of monotheism should come into or go out of existence, the same does not seem to be true of all extra-physical realities, and therefore the argument is no longer strictly valid, and would only be made so by the addition of something further. Various things suggest themselves, perhaps the most easily formulated is: *If there are (or have been or will be) any extra-physical realities capable of satisfying the desire in question, at least one of these is such that it could not come into or go out of existence.* A more modest suggestion would be: *If there are (or have been or will be) any extra-physical realities capable of satisfying the desire in question, then these could not come into existence without the (finitely) earlier, or go out of existence without the (finitely) later existence of some other extra-physical reality.* In the context of the previous note, I take it that while neither of these is a necessary truth, neither is an especially contentious claim, and that their disjunction is less contentious still.

39. To see this consider the following argument:
    (13) If the argument of (10)-(12) is sound, then premise (10) is true
    (14) If (10) is true, then if the argument of (10)-(12) is valid, it begs the question
    (15) If the argument of (10)-(12) is sound, then that argument is valid
    (16) Therefore, if the argument of (10)-(12) is sound it begs the question
    (17) Therefore, either the argument of (10)-(12) is unsound or it begs the question
    This argument is clearly valid, and its premises − (13), (14) and (15) − cannot be denied without contraction. (13) and (15) are entailed by the definition of soundness, while the truth of (14) follows immediately from the content of (10).

40. As is implied in the main text, the support for this premise is substantially the same as that for (1*).

41. Empirical considerations would be relevant to specifying the length of time that should be considered short. In some cases, the expected period of satisfaction may be so short as to render the principle useless. Thanks to Stephen Makin for this point.

42. See Blaise Pascal (1966 edn.: [#]132-[#]139, 66-72).

43. For further insight on this matter, I imagine that readers would more profitably consult a psychologist or psychiatrist than they would a philosopher. But having 'inside knowledge' about what it is like to be human, I strongly suspect that many of us find the very idea of having an existential need for God as repugnant as we find our own mortality. After all, to recognise that we have such a need for God is to recognize that we are not self-sufficient. (Compare Sartre's distaste for his not being 'self-caused'.) If my suspicions are right, we would naturally avoid thinking about this need just studiously as we avoid thinking about death. Supposing that these remarks are correct, our awareness of the need for God will frequently be 'repressed' and plausibly this 'repression' will often occur through diversion.

44. But not, the atheist would hope, at the cost of begging the question. One such way of begging the question (as well as making much else in the argument irrelevant) would be to construe the alleged desire as a desire to *realise* that God does not exist.

45. Augustine, *Confessions*, I.i.1.

46. The Christian concept of the fall, understood in terms of pride, arrogance or wanting to be our own god also provides material for an explanation of the human desire for autonomy. Interpreting this doctrine in the light of the suggested argument to atheism from desire, a Christian might even say that this desire is in some sense natural to humans, but only to *fallen* humans. However, since *fallen human* is arguably not a *natural kind*, and in our sense a desire can only be natural to a kind which is itself natural, the desire would not be natural in the sense required in this atheistic 'argument from desire'.

47. Two objections that I have not dealt with here are: (i) that the argument assumes either a Platonistic (rather than Christian) or at any rate too optimistic a conception of Human nature. (ii) that the claim that we have a natural desire for God is inconsistent with Lewis (or anyone else) being, as he reported himself to be, a "reluctant convert." The first of these objections is dealt with in Douglas T. Hyatt (1997) and the second in Peter Kreeft (1989a: 230-1). Both are also addressed by Hugo Meynell (1991).

48. Thanks to Chris Friel for this point.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

1. Lewis adopted the phrase 'Mere Christianity' from the Protestant divine Richard Baxter (1615-91).
2. This definition is based upon that of Jaegwon Kim (1995).
3. For the record, I think the argument's main premise is likely to be correct. However, I take this not as an argument for eliminativism, but as a refutation of naturalist views which insist that our attributions of such states as beliefs and desires commit us to some form of proto-scientific theory.
4. For a variety of perspectives on this, see Sayer (1997: 306-9), Purtill (1990), Mitchell (1997), and Reppert (Forthcoming: Chapter 1).
5. This list is adapted from that provided by Reppert (Forthcoming: Chapter 4).
6. A good place to start thinking about these issues would be Willard (2000) and the works of John R. Searle.
7. The phrase "cognitive suicide" is taken from Baker (1987: Chapter 7).
8. Though see Hasker (1999) and Reppert (Forthcoming).
9. This distinction seems to be Lewis' version of Samuel Alexander's distinction between *contemplation* and *enjoyment*, which appears in *Space, Time and Diety*. Lewis reveals his familiarity with Alexander's distinction in *Surprised by Joy* (1955b: 174)
10. In a note Lewis also considers a third view: pantheism.
11. I have here taken the liberty of changing Lewis' "irrational" to "non-rational" in accord with the changes he made to *Miracles*, Chapter 3 following Anscombe's criticisms.
12. This is, in fact, a fictional exploration of the notion of the *Refrigerium*, a Catholic 'doctrine' according to which souls in Hell *may* sometimes have remission and refreshment. See Hooper (1997: 279-81) for a little background on the *Refrigerium*.
13. Arianism, named after Arius (c. 250 – c. 336), denies the true divinity of Christ, asserting that the Son is not eternal, nor of one substance with God.
14. This is formulation is based on my definition in Chapter 5.
15. The explicit target of Gerwirth's comments here was determinism, but the remarks also seem to apply to naturalism.
16. But see Appendix A, note 13.
17. At least this is true if we require treat headings that have differences beyond the colon as different headings. If we only count the portion before the colon, then there are less entries under this heading than under "God", "Love", "Lewis, C.S." and "Prayer"; and, interestingly, the same number as under "Hell" and "Jesus".
18. "Further Up and Further In" is the title of Chapter 15 of *The Last Battle* (1956), the last of Lewis' Narnia books.
19. But see Appendix B and the various references cited there.
20. See K.J. Clark (1990) for an attempt to co-opt Lewis in this manner.
21. But see Howard-Snyder (2002) and Reppert (Forthcoming: Chapter 1).
22. See the ongoing discussion in the pages of *Philosophia Christi*, along with various pieces cited earlier.
23. The thought that many things are most truly themselves when they find their proper place in a an ordered hierarchy is thoroughly Lewisian. See Lewis (1942a), (1942c) and (1964a).

Appendix A: Short Biography of C.S. Lewis

1. Like most who have taken an interest in the life of C.S. Lewis, I firmly believe that neither A.N. Wilson's biography nor the film *Shadowlands* is such an 'expert source'.
2. Over the academic year 1924-1925 Lewis taught a course entitled "The Moral Good - Its Place among the values."

3. Lewis' entry to Oxford initially depended upon his passing two exams one for a scholarship and the second for entry to the university. He passed the first easily, but failed the second ... twice. "He was allowed to attend Oxford after the war only because the passing of [this exam] was waived for men who had been in the service. If it had not been for this piece of academic generosity, [he] would probably never have passed and never been able to make a career at Oxford or any other British university." George Sayer (1997).

4. See the entry under "Boxen" in Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West Jr., eds. (1998: 104-6).

5. In later life C.S. Lewis was to write the influential *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942c).

6. See Lewis (1955b: 167) and within this dissertation pp. 6-7, 155-9.

7. Lewis' actual conversion occurred quietly on September 28, 1931.

8. One more theme that ran through Lewis' life, was relevant to the reconciliation of imagination and reason, and was important in his conversion was the experience of "joy" or *sehnsucht*, which Lewis came to see as a desire for God. I have not mentioned this in the main text for two reasons. Firstly, it is too complex a "theme" to do any kind of justice to in this short biography. Secondly, I have done my best to convey the relevance of this experience in Chapter 6, on the Argument from Desire.

9. George MacDonald was perhaps the single most important influence upon C.S. Lewis. Lewis, in a preface to a collection of quotes from MacDonald, referred to him as "my master" (Lewis ed. 1946).

10. Lewis (and Tolkien) thought deeply about Myth. Some of this thinking appears in Lewis (1944b), (1961a) and (1982).

11. There were, of course, other members, including Warren Lewis and Charles Williams. Owen Barfield also attended, but only occasionally.

12. For more on the Oxford Socratic Club see Walter Hooper (1979) and Christopher Mitchell (1997).

13. In terms of Narnian chronology the seven chronicles assume the following order (with tellurian dates of publication in brackets): *The Magician's Nephew* (1955); *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (1950); *The Horse and His Boy* (1954); *Prince Caspian* (1951); *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* (1952); *The Silver Chair* (1953); *The Last Battle* (1956). Now easily available in countless editions, the seven taken together are known as the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

14. Two useful estimations of his influence are Chad Walsh (1979) and Philip G. Ryken (1997).

Appendix B: C.S. Lewis on Faith and Reason

1. This appendix draws heavily on R. Holyer (1988b).

2. C.S. Lewis, letter to Sheldon Vanauken, in W. Martindale and J. Root, eds. (1989), [#]195.

3. On Lewis' use of the 'cumulative case,' see Chapter 6 of S.R. Burson and J.L. Wells (1998).

4. See Lewis' poem "An Apologist's Evening Prayer" in J. Como (1998: 179).

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