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DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE; A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

ANDREW J. DAVIS

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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ABSTRACT

In religions in which a supreme being is worshipped, he is often said to be transcendent. The reason for this is that a transcendent being surpasses one not transcendent - and only an unsurpassable being is worthy of worship. Transcendence involves being beyond knowledge, understanding and language of which created rational beings are capable. In particular, unsurpassable goodness would transcend in various ways the understanding capacities of created rational beings.

Anti-realist theories of meaning might be thought to challenge the coherence of epistemological transcendence. However, these theories have serious weaknesses and their challenge ultimately should not worry the Theist. Epistemological transcendence might also be thought to present a problem to anyone wishing to speak about God, and have beliefs about him. But by invoking causal theories of reference we can see that this problem can be overcome. In order that members of communities of Theists can see each other as talking of, believing in and worshipping the same transcendent God it may well be that these members will need the capacity to believe things they cannot fully understand, and to believe things which are inexpressible in language mastery of which they are in principle capable. On the face of it, such requirements are fraught with philosophical difficulties. But if we look carefully at what it is to believe something, and at the various kinds of understanding failure that there may be, we see again that the philosophical difficulties may be overcome.

Finally, an ontologically transcendent God still has to be spoken of in language developed firstly in connection with created items. Aquinas' theory of analogy is touched on in this regard, and a positive theory of how the language of created rational beings may be applicable to God is presented, with help from theories of comparison metaphor.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTS OF TRANSCENDENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

Must God be transcendent? If he must, are there in consequence insoluble philosophical problems for the Theist? I am going to argue for a qualified affirmative answer to the first question. In the course of my argument, I examine some of the meanings that may be attached to the expression 'transcendent', the various degrees of transcendence that are possible, and the reasons for requiring that God be transcendent.

My answer to the second question is in the negative. In order to reach this conclusion I study what seem to be strong objections to transcendence, based in a number of areas of philosophy. Chapter 4 discusses the potential threat to transcendence posed by anti-realist theories of meaning. In Chapter 5, I scrutinise the problem of reference to a transcendent God, drawing mainly on the work of philosophical logicians. The question then arises in Chapter 6 as to whether it is possible to have beliefs concerning a transcendent God. I conclude that none of the objections that I investigate in these chapters do in fact present insuperable difficulties for the Theist. Finally, in Chapter 7, I offer a positive account of language about transcendence in the context of theories of language and metaphor.

By the end of this work, I hope to have achieved two broad objectives. First, to have given the Theist grounds for optimism with respect to the philosophical legitimacy of transcendence, and second, to have increased philosophical understanding both of the religious motive for transcendence, and of transcendence itself.

2. TRANSCENDENCE

At this introductory stage, I offer a three-fold distinction between types of transcendence, which will be refined and qualified as discussion proceeds.

Ontological transcendence

A well-worn phrase refers to God as the 'wholly other'. This is an

extreme expression of what I refer to in this work as ontological transcendence. The implication of the phrase is that God is somehow distinct from, separate from, and different from everything else that exists. But we cannot interpret expressions such as 'distinct from', or 'separate from' in a crude spatial fashion. Consider the point that many theists hold that God is present at every point in the universe, and that he is also 'other' than the universe, or 'distinct' from it.

I am going to offer a quasi-technical specification of ontological transcendence, whose motivation and value may not be immediately apparent, but should become clearer as we proceed. I suggest, then, that an ontologically transcendent being is one who (a) possesses essentially at least one property which any other existent would essentially lack, and (b) the property in question must also be such that any other existent would essentially fail to possess it to a lesser degree.

(I understand 'a has property P essentially' in the following Aristotelian fashion, as developed by Brody.¹ 'a has P, a has always had P—there is no possible past in which a exists without P, and there is no moment of time at which a has P and at which there is a possible future in which a exists without P'. This account of essential properties cannot be applied to God unless he is understood to exist in time; that is an assumption which I make throughout, but for which I offer no argument).

The word 'essentially' plays a crucial role in specifying the 'otherness' of God. If it were omitted from the specification of ontological transcendence given above, we would merely be saying that, as a matter of fact, God is unlike in at least one respect any other existent. And if we left matters there, we would scarcely have captured the difference between God and everything else — the gulf between him and all other existents. After all, if the universe is full of variety, a number of items within it might be such that each of them differed, as a matter of contingent fact, from all other existents in at least one respect; a number of items, then,

could in principle meet the requirements of a specification of ontological transcendence weakened by the absence of the expression 'essentially'. Whatever account we provide of the 'gulf' between God and other existents, it must surely exclude the possibility that a similar 'gulf' could in principle exist between an individual distinct from God and all other existents.

It is worth pausing briefly to note the importance of (b) in the specification of ontological transcendence. Traditionally, God is ascribed extraordinary properties, such as omnipotence and omniscience, which certainly set him apart from all other existents. But this 'setting apart' is, at best, a matter of degree. Many of these traditional properties, though not omnipotence, could in principle be possessed by beings distinct from God, and there is certainly no problem in principle for the suggestion that other beings could possess the traditional properties to lesser degrees - for instance, be very knowledgeable indeed, or very powerful indeed. So the inclusion of (b) in the specification of ontological transcendence attempts to ensure that the 'setting apart' in question is not merely a matter of degree.

There is one respect in which the specification of ontological transcendence might mislead; it might seem to imply that God might have just one or two ontologically alien properties - that there might be a certain aspect of the divine nature around which we could place a neat boundary; inside the boundary would be strangeness, or otherness, whilst outside the boundary would be properties which could at least in principle be possessed by existents distinct from God, or could in principle be possessed to a lesser degree by existents distinct from God.

I now argue that there can be no such neat division between divine properties which meet the specification for ontological transcendence, and divine properties that do not. Divine properties are bound together by links of various kinds. Some of these links may be straight forwardly

logical entailments; for example, it may be claimed that omnipotence entails omniscience, or that divine rationality entails moral perfection, etc. I do not pronounce here on the merits of such contentions. In most cases the links are more complex, and difficult to specify. But we can illustrate the fact that the links are present - they show up in connections between our understandings of the various properties. Suppose someone attempted to explain the nature of divine goodness. It would be quite impossible for him to do so comprehensively without also explaining, at least in part, the nature of what it is for God to be a person. And if, for instance, the view was taken that divine personhood does not include the undergoing of emotions and the possession of desires, this would imply a very different understanding of the nature of divine goodness from that understanding of divine goodness which would go with a view of divine personhood which admitted emotions and desires to the divine psyche. One could not take a particular view of divine goodness without also coming to at least a partial conclusion as to the nature of divine personhood, and vice versa. Or again, if someone attempted to explain the nature of divine freedom, he would also have to bring in his understanding of what it is for God to be a person - whether, for instance, God has emotions and desires, the nature of a divine intention, etc. Divine properties, then, are bound together in a mutually supporting structure.

There is one divine property which is 'isolated' from the others, but I contend that it is the only one. It is eternity. This reflects the fact that, speaking of existents in general, the length of time for which they exist is a matter which is logically or conceptually independent from their other properties. It must be admitted, however, that it might be argued that this generalisation is not without its exceptions - that, for instance, one cannot fully understand what it is like to be a person without an appreciation of the life expectancy of a person - that a being who anticipated an eternal future would (necessarily) be a different sort of person from one who did not, etc.

I do not want to get bogged down in these complex issues - I note them in passing, observing that, at most, eternity is the one exception to the 'rule' that divine properties are linked together in a variety of ways, some clearly logical, others more loosely characterisable as 'conceptual'.

Hence, if God is ontologically transcendent, this will not merely involve one isolated 'strange' property; if he possesses at least one property essentially, such that any other existent would essentially lack it, then his other properties, with the exception of his eternity, will be 'tainted' with ontological transcendence.

Epistemological Transcendence

God is sometimes referred to by Theists as 'mysterious'. I propose to use this expression interchangeably with 'epistemologically transcendent'. Broadly speaking, a mysterious God is one about whom there are truths which cannot be known by a created rational being (CRB), and/or concerning whom there are truths which cannot be understood by a CRB. There can be more or less extreme versions of mystery - and this fact becomes crucial when we later consider possible objections to mystery. For instance, a believer of an extreme persuasion might hold that no truths concerning God can in principle be known by any CRB. Or he might think, more reasonably, that some truths can be known concerning God by CRB's, whereas others cannot in principle be known by CRB's. Or someone might hold that, though there are truths concerning God which cannot be known by CRB's, this is not a matter of them being unknowable in principle by CRB's. He might take the view that no aspects of the divinity can be known by CRB's now, but that in an after life they could be known. Or he might claim that no aspects of the divinity can be known by CRB's employing their own natural powers, but that the divine nature can be known by CRB's if God helps them.

Ineffability

It is sometimes thought that God is indescribable- beyond the power of language to specify his nature. God has an ineffable nature if he has a

nature which eludes linguistic description. Like mystery, ineffability can come in more or less extreme guises. For instance, it might be held that to some extent God could not be described, or, on the other hand, that he was entirely beyond description. It might be held that no language which a CRB could develop by means of his own natural powers could describe God, but that God could somehow enable CRB's to describe him, etc.

Some of the relationships between the different kinds of transcendence will emerge only as the discussion proceeds. But I want to mention one relationship here, which proves to be of importance later - that between ontological transcendence and mystery. If there are truths concerning God which a CRB cannot know, or cannot understand, how could this be explained? If the 'cannot' in question were merely contingent, we might imagine a number of possible explanations, and some of these have actually been suggested by proponents of Theism. For instance, it might be contended, in a Kierkegaardian fashion, that CRB's cannot as a matter of fact know much about God, since God must hide himself from CRB's; that he must do this in order that he may teach them about himself in an appropriate way. Another explanation having some affinity with this one would be that God chooses to present himself to CRB's in a veiled manner, in order that he should not 'compel' faith from his creatures. I am not claiming here that any one of these explanations would prove on examination to be philosophically satisfactory, but merely that, at least at first sight, a number of explanations seem possible.

But if the 'cannot' is stronger - if it is said that there are truths concerning God which cannot in principle be known or understood by CRB's, possible explanations are harder to imagine. Indeed, the only obvious explanation that I can see is in terms of ontological transcendence. God's 'otherness' explains CRB's epistemological limitations with respect to him. It must be admitted that the mere fact that a divine property is such that God essentially possesses it, and any other existent essentially lacks it,

even to a lesser degree, does not seem to entail in any straightforward manner that CRB's cannot know or understand that God has such a property. Nevertheless we can see, perhaps, that ontological transcendence may well ultimately be responsible in some complex fashion for mystery; if so, it would be likely that CRB's would be unable to fathom just how it was responsible.

Suppose a fairly extreme version of mystery is required by a given Theism. We then have in that Theism a situation similar to that arising for ontological transcendence. If ontological transcendence is responsible for mystery, then no one divine property can be mysterious in total isolation from other divine properties, any more than ontological transcendence could consist in a single divine property in isolation from other divine properties. If there is one divine property which is, say, in principle unknowable or incomprehensible to CRB's, then there are others infected with mystery, at least to some extent.

3. TRANSCENDENCE IN WORLD RELIGIONS

The man with a religious view of the world regards something as 'highest' - something as more worthy than anything else of his 'ultimate concern', to use Tillich's phrase. There is, of course, more to viewing the world religiously than this, otherwise it would be an undisputed fact that Marxism, Humanism, and the like, were world religions. For the Marxist takes as that which is worthy of his ultimate concern a certain social arrangement; the humanist regards as worthy of his ultimate concern the well-being of the entire human race. There is, of course, an unfortunate vagueness and generality attaching to the phrase 'ultimate concern' - the provision of paraphrases, such as 'the most important', 'that which is most worthy of being desired', 'that which is most worthy of being pursued as an end in itself', 'that which is worthy of worship', do not help much without careful discussion. This will be attempted in Chapter 2. Some would regard 'religion' as a word like 'game' - claiming that there are no features common to all religions; some

religions involve belief in supernatural beings, whilst others do not; some involve 'a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual in it'², whilst others do not, etc. In my view, perhaps in virtue of its sheer generality, Tillich's 'ultimate concern' marks an element which is a necessary condition for a view to be a religious view, but not a sufficient condition.

Many religions which are monotheistic in character have thought of their God as transcendent in some way, especially where a central aim of the religion is worship of the God. Shortly I will provide some illustrations of this. But not all monotheistic religion has concerned itself solely, or even at all, with worship; some monotheistic forms of hinduism, for instance, are striving for some kind of union with God - and even where this striving is also accompanied by worship of a kind, the very idea of 'union' seems to preclude extreme versions of ontological or epistemological transcendence. Both worship, and the desire for union, mediated perhaps by contemplation and meditation, may be seen as alternate expressions of an 'ultimate concern'. In the next chapter, I try to develop the connection between that which is 'highest' or most worthy of ultimate concern, and transcendence, in monotheistic religions whose practice centrally involves worship.

It is within the Judaeo-Christian and the Islamic traditions that we have the clearest claims that God is transcendent; it is also these traditions that have almost entirely concerned themselves with worship of the supreme being, rather than, as in some of the Hindu traditions, with practices designed to lead to contemplative union or identity with the supreme being. Most of the examples I cite from the former traditions are very extreme and not representative of the religious thought of the belief system in question. But in view of their extremity, the issues involved, and perhaps the motives for ascribing transcendence, are that much clearer.

In Jewish thought, a clear connection is made between ontological

transcendence and being the "highest"; 'All the nations of the earth shrink, in his presence, to nothing... will you find a likeness for God - set up a form to resemble him?... There is One who sits so high above its (the earth's) orb, those who live on it seem tiny as locusts...What likeness then, can you find to match me with? asks the Holy One'³. In the writings of Philo, a Jewish philosopher influenced by Greek thought, especially platonism, we find a very extreme version of transcendence. Something akin to ontological transcendence is affirmed in passages such as... 'For he proceeds onwards before the created universe, and outside of it, and not contained or born onward in any of the things whose existence began after him'⁴. Philo thinks that God is ineffable, and also mysterious. '...the Father...directed a perception of himself, as far at least as a created and mortal nature could attain to such a thing, not indeed such a perception as should show him what God is, but merely such as should prove to him that he exists; for even this, which is better than good, and more ancient than the unit, and more simple than one, cannot possibly be contemplated by any other being; because, in fact it is not possible for God to be comprehended by any being but himself'⁵. God is too great, too perfect, to be capable of being adequately described by affirmative propositions. So Philo develops a negative theology⁶.

The Koran throughout emphasizes God's sovereignty and power; in the following Sura among others, language is used which may well involve ontological transcendence.

'In the name of the merciful and compassionate God,
Say 'He is God alone,
God the Eternal
He begets not and is not begotten,
Nor is there like unto him anyone'⁷.

Within Christianity there have always been strands of thinking which greatly emphasized transcendence; other Christian traditions have not done so, and some of these, of course, have been especially prominent in modern times.

Almost every variety of transcendence is ascribed to God by, for

instance Pseudo-Dionysius (c.500 A.D.) - mystery, otherness, and ineffability. '...nor do existent beings know it (God) as it actually is... nor can reason attain to it to name it or to know it... nor can any affirmation or negation apply to it; for while applying affirmations or negations to those orders of beings that come next to it, we apply not unto it either affirmation or negation, inasmuch as it transcends all affirmations by being the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and transcends all negation by the pre-eminence of its simple and absolute nature-free from every limitation and beyond them all'⁸. Whilst the writer has some more localised philosophical motives for making God transcendent, his general drift is that God is transcendent in all these ways because he is so great.

John Scotus Eriugena translated the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and wrote commentaries on them in the ninth century. Like Pseudo-Dionysius, he asserts of God all three types of transcendence, and asserts them in perhaps the most extreme fashion of all thinkers. According to him, there is a sense of 'comprehend' in which God does not even comprehend himself; even Philo does not go this far - he just says that one would have to be God to comprehend God. Eriugena says: '... God is comprehensible in that one deduces from creation that he is, and is incomprehensible because what he is can be comprehended by no understanding human or angelic, not even by himself because he is not a what but is superessential...'⁹. Yet again, Eriugena makes the connection between the fact of transcendence, and the superiority of God to all others... The divine likeness in the human mind, therefore, is recognised most clearly in that it is known only to be; but what it is is not known; and to put it thus, in it we deny that it is anything and affirm only that it is. Nor is this void of reason. For if it were known to be some certain thing, it would be circumscribed certainly in something, and, by that fact, it would not express in itself wholly the image of its Creator who is entirely uncircumscribed, and is understood in nothing because he is infinite, above all that is said and understood, Superessential'¹⁰.

We find that Aquinas takes on board some of this, but not all of it in its most extreme forms. Some thinkers put forward a level of epistemological transcendence which applies only to this life - in a life after death, God will be 'known'; others say that God will only be 'known' or 'understood' by a CRB if he provides them with special help to do so. I will have to look more carefully at the precise role of the expressions 'known' and 'understood' in later chapters.

First, many passages in Aquinas suggest ontological transcendence - 'God is more distant from any creature than any two creatures are from each other'¹¹. He does not, however think that God is strictly ineffable; he devotes a certain amount of space to explaining just how we can speak of God - by means of the *via negativa*, and by the use of analogical language.

In discussing epistemological transcendence, Aquinas distinguishes between the questions of how far CRB's can know what God is like, from the questions of how far CRB's can understand what God is like. He seems to think that in principle CRB's cannot fully understand God, whereas they can in principle know what God is like, even if they cannot in this life, or even if they cannot fully do so in virtue of their own efforts. The blessed can attain to a vision of God, in which they do see him as he really is, but they cannot fully understand what they see. '...our way of knowing does not measure up to...(God). Whoever sees God in his essence sees something that exists infinitely and sees it to be infinitely intelligible, but he does not understand it infinitely. It is as though a man might be of the opinion that a certain proposition could be proved without himself being able to prove it'¹².

The version of epistemological transcendence put forward by Kierkegaard in his 'Philosophical Fragments' looks weaker than that asserted by most of the other writers mentioned here. According to Keirkegaard, God chooses to hide himself from CRB's. He loves his creatures, but it is hard for him to make himself understood in such a way as not to 'annihilate the

unlikeness that exists between him and the creature'¹³. God could show himself directly to his creatures, and receive worship from them, but this would overwhelm and crush the creature. It is perhaps not clear, at least in 'Philosophical Fragments', whether it would be possible for God in Kierkegaard's view to reveal himself fully to a creature if God ceased to worry about the effect that this would have on the creature.

In the present century, Karl Barth has, apparently, emphasized God's ontological transcendence; though according to him God is only epistemologically transcendent in the sense that CRB's cannot by themselves come to know about God's nature-God has to enable them to do so. The Barthian view that God can in principle enable them to do so seems to imply a much weaker form of mystery than that which would be asserted, for example, by Pseudo-Dionysius.

In passages such as the following, Barth urges ontological transcendence:-
'He who is called God is not to be regarded as a continuation and enrichment of the concepts and ideas which usually constitute religious thought in general about God... God is not to be found in theories of gods...God... is and exists in a completely different way from that which is elsewhere called divine'¹⁴. Or again, 'God is not in the series of these worldly powers, perhaps as the highest of them; but He is superior to all other powers, neither limited by nor conditioned by them, but He is the Lord of all lords, the King of all kings'¹⁵.

A weak version of ineffability is also advanced - 'weak' in the sense that, in Barth's view, God himself can enable CRB's to speak of him, even though they cannot do so by means of their own powers'. ...God is not only unprovable and unsearchable, but is also inconceivable. No attempt is made in the Bible to define God - that is, to grasp God in our concepts...' ¹⁶
'...whatever we say of God in ...human concepts can never be more than an indication of him; no such concept can really conceive the nature of God. God is inconceivable. What is called God's goodness and God's holiness

cannot be determined by any view that we men have of goodness and holiness, but is determined by what God is'¹⁷.

Given the vast territory of the development of religious thought, the samples presented in this introductory chapter have an inevitably sketchy and disjointed character. But we have seen enough to understand the importance of transcendence for many thinkers within the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions; we can now proceed to philosophical investigation of its importance.

NOTES

- 1 'Identity and Essence' p 123 Princeton University Press 1980
- 2 W. P. Alston 'Philosophy of Language' Prentice Hall 1964
- 3 Isaiah 40
- 4 'The Essential Philo' p 179 Ed. N. N. Glatzer
- 5 op cit p 306
- 6 c.f. Copleston. 'A History of Philosophy' Vol 1 part 2 ch 44
- 7 CX11 'Chapter of Unity'
- 8 'Mystical Theology' Ch 5
- 9 'Selections from Medieval Philosophers' Ed. and Trans. R. McKeon
p 122-3
- 10 op cit p 123
- 11 Summa Theologiae Eyre and Spottiswoode 1963 1a 13 5
- 12 op cit 1a 12 8
- 13 S. Kierkegaard 'Philosophical Fragments' trans. D. Swenson
Princeton University Press 1962
- 14 'Dogmatics in Outline' p 35-6 trans. G. T. Thomson SCM Press 1949
- 15 op cit p 47
- 16 op cit p 38
- 17 op cit p 46

CHAPTER TWO

WORSHIP; AND THE UNSURPASSABLE

We have seen that in world religions which concern themselves with the worship of supreme being, there is a link of some kind between - (A) that being having a nature which is 'highest' - worthy of worship, and (B) that being possessing transcendence. I now turn to philosophical explanation, articulation and defence of this link. I know of no philosophical argument which could prove conclusively that a supreme being who is worthy of worship 'must' be transcendent. What I attempt is to provide considerations 'capable of determining the intellect' in favour of the conclusion that a supreme being must possess a degree of transcendence. This task provides the matter of the present and following chapter.

1. WORSHIP

If someone worships a being, he is paying that being the highest possible compliment. He holds that being in the highest possible regard. He holds that the object of his worship is unsurpassable. (Though I take this point to be obvious, it has been questioned, and I defend it in section 4). There are degrees of reverence which may be accorded Lord Mayors, winners of the Nobel Prize, kings, Popes, etc. Worship, if placed on a scale with these other gradations of tribute, would go on the scale beyond all the rest. In fact, worship involves a degree of reverence or honour that cannot (logically) be exceeded.

In worshipping a being A, the worshipper regards A as having at least quasi-personal characteristics. I cannot worship a volcano, and yet think of it as just an inanimate physical extrusion from the earth's surface; I need to believe that it is some kind of 'personal god', with a capacity to be aware of me - to be aware, in particular, that I am worshipping it. In this respect, worship differs crucially from meditation or contemplation. In so far as these activities are directed to an 'object', the object can as easily be the impersonal substrate of all existing things, the One, or Brahman, or a state of oneself, as a personal being. Another reason why the object of worship must be personal is this. Most believers who

worship do so, to fulfil what they regard as an obligation; they think worshipping is something which created rational beings have a duty to do, and that the supreme being has a right to this worship. It is a logical point that an impersonal item cannot have this type of right.

Worship may be described as an 'intentional' activity (in Brentano's sense) like hunting. The worshipper's activities are 'directed' towards a particular object or being, which may or may not really exist, though, of course, the worshipper will suppose that it does exist; similarly I can hunt a particular lion, Leo, which I suppose to exist - my hunting activities are 'directed' towards Leo as an 'intentional' object, and this is possible whether or not Leo really exists. Of course, I could hunt, not Leo, but just a lion or lions; this is not paralleled in the case of worship - a point which will emerge in later discussion.

The intentional object towards which worship is directed must (logically) be thought of as endowed with certain characteristics and not others. I cannot admire X without believing that X has certain properties in virtue of which it is admirable; I cannot pity Y without believing that Y has certain properties in virtue of which it is pitiable. Similarly, as I shall be maintaining, I cannot worship Z without believing that Z has certain properties in virtue of which Z is unsurpassable. (There is no general rule here - I could love P without necessarily believing that P has properties in virtue of which P is lovable - I could fear Q without necessarily believing that Q has properties in virtue of which it is dangerous, etc.)

'X is unsurpassable' might be described as an 'evaluative judgement'; perhaps philosophers will never satisfactorily explain the meaning of 'evaluative' here, or justify a contrast with e.g. 'descriptive'. But we can certainly suggest other judgements which are *prima facie* of the same sort. For instance, 'The bull is dangerous', 'The man is courageous',

'The music is beautiful', and the like.

Sometimes my 'evaluative judgements' may be ill-founded. I might think, for instance that a household spider was dangerous. My reasons for making this judgement might be that I think it is poisonous, that it bites humans whenever it can, and so on. These beliefs of mine are false, and so my judgement is ill-founded. My judgement may or may not also be described as 'irrational'; it might be said to be irrational in the sense that it is made on the basis of false beliefs; but it need not be irrational of me to make such a judgement, since, in imaginable, if exceptional circumstances, I might be justified in having the false belief that the spider had certain properties in virtue of which it would be dangerous.

These judgements can be ill-founded or irrational in another way; they may be exaggerated, or, on the other hand, too weak. Suppose I judge my neighbour's Alsation to be dangerous. My reason is my belief that the animal once bit an intruder - five years ago. My judgement that the animal is dangerous, then, is too strong, given that this is my only reason - it might have been more appropriate to think of the animal as 'mildly threatening', or something of this sort.

Other judgements which are prima facie of the same sort as those already mentioned are not open to accusations of ill-foundedness or irrationality in quite the same way. But there is controversy over which these are. To cite one example over which there should be little dispute; if I am disgusted with the dinner, I judge, say, that the food is nauseating. But my friend, partaking of the same food may come to the 'opposite' conclusion; neither of us could, it may be argued, fairly accuse the other of having inappropriate beliefs about the food, nor of having made too weak or too strong an 'evaluative' judgement on the basis of the beliefs we do have about the food. On the other hand, if my friend was a gastronomic aesthete, and thought that there could be something about the

nature of the food in virtue of which such and such an evaluative judgement was appropriate to it 'objectively', then there would be a very different story to tell here. And there are more obvious examples of 'evaluative judgements' over which there is dispute as to whether they can be 'ill-founded' - for instance, moral and aesthetic judgements.

Accusations of 'ill-foundedness' or 'irrationality' are only made against evaluative judgements if the following obtains. The 'evaluative predicate' ascribed to an object or situation in such a judgement, must attribute a property, e.g., dangerousness, courage, beauty, to the object or situation, a property which has an 'objective base'. A property of the kind in question has an objective base if the object (etc) which possesses it does so in virtue of its possession of other properties, at least some of which must be non-relational. These latter properties must have the following realist feature; for any one of them, p, if an object O is p, then 'O is p' is true in virtue of O being p, and also, in virtue of O being p, 'O is not p' is false. Some philosophers would take the further step of claiming that, say, the possession of courage is entailed by the possession of certain other properties of the person, etc. I do not want to commit myself on this.

I will shortly be defending the view that the property of unsurpassability would be 'objectively based'; it would be possessed by a being in virtue of that being's possession of other properties, some of which would be non-relational, and have the realist feature outlined about. The 'other properties' would not all be what traditionally would be called 'descriptive' e.g. a being's unsurpassability would be had partly in virtue of that being's moral perfection, or so I would contend. (Possibly moral perfection itself is had in virtue of yet other properties which would come under the traditional classification 'descriptive', but, as I have already indicated, I do not attach any ultimate significance to these labels, being unable to supply anything better than extensional definitions of 'descriptive

properties' and 'evaluative properties'.)

Some philosophers would deny that any of the so-called 'evaluative properties' exist at all, let alone have an 'objective base'. They would deny, for example, that O can possess courage as a property, and they would deny that it could possess such a property in virtue of its possession of other properties with the realist feature sketched above. J. L. Mackie would take this line on at least the so-called moral properties such as moral goodness. On his view, 'O is morally good' is not true in virtue of O possessing the property of moral goodness, the latter being had in virtue of other properties with the realist feature. He agrees that our ordinary ways of talking and thinking often suggest that there are such properties, but contends that this is an 'error'.¹

My defence of the claim that unsurpassability would be an objectively based evaluative property will proceed as follows. I argue that the Theist who believes that there exists a supreme being who is worthy of worship must, among other things, regard his God as supremely desirable. I show that the notion of the supremely desirable involves objectively based evaluative properties, and contend that if the Theist is committed to some such divine evaluative properties, then he should take the further step of claiming unsurpassability itself as an objectively based evaluative property. Of course, some philosophers might want to argue that no form of evaluative realism is coherent; I do not engage to defend evaluative realism in any comprehensive fashion, but rather to show that it is required by Theism; if evaluative realism could be shown to be untenable, this would, in my view a fortiori show that a view in which a supreme being is regarded as worthy of worship is untenable.

2. WANTS

To explain the nature of the supremely desirable, it will be necessary to spend some time in discussing the nature of wants and desires; not all of the results obtained here will be used immediately to develop the argument I have just sketched; some of them will be important later when we discuss

the nature of divine goodness, and in our discussion of belief.

It is often thought that 'desirable' is ambiguous as between 'is desired' and 'is worthy to be desired'. Whether or not there is ambiguity of this kind in common speech, I shall intend 'desirable' to mean 'worthy to be desired'. If something is such that it is fitting or worthy to be desired, it may be morally fitting, or fitting in some other sense. When I speak of the ultimately or supremely desirable character of God, I mean that he is such that it is morally fitting to desire him more than it is possible to desire anything else. These introductory remarks cannot be taken any further until we have gone more deeply into the question of wants and desires, and accordingly I turn now to this matter.

I make what I hope is the uncontroversial assumption that wanting or desiring is 'propositional' - thus 'I want p' may be suitably paraphrased in all cases by a sentence of the form 'I want that q'. Thus 'Jones wants cornflakes' could mean 'Jones wants (that he eats cornflakes); equally, it could mean 'Jones wants (that he buys cornflakes)' etc. Context should make clear what is meant. The typical want or desire statement is not explicit. For example, the wanting or desiring of another person can mean many things, and a characteristic statement of such a want or desire will mean more than one of these things at the same time. 'Jane wants Peter' could mean for instance, 'Jane wants (that she marries Peter)', 'Jane wants (that she is with Peter)', 'Jane wants (that Peter come to her office at once)' etc. If Jones is said to want God, this also could mean a number of things - but most significantly, and most probably, the following sorts of things would be meant: 'Jones wants (that he is with God).....(that he is 'closer' to God than he is now)...(that he continues to enjoy being in the presence of God)....(that he has a better relationship with God than he has at present), ' and so on.

Matters are complicated by the fact that want/desire has a number of 'senses' - often employed together, and we frequently slide from one sense

to another. I write 'sense' in scare quotes, since my contention is not that 'want' has a number of distinct meanings; I wish rather to distinguish four strands or elements within the rather wide and sometimes vague notions of wanting and desiring that we employ. Within the category of what I dub 'B-wants', which I treat first, I will have also to distinguish a number of sub-categories.

B-wants-general

Few wants or desires fail to contain an element of B-wanting. The general form of a B-want, where I want (that p) is a belief. It is the belief that I will be pleased (that p). 'Being pleased is' vague - ultimately it proves too vague, and we will distinguish various kinds of B-wants according to more precise specifications of ways in which we can be pleased. A few instances before we go into matters more carefully - 'I want a holiday' becomes - 'I want (that I am having a holiday)', and the B-want component in this becomes - 'I believe that I will be pleased (that I am having a holiday)'. 'I want Jane' becomes, e.g. 'I want (that I am with Jane)', and the B-want element may be expressed as 'I believe that I will be pleased (that I am with Jane)'. I can be 'pleased' at all sorts of things - at experiences of my own that I anticipate undergoing - at states of affairs which do not involve my own experiences at all, and so on. Before we go into this, the general form of the belief that I have claimed is identical to a B-want requires a qualification.

Evidently I can desire that certain states of affairs obtain, even though they would obtain after my death, or even if, were they to obtain, I would not personally be in a position to have a reaction to them, let alone be pleased. For instance, I can want to sacrifice my life for a friend; I can want to be famous a hundred years from now; I can want there to be no hungry people on the earth in 2080. The distinction here is between wants which involve experiences I will undergo personally, and all other wants. Thus, if I want to eat a piece of cake, I anticipate a

pleasurable experience in the course of eating the cake - I believe that I will enjoy eating the piece of cake - or, to return to the vague phraseology of the beginning of this section, I believe that I will be pleased to eat the piece of cake. But, on the other hand, I could want the next door neighbour to recover from his illness even though I believe that I personally will not have any experiences in connection with the recovery - perhaps I believe that he is going to move away from the district as soon as he comes out of hospital. What I want here bears no relation to what I anticipate in the way of my own future experiences. It is not that I expect to be pleased once the wanted state of affairs obtains and makes an impact on my own experience, for I look to no such impact; it is rather that I expect to be pleased at the obtaining of the said state of affairs per se.

Now I can, in principle, be pleased about that, whether it obtains currently, has already obtained, or will obtain in the future; indeed, all that seems necessary is that I believe that it currently obtains, or that it has already obtained, or that it will obtain, for me to be pleased about it. Thus, if I want the next door neighbour to recover from his illness, my belief that I will be pleased on his recovery could be shown to be 'correct' as soon as I become convinced that he will recover - perhaps his wife tells me that the doctors have every confidence, etc; my being pleased does not have to wait upon the fact of the recovery itself. Or again, if I want to be famous after my death, it is true in a way that were I to be around as a kind of ghostly spectator, I would be pleased to contemplate the evidence of my growing fame. But, needless to say, my desire for posthumous fame would not normally take this form. It in fact amounts to a belief that I would be pleased that the following state of affairs obtains - I am famous after my death. I do not have to wait until after my death to start being pleased; my belief that I will be pleased about it could be shown to be correct if, as soon as I become convinced that I will be famous after my death, I am pleased.

Suppose I want my son not to have been killed in an air crash. Let us build into the example that I do not anticipate seeing, or hearing from my son again, if, by good fortune he is still alive. Perhaps he is working in a foreign country, and I am due to die from cancer very shortly. My want here does not simply amount to the belief that I would have been pleased an hour ago, when the crash took place, if my son had not been killed; the time factor is irrelevant, since the obtaining of the desired state of affairs does not affect my personal experience directly. The desire in question amounts rather to the belief that I will be pleased once I am convinced that the state of affairs in question did obtain. One final example at this point: If I want to sacrifice my life for a friend I believe that I will be pleased at the obtaining of the state of affairs - me sacrificing my life for a friend. Evidently, I cannot wait until I have performed the sacrifice to be pleased; my being pleased will be restricted to that period of time before my death in which I am convinced that the appropriate state of affairs is going to obtain.

In her book 'Happiness', E. Telfer suggests that enjoyment is of activities and experiences that I perform or undergo myself - thus I enjoy the cake, the holiday, the film. But I scarcely enjoy-being famous after my death (although I could enjoy dwelling on the prospect of it) - my neighbour recovering from an illness when I am never going to see him again - the labour party winning the election in a country I am never going to visit, etc. Being pleased, she suggests, is a wider notion, not restricted to my personal activities and experiences - I can be pleased at the result of the General Election, the government's stand on pornography, and so forth². I would have thought that I could also be pleased at those things I enjoy or from which I gain pleasurable sensations - thus I can be pleased at eating the cake, at watching the film, etc. Anyhow, in the spirit of her observations, and in the light of the foregoing discussion, I distinguish between two broad categories of B-wants.

Experiential B-wants

For these, I reserve the expressions 'enjoying', 'getting pleasure from', and the like. Often it would be quite natural to talk of 'being pleased' in such contexts, but in the interests of clarity I will avoid so doing from now on. When I have a B-want of this kind that p, I believe that I will enjoy p obtaining, or get pleasure from p obtaining. Sometimes the situation is more aptly portrayed in negative terms - I want that p can amount to the belief that when P obtains, my present state of discomfort, pain, etc. will disappear.

If I believe that I will enjoy p obtaining, or have enjoyable experiences when p obtains, then, in so far as these are expressions of experiential B-wants, I believe that p's obtaining will be a causal factor in my enjoying myself at the time that p obtains. Suppose I want a piece of cake. This almost certainly involves an experiential B-want. In 'propositional' form, it becomes - I want (that I am eating cake), and this, according to the account offered here, is equivalent to the belief - that I will enjoy the obtaining of the state of affairs - me eating a piece of cake. Implicit in the belief is the thought that my enjoyment will, at least in part, be caused by the obtaining of the desired state of affairs. A second instance - I want to get out of the cold water, in 'propositional' form is expressed as 'I want (that I am out of the cold water)' which is equivalent to the belief - 'the obtaining of the state of affairs - me being out of the cold water, will, at least in part, be causally responsible for me at that time not to be in the state of discomfort I am in at present'.

Non-experiential B-wants

For this category of B-wants, I reserve the expression 'being pleased'. These are B-wants for the obtaining of states of affairs whose obtaining at time t does not causally affect my experiences at time t or later. They are equivalent to beliefs as follows. 'I non-experientially B-want that p' becomes - 'I believe that I will be pleased if p obtains, whether or not I

also believe that the obtaining of p will causally affect my own experiences. Put in this way, my belief includes the belief that once I am convinced that p will obtain, then I will be pleased; if I am convinced that p is now obtaining, then, even if my experience is entirely unaffected by the obtaining of p itself, my belief that it is obtaining will be associated with my being pleased about it, etc.

For example, 'I want the liberals to be in power in the 22nd century' basically amounts to the belief that I will be pleased at the obtaining of the state of affairs - the liberals being in power in the 22nd century - but since I will not be around to witness this state of affairs, my belief is, more specifically, that if I become convinced that the said state of affairs will obtain, then I will be pleased about it, and will continue to be pleased about it as long as my conviction remains. Or again, suppose I want my next door neighbour to recover from his illness, though I believe that I will never see him again. This becomes: 'I believe that I will be pleased at the obtaining of the state of affairs - my next door neighbour recovering'. But since, ex hypothesi I won't actually get any experiences associated with his recovery itself - I won't enjoy seeing him well again - or even enjoy his wife's happiness at his recovery, etc., my belief, more carefully expressed, is that I will be pleased as soon as I have grounds for thinking that he is well again, or even for thinking that he will be well again. Accordingly I need not believe that the actual obtaining of the state of affairs - my next door neighbour recovering - will be a causal factor in my being pleased; I will not necessarily believe that his recovery will causally affect my experiences at all; if there is a pure non-experiential B-want here, what I want is purely that he recover, without regard to whether it makes any difference at all to my experiences. (Of course, in a natural case there would be a combination of both experiential and non-experiential B-wants here - I separate the two rather artificially for purposes of philosophical analysis).

As with the experiential B-want, we can have a negative version of the non-experiential B-want. 'I want the war (which is taking place in another country which I shall never visit etc.) to end', could mean: 'I am currently not pleased, because I am convinced that this war is taking place, and I believe that were I to come to believe that it had ceased, I would no longer be distressed as I am at present. 'In this example, it is important once more to emphasize the point that I need not believe that my anticipated relief from current distress will be causally determined in any way by the cessation of the war. I might come to have the false belief that the war had stopped, and I would still believe that I would be pleased - so long as I was unaware of the falsity of my belief.

C-wants

These are simply those beliefs involved in B-wants which are true. In the category of experiential B-wants, the matter is easily expressed; I B-want cake; if I actually eat it and enjoy doing so, then, at the time that I B-wanted the cake, I also C-wanted it. There is a sense in which there can be C-wants which are not gratified, as illustrated by the following; someone might B-want cake, but fall down dead before he is able to eat it; it may well be that he C-wanted it too - i.e. it may well be true that he would have enjoyed it had he eaten it - this counterfactual being true perhaps in virtue of certain physiological states of the person before death. As regards non-experiential B-wants which turn out to be C-wants too, the matter is slightly more complex. Suppose I B-want the liberals to be in power in the 22nd century, and also C-want this; I believe that I would be pleased were the liberals to be in power in the 22nd century. I will not be around to see, so this belief amounts here to the belief that were I to become convinced that the liberals were quite definitely going to be in power in the 22nd century, I would be pleased from then on. If I then do become convinced, for whatever reason, that they will be in power, and I actually am pleased about it, then I C-wanted the liberals to be in power in the 22nd century. Or again, if my non-experiential B-want for the recovery of my

next door neighbour is also a C-want, then, were I to become convinced that he would recover, was recovering, or had recovered, then I would indeed be pleased. Generally, C-wants are judged to be present 'after the event', although with non-experiential wants this is evidently not always possible.

A-wants

Characteristic examples of such wants are so called appetitive desires for food, sex, and so on. (Though appetitive desires are seldom purely A-wants - in speaking of A-wants I talk of an element in desiring which rarely occurs on its own in pure form, though it does occasionally, as I argue shortly). Sometimes we may speak of cravings or yearnings here rather than wants. The most important feature of such wants is that there is no link between the having of such a want and the kinds of beliefs involved either in experiential or non-experiential B-wants.

To give one or two examples; it is possible, though admittedly very unusual, for me purely to A-want food; I may not believe that I will experience pleasure when I eat the food, or enjoy eating it, or even be pleased in any sense that I am eating it. Perhaps I have an obsessional wish to slim - perhaps I have a severe stomach condition, and I believe that I will experience severe discomfort when I eat food; the condition might be so bad that I would not believe that I would be pleased in any sense that I had eaten it; I might feel quite suicidal, and even the bare thought of eating food to prolong life would not move me.

The most plausible examples of pure A-wants occur with drug addiction. Evidently, particularly at the beginning of the drug taking, the person concerned may have certain beliefs as to how he will feel after taking the drug - beliefs of a favourable character. He may believe that he will feel good in such and such ways. But eventually he may reach the stage where he no longer has any such beliefs - the drug, he thinks, is doing nothing for him - he wishes he were not addicted to it - he believes it is causing his health to deteriorate, giving rise to physiological states which themselves

are inducing within him pain and nausea. Yet he still A-wants the drug. He craves for the next dose - he has ungovernable yearnings for it. Further examples of a similar kind may, arguably, be found among desires of a type with which a psychiatrist would attempt to deal. For instance I may A-want to steal from shops - I am a genuine kleptomaniac. I need not believe that I will enjoy the stealing or the having of the objects concerned - I need not believe that I will in any sense be pleased at the thieving, or with the possession of the objects afterwards.

It is characteristic of A-wants that the A-wanter is in a state of mild discomfort analogous to pain; the discomfort is generally slight. But it cannot be objected against my outline of A-wants that there is an inevitable link with B-want type beliefs. The objection which fails would run as follows; I want my next dose of heroin, and believe I will be pleased when I have had it, because, whatever else will still be wrong, I think that the present discomfort of having the want at all will be removed. The flaw in the objection is this. Whilst I may believe that the discomfort of the having of the want may be removed - equally I may not have this belief. I may have reached a state in which I believe that no matter how much I try to satisfy my want, the 'discomfort' of its presence - the feeling of desperate craving, will not disappear. Yet I may still want the next dose - and if so, this would be, in my view, a pure A-want.

An additional feature of A-wants, though perhaps not peculiar to them, is that they come and go independently of my voluntary control. I cannot, by some kind of act of will, A-want food or sex; neither can I in this way extinguish such wants. I can try to distract myself from them, and I can, if I think it is necessary, endeavour not to give into them. But once I cease my efforts, the want may still remain. (My will can perhaps have a longer term influence over such wants, for I can choose, or avoid choosing certain things which might lead to various habits, etc. But when I speak of an 'act of will' in the present context, I mean something that could be

accomplished fairly quickly).

D-wants

There is a sense of 'want' which means roughly the same as 'intend' or 'choose' or 'decide'. For example, Jones says to the shopkeeper: 'I want some cigarettes, please'. He need not, although he may, have any kind of yearning or craving for cigarettes, so there need be no element of A-wanting here. He need not think that he will be pleased in any sense to have the cigarettes - he may have been forced by his mother to buy some for her, and he may be trying very hard to get her to stop smoking. So he need not B-want or C-want the cigarettes. However, without, A,B or C-wants, Jones can still mean that he intends to have some cigarettes, and that he intends that the shopkeeper should give him some.

3. THE JUSTIFICATION OF WANTS

I cannot be 'justified' in having a pure A-want; when I crave for the next dose of heroin, this is just a brute fact about me. There may be reasons for it, in the sense that there may be an explanation, say in physiological terms, of my craving, but I can have no kind of justification for the craving. By the very nature of A-wants they are not had because the A-wanter believes that the object of his want has one set of features rather than another. Anything can be the object of an A-want in theory, and indeed, psychopathology indicates that some very peculiar things are sometimes the objects of A-wants. But pure A-wants are rare - there is usually a B-want of some kind involved too.

It is perfectly possible for someone to have, either an experiential, or a non-experiential B-want, where the question of whether the want is justified has not arisen for him. Some psychologists argue that we begin life with a set of 'native desires' - and few of the candidates that they suggest look as though they could be pure A-wants. For instance if, in some sense curiosity is innate, a baby might be said to believe that it would enjoy exploring its environment - i.e. involved in its curiosity could

be an experiential B-want to explore the environment. The baby will almost certainly have failed to consider whether it has any justification for having this want. Let us consider another example which involves a non-experiential B-want. Some people are born, let us suppose, with innately benevolent dispositions. Hence they have non-experiential B-wants for others to be happy. At a given time, the question of whether they are justified in believing that they would be pleased if others are happy need not have arisen for them.

Those beliefs, then, which constitute B-wants may on occasion be held by people who do not consider whether they are justified in believing thus. But normal reasonable people do not retain beliefs for which they do not think they have justification; if B-wants are had by someone who does not consider himself justified in having them, then he will probably give them up over a period of time. It is possible, however, that B-wants, rightly thought by their possessors not to be justified, might not diminish, if, for instance, the want is in some sense pathological - a result, say of treatment in early childhood.

A belief *b* which I am justified in holding, is either in itself such that I am justified in holding it, or such that I am justified in holding it if I am also justified in having certain other beliefs which provide justification for holding *b*. Prima facie, the beliefs which constitute B-wants are no exception to this; if so, there may be some which are such that we are justified in having them without reference to further beliefs, and others which we are only justified in having given the support of further beliefs. When further beliefs are appealed to, these may be described as our reasons for our B-wants.

Many such reasons will simply be beliefs which link a state of affairs which we are justified in believing we will enjoy, or be pleased about, with other states of affairs which are connected, e.g. causally, with states of affairs of the former kind. Thus, suppose my belief that

I will enjoy eating cake is one which I am justified in holding. Suppose I want to go into the dining room - viz., that I believe that I will enjoy myself when I go into the dining room. This belief is not, we will suppose, a self-justifying one; my reason for holding it is that I believe that there is cake in the dining room; that if I go in I will be able to have some, and that I will enjoy having some. In different terminology, I want to go into the dining room, not for itself, but only as a means to the end of getting the cake which is there. I only mention these means-ends reasons to put them on one side since I want to concentrate on the kind of justification we may have for believing that we will enjoy p obtaining, or be pleased that p, where p is already the 'end' in question.

The justification of experiential B-wants seems only to take one or two simple forms. If I B-want a piece of cake, my justification could consist in my belief that I have had cake before, and that I enjoyed it on the previous occasion. Or more eccentrically but arguably with equal validity, my justification might consist in beliefs about my own physiological/and or psychological make up - beliefs which lead me to think that I would enjoy the cake. My justification for an experiential B-want does not require me to attend to the intrinsic character of the state of affairs that is wanted; the kind of justification I had for my want for cake could, in principle at least, apply to anything. For instance, I could, in theory, experientially B-want to bite the tree on the grounds that I believe that I have done it before and enjoyed it - or on the grounds that I believe I am the kind of person who enjoys this kind of thing.

The situation as regards the justification of non-experiential B-wants is quite different. Remember that we are excluding the cases of 'being pleased' which result from enjoyment, and that we are reserving the expression 'being pleased' for cases where our own experiences and activities are not involved. Then I cannot believe that I will be pleased that p, on the grounds that 'I believe that I was pleased last time'. It is not a

question of whether I was pleased last time - as though I try to remember how I felt last time that p obtained, and conclude, given the appropriate memory, that I will feel good about it this time too. That would be an attempt to obtain a justification of a kind appropriate to experiential B-wants. If my belief that I would be pleased that p is a justified belief, its justification springs from the correctness of my beliefs as to the very nature of p itself; justification cannot lie in beliefs I might have concerning the experience I would have as a result of p, since ex hypothesi p need not affect my experience at all, and I may well believe that p's obtaining will not reflect on my experience.

Now what could it be about p itself which could 'justify' my belief that I would be pleased that p? In my view, the only way in which p could justify my belief that I would be pleased that p, is if p involves the manifestation of 'evaluative properties' such as moral goodness, courage, prudence, beauty, and so on. If in the philosophical long run, it turns out that the 'evaluative realist' is mistaken, and there are no such things as evaluative properties, then, as far as I can see, I cannot have a 'justified' belief that I would be pleased that p; I can only have a belief that I would be pleased that p which amounts to a prediction of a purely 'subjective' response to p, if it obtains. Some will of course wish to dispute this claim. But if they thought there was justification to be had in this area at all, I cannot see what alternative they can offer to something like 'evaluative properties'.

There is of course still room for dispute within the confines of evaluative realism over the questions - what evaluative properties are there? - and in virtue of what properties are evaluative properties possessed as 'resultants'. For instance, even a utilitarian of the crude hedonic variety might accommodate himself within the realist perspective, if he said, e.g. - the moral property of goodness is possessed solely in virtue of the quantity of pleasure produced.

Often I will have both an experiential and a non-experiential B-want that p. Suppose I want my next door neighbour to recover from his illness, and this time expect to enjoy his company when he is out of hospital. I may well believe both that I will enjoy myself if he recovers, and that I will be pleased if he recovers. If I take the view that my belief that I will be pleased at his recovery is a justified one, this will involve me in thinking that the state of affairs - my neighbour recovering from his illness, involves the manifestation of a realist evaluative property - say moral goodness of some kind. My belief that I will enjoy his recovery may also be a justified one - not justified by any evaluative property manifested thereby, but on the grounds, for instance, that I have enjoyed his company before, and I believe that his recovery means that I can enjoy his company one more. Or again, suppose I wish to go to the concert. I have an experiential B-want to go - whose justification is that I believe I have enjoyed concerts before. I may also believe that I will be pleased to go - the justification for this could be my belief that the music manifests a realist evaluative property - viz. 'beauty'.

Sometimes experiential and non-experiential B-wants will conflict. I will not anticipate being really pleased overall, or happy, that p, where p's obtaining will play some causal role in determining my future experience, unless there is not merely an absence of such conflict, but also the presence of an appropriate non-experiential B-want. An example of conflict:- I might believe that I would enjoy sleeping with my neighbour's wife; nonetheless, I might also believe that I ought not to do this. In the light of these beliefs, it might be true to say of me that I have an experiential B-want to sleep with her, and a non-experiential B-want to refrain from so doing. In such a situation I will not anticipate being pleased overall to sleep with her, or being happy to sleep with her.

Consider another example, where there might be no conflict, but where the lack of an appropriate non-experiential B-want indicates that true

happiness will not be anticipated: I might believe that I would enjoy having an electrode implanted in the pleasure centre of my brain, and in so far as I did so, I would have a sort of experiential B-want for the electrode to be implanted. But even if I had no view that such implantation would be morally wrong (possibly, I ought to have such a view, but let us put that to one side), I am unlikely to anticipate real happiness; I would not believe that I would be pleased overall to have the electrode implanted. I would not have a non-experiential B-want for the electrode; I would be unable to see any possibility that such a want could be justified. There would be nothing about the state of affairs of an electrode implantation, I might well think, in virtue of which any realist evaluative property would be manifested which could provide justification for non-experiential B-want for the implantation.

We are now ready to apply the results of these reflections to the matter of desiring God. Suppose Jones worships God. This entails that Jones believes that God is unsurpassable (a claim that will be defended in the next section). Part of being unsurpassable is, surely, being supremely and ultimately desirable. Jones, believing in an unsurpassable being will want that being more than he could possibly want anything else; his possession of such desires will be a criterion of his belief that he recognises the supremely desirable character of God. But what exactly does it mean to say that Jones wants God more than he wants anything else? We have already suggested some of the propositional forms such wants might take; we are now in a position to take this further. Suppose that Jones wants (that he is with God) more than anything else. It might seem that this could be treated purely as an experiential B-want, according to which Jones has the belief that he would enjoy being with God more than he could possibly enjoy anything else.

But I want to argue that such an experiential B-want is not enough; if God is ultimately desirable, he must be such that Jones would be more pleased,

overall, as he thinks, or such that Jones anticipates that he would be more truly happy, to be with God, than he could possibly be with anything else. I have urged that if S is to anticipate being pleased overall that p, or if S is to anticipate being truly happy that p, then there must (1) be no conflict between S's experiential and non-experiential B-wants, and (2) S must have appropriate and compatible experiential and non-experiential B-wants that p. We have seen that the justification of non-experiential B-wants that p could only consist in true beliefs concerning the manifestation in p of realist evaluative properties. Jones requires both an experiential and a non-experiential B-want for God; it must be possible for Jones to regard his non-experiential B-want for God as a justified one - (indeed, if Jones is a 'normal reasonable person' without any pathological religious desires, he requires in actual fact to think that his non-experiential B-want for God is justified - otherwise he will not retain this want).

Hence Jones will need to believe that God is such that he possesses certain realist evaluative properties. In sum, for Jones to believe that God is unsurpassable, he needs to believe that God is such that he possesses certain realist evaluative properties. We have now reached the conclusion for which I have been arguing, and which was the reason for my long excursion into the subject of wants.

At this point, it is a natural step for the Theist to take - viz. to say that God possesses the realist evaluative property of unsurpassability - that it is this property that ensures his ultimate desirability, and that he is worthy of worship. The question of course arises as to what God must be like to be unsurpassable. The next chapter considers this question to the extent that it inquires how far God must be transcendent to be unsurpassable. Associated with the general question of what God must be like to be unsurpassable is another. How are we to judge what properties he requires to be unsurpassable? Such a question does not differ in kind, though perhaps it does differ in difficulty, from the question which faces

all moral realists - or even all evaluative realists. How do we judge when an evaluative property is manifested? The evaluative realist has to assume that we can on occasion be correct in our claim to recognize instances of such properties; such an assumption is of course compatible with the possibility of wholesale error, the possibility of perpetual lack of agreement about, for example, what is desirable, courageous, admirable, beautiful, and the like. It would be nice for the evaluative realist if he could provide a watertight and rigorous specification of the sort of person who would be an 'ideal observer' - who would be bound to detect evaluative properties in the appropriate circumstances. This person would be 'rational' - not afflicted by any kind of 'blindness', moral or otherwise, able to take an impartial view, who, after cool consideration of the situation would react in a 'fitting' matter. But any attempt to specify such a person would almost certainly result in circularity or vacuity.

I have argued that a religion in which an unsurpassable being is worshipped entails some form of evaluative realism, and suggested that the Theist treat unsurpassability itself as a realist evaluative property. In the discussion that follows, I am just going to have to assume the possibility that, if such a form of Theism were true, we would be able to detect or judge that about a supreme being in virtue of which he would be unsurpassable - that in virtue of which the being would be worthy of worship.

We can perhaps render this apparently daunting judgemental task easier than it first appears. We can, for instance, reflect that the features of the being in virtue of which he is unsurpassable - worthy of worship, are at the same time the reasons why we ought to do those things involved in worship. In other words we can to some extent 'unpack' worship into some of the characteristic activities and responses it involves. For example, whatever it is about the being that makes him worthy of worship, is the reason why we ought to 'bow the knee' to that being in acts of ultimate humility. It is also the reason why a CRB ought to render the highest

praise and honour to him; again, it is the reason why a CRB should strive to serve him to the very best of his ability - and why a CRB would be justified in thinking he would be happier with him than he would be doing anything else. From a slightly different perspective, we can say that that about the supreme being in virtue of which he is worthy of worship will be that in virtue of which he is worthy of certain emotional responses to him that, arguably, a CRB ought to cultivate - a supreme degree of love, admiration, awe, fascination, and so on.

If, then, we are sometimes at a loss when we are wondering whether a being with such and such a nature is unsurpassable - worthy of worship, we can look at matters in detail, and take points in turn; for instance, we can ask whether a being of the kind in question would be such that we ought to bow the knee to him, or, again, whether he would be such that we should render him the highest praise and honour, etc. Ultimately the questions that arise here will not be settleable by argument, but by judgement. We can do no better than this.

4. MUST A BEING BE UNSURPASSABLE TO BE WORTHY OF WORSHIP?

The claim that only an unsurpassable being is worthy of worship is attacked by Peter Appleby in his article 'On Religious Attitudes'³. Since this is a claim whose truth I have already assumed, and will go on assuming throughout this work, I will say a little in the present section in defence of it.

There is a group of closely connected statements which may relevantly be considered in this connection, viz:

- (1) Necessarily, if any being is God, he is unsurpassable.
- (2) Necessarily, if there is an unsurpassable being, there is only one such being.
- (3) Necessarily, if any being is God, he is worthy of worship.
- (4) Necessarily, if any being is worthy of worship, then he alone is worthy of worship.
- (5) Necessarily, if any being is God, he alone is worthy of worship
- (6) Necessarily, if any being is unsurpassable, then he alone is worthy of worship.

We could consider (1)-(4) as premisses of an argument, whose conclusion is ultimately (6). (5) follows from (3) and (4). Then, putting (5) with (1) and (2) we obtain (6). Concerning all this, the following observations may be made.

(1) appears to be a de dicto necessary truth. It seems to be based on the fact that we would not award any being the title 'God' unless he were unsurpassable. It's ancestry is of course respectable, going back to Anselm or beyond-God is "that than which a greater cannot be conceived".

Concerning (2): if this premiss is true, as I indeed think it is, its truth arises from what it means to be unsurpassable. Unsurpassability implies both (a) that the being in question could not be bettered, and (b) that the being in question could not be equalled. An argument for (b) which I only sketch here is this: an unsurpassable being would be eternal and omnipotent; on standard versions of what it is to be omnipotent, it is logically impossible for there to exist more than one eternal omnipotent being. Hence, if there is an unsurpassable being, then, necessarily, there is only one such being.

(3) is an assumption, with which I think Appleby would not quarrel. Appleby entirely disagrees with the conclusion (6), and probably, therefore with (1) and (4), which indeed seem to be the only premisses open to dispute in any real sense. Appleby brings counter-examples against (6). In his view, it would imply that in polytheistic religions, Gods were not worshipped, since, he presumes, if one was paying tribute to one god among others, one could not have been thinking of that god as unsurpassable. I have some inclination to accept that such beings were not worshipped, but Appleby evidently finds such an implication implausible. An alternative response to Appleby would be to say that primitive man did, in a sense, worship all his gods. But he was inconsistent, and thought of whatever god he was honouring at a particular moment as uniquely unsurpassable, failing to realise or care that this attitude conflicted with the attitude he had taken,

say to another god on the previous day.

Writing about the Vedic religion, and commenting on a hymn to Indra, Ninian Smart says: 'Here is exhibited the tendency to exalt one god as surpreme over all. To be sure, the hymn recognises other gods; there is no strict monotheism here. However, here, and elsewhere in the Vedic hymns, it is noticeable that the god addressed tends to be treated as the sole object of worship, and the attributes of other deities are often heaped upon him.

'This attitude has been called kathenotheism (literally 'one-god-at-a-time-ism'). Although the composers of the hymns may on various occasions address themselves to various gods, within the context of a given hymn the god addressed is supreme...there is an attitude not far removed from monotheism, even though outside the frame other gods are recognised and exalted. The chief gods are reckoned supreme severally, one at a time'⁴.

Appleby argues that the ancient Hebrews did not think of Jahweh as all-powerful and all-knowing, but just as very powerful, and as knowing a great deal. Yet, he claims, they worshipped Jahweh. And it was fitting for them to do so. Also, in his view the contention that only an unsurpassable being is worthy of worship implies that most 'ordinary believers' are idolaters. In their rituals (etc) in church, mosque or temple, they do not think of God as being unsurpassable.

If we refuse to say that an activity carried out by a CRB is worship unless the being towards whom the activity is 'intentionally' directed is thought of by that CRB as unsurpassable, one response to Appleby is this. It is to accept that neither the ancient Hebrews nor the 'ordinary believer' has the capacity for full worship; perhaps worshipping is something which is an ideal; something CRB's can strive to achieve, but never accomplish in full. Thus idolatry does not arise, since there is not actual full-blooded worship taking place. Though this view has some attractions, it must be admitted that a view which results in the conclusion that 'worship'

is misapplied in the vast majority of cases at present could scarcely be maintained without qualms.

Better perhaps is to say that the ancient Hebrews and the modern ordinary believer do think that the object of their worship is unsurpassable, and that Appleby is wrong to deny this. I suspect that Appleby assumes that they don't take their object of worship to be unsurpassable, because he also assumes that they would not think of themselves as believing, and would not say, that the object of their worship possesses those features traditionally thought of as those in virtue of which God is unsurpassable - viz., omnipotence, omniscience, and so forth.

But we need to make careful inquiry as to how we would go about testing whether, say an ancient Hebrew believed in a God who was unsurpassable. On my view, some kind of dispositional theory of belief is correct, and I defend this at some length in Chapter 6. When I believe that p, I am normally disposed, among other things, to say that p in certain circumstances, and to think of myself as believing that p - i.e. in certain situations when I consult my state of mind introspectively, it seems to me that I believe that p. But - and this is a point I develop much more fully in Chapter 6, sometimes when it seems to me that I believe that p, I do not in fact believe that p; also, though typically, when I believe that p, I am disposed to 'assent inwardly' to p, or to say that p, this need not be so; sometimes I can believe that p when I am neither disposed to think I have this belief, nor disposed to say it; unconscious beliefs are one kind of example of this.

I am not for one moment suggesting that the ancient Hebrews had unconscious beliefs in an unsurpassable God. But I am claiming that when we are assessing what it is that someone believes about God, we should not attend only to what the believer may say, or think to himself that he believes. We must look (of course) at the whole range of his behaviour; we must also try to imagine what he would have said and thought had he been confronted with situations of a kind with which he was never in actual fact

confronted. The ancient Hebrew, for example, might, at most, have had a disposition to 'assent inwardly' to the proposition that Jehovah is very powerful, rather than to the proposition that Jehovah is omnipotent. But suppose he, anachronistically, had been confronted with St. Anselm, who put the question to him. 'Do you think either that there is, or that there might have been a being more powerful than Jehovah?' It is not at all obvious that the Hebrew would happily have answered in the affirmative to either question. Once he had considered this thought, perhaps a thought that had never entered his head before, I suggest he might well deny that any being could possibly be more powerful than Jehovah. Of course, on a dispositional theory of belief, there is no infallibility about the mental or verbal responses that a Hebrew would make when stimulated by St. Anselm either. But such a theory makes us much more cautious than Appleby about assuming that we can tell what, say, the Hebrews believed just from what they would probably say or think in everyday religious circumstances. The behaviour of the Hebrews in general could quite plausibly be interpreted as manifesting belief in an unsurpassable being.

Similar points could be made about the modern 'ordinary believer'. He might not be disposed to say, or to think that he believed, for instance, in an omnipotent being, as opposed to a very powerful being, within the standard range of circumstances in which he would be likely to be placed. It is at least arguable that his behaviour as a whole, and possibly the extremes of emotions that at least some normal believers exhibit, could be interpreted as belief in an omnipotent being, and more generally, belief in an unsurpassable being. It might also be contended, that were we able to put the 'normal' believer on the spot, and ask him in a way he found intelligible whether he supposed that the object of his devotion could be surpassed, he then might insist that the object of his devotion could not be surpassed.

NOTES

- 1 c.f. J. L. Mackie 'Ethics' Penguin Books 1977
- 2 E. Telfer 'Happiness' p14 Macmillan 1980
- 3 Religious Studies 1970
- 4 'The Religious Experience of Mankind' p90 Fount Paperback.

CHAPTER THREE
UNSURPASSABILITY AND TRANSCENDENCE

1. Unsurpassability entails transcendence; general

We are now ready to explore the links between the unsurpassability of a supreme being, and the transcendence of that being. Without argument, I will assume that God must at least have the traditional properties in order that he be unsurpassable - viz. that he must be omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, the creator ex nihilo of all other existing things. I will have a little more to say about the implication that he must be the creator when we come to the question of ontological transcendence. A further major implication, that he must be perfectly good, and the type of transcendence which flows from this, will form the subject of the bulk of the present chapter.

Otto writes: 'The 'truly mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other' whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb'¹.

In my terms, Otto thinks that God must be ontologically transcendent in order that emotions such as awe, fear, wonder, and so on, should be fitting, and that he is epistemologically transcendent in virtue of his ontological transcendence. The reference to the 'irremovable limits' of our knowledge also suggest that Otto believes that an unsurpassable being is 'bound' to be mysterious to 'finite' CRB's. I am in broad agreement with this approach, but I will spend a few paragraphs in spelling matters out in my own way.

We will see later that there are important differences between epistemological transcendence in the sense of transcending understanding, and epistemological transcendence in the sense of transcending knowledge, but for present purposes these two types may be treated together. When a

Theist says that God is mysterious, this may well be an expression of his conviction that God is such that before him it is fitting to feel the utmost humility, and such that it is fitting to perform acts directed to him which express extreme self-abnegation. God, the Theist feels, is so great that he is bound to be beyond the powers of CRB's to understand him fully, and bound to be beyond the powers of CRB's to know all there is to know about him. It would, of course, be fitting to feel awe of a being who is creator and lord of the universe, all powerful, all knowing, etc. There is a strong impulse to say, however, that it is fitting to feel an even greater degree of awe (etc) with respect to a being who is all that the former being is, but is also 'mysterious' in the sense of Otto - viz. unknowable because other, different. In this kind of context Otto also speaks of 'fascination'; being unsurpassable involves being supremely desirable, as we discussed in the last chapter; a being who is unknowable, and/or incomprehensible, at least to some degree, seems to have that in virtue of which he is more desirable, because of an extra element of 'fascination', than a being who is seemingly all that the first being is, but lacks the mystery.

It is, of course, at points like this that the elements of 'judgement' comes in - the point I touched on at the end of the last chapter. If someone disputes here that unsurpassability does involve mystery; if they claim that they can see nothing 'fascinating' about mystery, there is little more than I can say to show that I am 'right' and that they are 'wrong'.

It is a familiar, but important point, touched on indeed by Appleby², that there comes a point when the degree of mystery invested in the object of worship begins to interfere with the very possibility of some of the other emotions which it is fitting to have with respect to the object or being in question. In so far, for example, as love may be thought of as an emotion, it is clearly not possible to feel any degree of love, let alone the greatest possible degree of love, for a being who is wholly mysterious and

and incomprehensible. The constraints on the degree of mystery that a supreme being may possess are not only of the philosophical kind which we will spend some time in discussing, then, but are also religious; worship of a totally mysterious and incomprehensible being is an unintelligible activity. Nevertheless, there is no doubt in my mind, at least, that a being who was indeed unsurpassable would not be totally within the epistemological grasp of a CRB; it will be in Chapter 4 that we will discuss various precise philosophical versions of this claim, and examine whether there are tenable versions.

Concerning ontological transcendence, very similar points can be made as were put forward in favour of a degree of mystery. It seems wholly appropriate to respond with extreme emotional responses, for example, in the way of wonder, fascination, dread, awe, astonishment, and so on, to that being who is worthy of worship. And a being who was at least to some degree 'other' or 'alien' would seem to be more fitting as an object of these emotions than a being who was not ontologically transcendent in this way. And a being who was not only wonderful, but also 'different' would perhaps be more desirable (Otto's fascination) than a being who lacked ontological transcendence.

A profound difference between religions of India - Hinduism and Buddhism, even where they contain important monotheistic elements, and the monotheism of the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, is that in the latter the supreme being is seen as the creator *ex nihilo* of the universe, whereas in the former he is not. Worship is the characteristic mode of religious approach to the God of Judaeo-Christianity and Islam, whilst meditation and contemplation is the characteristic mode of the Indian religions. Even the adherents of Bhakti-loving devotion to a God, never invested him with the powers of a creator *ex nihilo*. And it is, of course the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions that have developed the notion of the 'otherness' of God.

I will sketch a 'route' to ontological transcendence which goes by means of the notion of creation ex nihilo: to be unsurpassable, a being must be the creator ex nihilo of everything else that exists; being the creator ex nihilo is a property which conforms to the specification of ontological transcendence which I gave in Chapter 1; an ontologically transcendent being (a) possesses essentially at least one property which any other existent would essentially not possess, and (b) the property in question must also be such that any other existent would essentially fail to possess it to a lesser degree.

It might be thought that the property of being the creator ex nihilo fails to meet requirement (b). For, it might be said, God could impart to other beings the ability to create ex nihilo; it might appear to follow from this that they possessed to a lesser degree that property which God is alleged to possess essentially. However, I do not in fact think that it would be a matter of a property being possessed to a 'lesser degree'. God would have to maintain in existence such lesser creators as he chose to permit, otherwise they and their creations would 'disappear'. There is surely a difference in kind between the property of being the original creator and sustainer of all existing things, and the property of possessing delegated creative and sustaining powers. Hence the property of being the creator ex nihilo does after all meet the (b) requirement for ontological transcendence.

As with mystery, ontological transcendence must not be such as to preclude the very possibility of worship. If, for instance, ontological transcendence denies personhood, then an ontologically transcendent being would not surpass a being not endowed with such a 'characteristic'. Now being the creator ex nihilo surely involves agency of a kind which only a person possesses; the expression 'impersonal creator' does not seem to denote a possible entity. Hence, insofar as being the creator involves God in being 'other', this 'otherness' cannot preclude his being a person. The

emphasis on the unsurpassable being possessing personhood will prove crucial in ensuing discussion.

If we now consider briefly the third type of transcendence - viz. ineffability: there seems to be a close association between the views that God is beyond the understanding of CRB's and that he is in some sense beyond the language of CRB's. We cannot speak of something of which we have no comprehension. If another understands something that we do not, we can repeat what he says, taking his authority for the fact that the string of words in question can express an intelligible proposition. But, it may be thought, any view that God is beyond the understanding of CRB's which is extreme enough to be interesting, will imply that no CRB could in principle be in a position to understand. So there would not even be the possibility of using someone else's authority to support statements about God which we want to make but cannot understand ourselves.

However, in my later discussion of belief, I argue that we cannot in fact believe anything about God which we cannot understand in the sense of 'understand' apparently employed in the above paragraph. I also take up a conclusion I reach shortly concerning the moral nature of a supreme being - that there is an entirely different sense of 'understand' in which we fail to understand God which has no obvious link with the question as to whether he is ineffable. I argue that this distinct sense of 'understand' is such that absence of understanding need not preclude belief.

The motives for attributing ineffability to God seem much the same as those which lie behind the other types of transcendence. A being who is too great to be subject to be subject description mastery of which a CRB is in principle capable, is a being before whom it is, for instance, more fitting to bow the knee in acts of ultimate humility than a being who is not transcendent in this way. (In the present work I do not attempt to discuss the philosophical problems which may be thought to arise from ineffability, other than those involved in belief).

2. The Moral Nature of an Unsurpassable being

I now proceed to argue for the same general conclusions vis a vis ontological and epistemological transcendence outlined in section 1, via the consideration of the goodness of an unsurpassable being. I show that unsurpassable goodness is such that (a) CRB's cannot fully understand it or know about it, and (b) that it involves aspects of God's nature which are ontologically alien to what may be found within creation.

Moral Rightness, and Moral Goodness

In the spirit of Ross³, but not to the letter, I want to distinguish between moral rightness and moral goodness. Moral rightness, as I understand it, can be a property of an action; it is closely linked to whether that action is such that an agent ought to do it - I will be a little more explicit about this in a moment. Persons as such cannot have the property of moral rightness. Moral goodness, on the other hand, can be (a) a property of persons, and of their emotions, desires⁴, and intentions, and (b) a property of actions. If a person is morally good, he is such that if he were praised, this would be fitting or appropriate. He deserves praise, or to be estimated highly. These remarks scarcely constitute a 'definition' of moral goodness, and they are not intended to be such. They should, however, serve to distinguish the moral goodness of a person from other 'evaluative properties' that he might have. For instance, if we attribute high intelligence to someone, we might be described as attributing an 'evaluative property' to him. But whilst praise of intelligence may in some sense be justified, it is scarcely deserved.

An action is morally good if it is such that the performance of it by an agent A is a reason for A being praiseworthy - morally good. As will be shortly made clear in examples, such a reason can be overridden by other reasons in such a way that A is not praiseworthy overall. Furthermore, whatever it is about an action in virtue of which it is morally good provides an agent with a reason for doing A; I will have more to say about

reasons for action later. When an action is morally good, its goodness is not linked in the same way as is moral rightness with the question whether an agent ought to perform the action, as we will see shortly.

As characterised in Chapter 2, I take a moral realist view, both of moral rightness and of moral goodness. So, on this view, both persons and actions possess the property of moral goodness in virtue of their possession of other properties, at least some of which are non-relational and have an 'objective base'. Also, actions possess the property of moral rightness in virtue of their possession of other properties, at least some of which are non-relational and have an 'objective base'.

Let us make some distinctions among actions, in respect of moral rightness. (1) An act can be right, all things considered. If so, it is an act which an agent ought to do, all things considered; I shall sometimes speak of acts which ought to be done. The judgement that an act is right is sometimes reached by an agent after considering various options, for each of which he may think there are reasons. Though he need not deliberate at all - and there may be no other possibilities even apparently open to him. So, in the type of example beloved by moral philosophers, Jones has promised his aunt to go and see her. But, at the moment he is about to set out, his neighbour suffers a heart attack. Jones being a doctor, can administer medical aid to the man which might even save his life until he can be got to hospital and given full treatment. Both keeping the promise, and helping the man, would be morally right actions for Jones. He decides that on balance the rightness of the second action overrides the rightness of the first, and judges, accordingly, that he ought to do the second action - that it is right, all things considered. An essential feature of the all-things-considered-right action, the action which the agent ought to do is this. If the agent recognises that he ought to do the action, and fails to do it, then he is morally bad in not doing it.

(2) An action can be right, even though it is not, in a particular circumstance, that action which an agent ought to perform. Ross would have said that the action was *prima facie* right. I would eschew his explanation of *prima facie* rightness in terms of rightness that seems to be present, or tends to be present. I would say that an action which is *prima facie* right really is right, whether or not it is also that which I ought to do-right-all-things-considered⁵. That in virtue of which the action is right can provide the agent with a reason for thinking he ought to do the action, but this reason need not be compelling; it is the kind of reason which can be put aside should the agent decide that he ought, all things considered, to do not that action but another.

Reverting to the original example, Jones considers the act of going to see his aunt. This action would be right, since it would be keeping his promise (or it would 'generate' the act of keeping his promise - it depends on your theory of action). The fact that it would keep a promise is a reason for thinking that one ought to do it. Giving medical assistance to the neighbour would also be right; there are reasons for Jones thinking that he ought to do this - the reasons being, for example, that the neighbour will be helped - that his life may possibly be saved, and so on. Jones decides that the reason for going to the aid of his neighbour 'overrides' the reason for going to see his aunt, and accordingly judges that helping his neighbour is what he ought to do. In this context, 'overrides' does not mean 'silences' (to use McDowell's phrase)⁶. The reason which 'loses' is not 'extinguished'; the rightness of keeping the promise is not merely apparent; it is real enough.

An act which is *prima facie* right, but which is not that act which the agent ought to do, all things considered, is not such that the agent is morally bad in refraining from doing it. It is not morally bad of Jones to refrain from going to see his aunt in the circumstances of the example. An agent may deserve censure for allowing himself to get into a situation in

which the act, A, which he ought to do all things considered, is incompatible with his performance of an alternative act, B, which is *prima facie* right; had the agent acted otherwise at an earlier stage, he might have been able to do both A and B. But the moral badness of the agent is had by him in virtue of his earlier folly; he is not morally bad at time *t* in virtue of failing to do B at *t*, where doing A at *t* is what he ought to do, all things considered, and he cannot do both A and B at *t*.

I want to avoid, as far as possible, commitment to a particular theory of action individuation, for which I have no space to argue. It is worth noticing, however, that on a so called 'austere' view of act individuation, sometimes attributed to Davidson, the act, say of killing Jones may be the same act as the action of saving my wife from being attacked by a lunatic. Thus, one and the same action can, given my remarks above, be both *prima facie* right and *prima facie* wrong. There is nothing objectionable about this. Colloquially we say: there are reasons why I ought to do that, but there are also reasons why I ought not to do that. On a so-called 'prolific' theory of action individuation such as that advanced by Goldman⁷ or Kim, the action of killing Jones would not be the same action as the action of saving my wife from being attacked by a dangerous lunatic. So it might seem that on such a view, an action could not be both *prima facie* right and *prima facie* wrong. However, we can still say that killing Jones has a 'consequence', my wife's being saved from attack; it is *prima facie* wrong qua exemplification of the act type - killing a human being, but it is also *prima facie* right since it has a 'consequence' my wife being saved from attack.

(3) An action may be neither *prima facie* right nor *prima facie* wrong; an agent may have no reasons for thinking he ought to do it, and no reasons for thinking that he ought not to do it; presumably the vast majority of our everyday actions are like this. But, as we will see shortly, such an action could still be a morally good action; and it could still be an

action which an agent would be morally good to perform. Not all good actions are actions which agents ought to do.

(4) An action may be *prima facie* wrong; in virtue of its nature, there may be a reason why an agent ought not to do the action. So, arguably, an action which is a killing of a human being is *prima facie* wrong; the fact that a certain action would be a killing is a reason why it ought not to be done.

(5) An action may be wrong, all things considered; it will then be an action which, all things considered, ought not to be done; I shall sometimes speak simply of actions which ought not to be done. An essential feature of such actions is this. If an agent recognises the action as one that ought not to be done, and yet he still does it, then he is morally bad to do it. He deserves censure. As a person, he is worthy of blame.

We can make a different set of distinctions among actions, which reflect whether we as persons are morally good, morally indifferent, or morally bad to do these actions, as opposed to reflecting whether the actions themselves are morally right, morally indifferent, or morally wrong. This set of distinctions cuts across the set of distinctions (1) - (5) that we have just outlined.

(A) Actions which it is morally good of us as persons to do - for which we deserve moral approval. I will illustrate by means of examples that examples belonging to this category include both (p) actions which we ought to do, all things considered, and (q) actions of which this requirement does not hold. It may also be thought that in certain circumstances I might be morally good as a person to perform an action which I ought not to do, all things considered; in a moment I make one or two brief observations on this - (r).

Concerning (p): perhaps, in view of John's promise to Jane when they were married, he ought, all things considered, to look after Jane for seven years while she slowly dies of M.S. Yet he is still morally good to do this.

He deserves our approval for so doing. Yet obviously we do not always deserve approval for doing what we ought. Sometimes doing what we ought is merely escaping a position in which we would be blameworthy - morally bad as persons, were we to refrain from the action in question. For instance, as a father I ought to give my child enough to eat if I can. Normally, however, I would not deserve any credit for so doing. If I did not give my child enough to eat, on the other hand, that would be morally bad of me. I would deserve disapproval.

Concerning (q). Falling on the bomb to protect his comrades from the explosion is not something that Jones ought to do, all things considered. I doubt whether it is something that is even *prima facie* right. But it would certainly be an action for which Jones would deserve approval.

Concerning (r), we need an example in which a person thinks at least that an action would not be morally wrong - thinks perhaps that it would be *prima facie* right, or even right, all things considered, and/or that it is an action in the performance of which he would be morally good as a person. Yet this action would not be, in our opinion, as the agent thinks it to be. We would take it to be, say, wrong all things considered. I am tentatively inclined to the view that there are no plausible examples, and that the best we could say of such a person is that, given his possession of what we would regard as mistaken moral beliefs about the moral character of the action, he might be neither morally good nor morally bad as a person in the performance of the action. I do not think that an agent ever deserves praise for the performance of an action which is, as we think, wrong all things considered. However, I am not so confident of my view here as to insist absolutely on this point. It is not crucial to the general argument.

(B) Actions for which we deserve neither blame nor censure - in the performance of which as persons we are neither morally good nor morally bad. This category includes some actions which we ought to do, all things considered, some actions which are *prima facie* right, some which are neither *prima facie*

right nor prima facie wrong, some which are prima facie wrong and even, as discussion of (r) above suggests, some which are wrong all things considered. However, whilst mistaken beliefs as to the moral character of actions may allow an agent to avoid deserving moral censure, mistaken factual beliefs as to the character of the action in question are not to the point. It might be thought, for instance, that if I had, through no fault of my own, false factual beliefs about a certain action, then I might not realise that it was one which I ought not to do, all things considered. Hence it might be concluded that as a person it would be neither morally good nor morally bad of me to do it. My response is that in the circumstances as described, I would not intentionally be performing the action under that description which was applicable to it though I believed otherwise, and so the question of whether I was morally good, morally bad, or morally indifferent to do the action under that description would not arise at all.

(C) Actions which it is morally bad of us as persons to do. Many of these will be acts which I ought not to do, all things considered. But acts which, though prima facie wrong, are not acts which I ought not to do, all things considered, can easily be actions which it is morally bad of me to do - e.g. if done with bad intentions. The same point seems to hold good for acts which are neither prima facie right nor prima facie wrong, acts which are prima facie right, and even actions, perhaps, that are right all things considered. Lest the latter seem an extreme claim, consider the following. Jones might believe that an action which we would take to be one he ought to do, all things considered, was in fact an action which he ought not to do, all things considered. Yet he still might do it. It might well be argued that in such circumstances Jones would deserve moral censure.

Plantinga points out in his discussion of 'great making properties'⁸ that some properties which are traditionally ascribed to God have an 'intrinsic maximum'. The maximum amount of power that any being in principle could have is omnipotence, and so an unsurpassable being will be

omnipotent. The greatest degree of knowledge that a being could possess is omniscience - so an unsurpassable being will be omniscient. Generally, many properties may be possessed to a given degree; objects possessing them may be allocated positions along a scale, which ranges from zero to that property's intrinsic maximum. Plantinga goes on to express some doubt as to whether all the properties that an unsurpassable being must undoubtedly possess have intrinsic maxima. For 'moral perfection' to be possessed at a maximum, he suggests that a being could always do what is morally right, 'so it would not be possible for it to be exceeded along those lines'⁹. But he is fairly tentative about this.

My argument for the transcendence of the moral nature of the unsurpassable being falls into two main parts. The first part deals with the notion of moral perfection. The second discusses that aspect of divine goodness which goes beyond moral perfection, namely supererogatory goodness.

Outline of the First Part of the Argument

Following Plantinga's hint, I say that a necessary condition for moral perfection is that the agent always does what he ought to do, and never does what he ought not to do. There is no difficulty in understanding this element of moral perfection. It does appear to be ^{the} intrinsic maximum of a property, degrees of which can be understood in fairly crude arithmetical terms. But my concern will be with the moral status of the agent as he always does what he ought, and never does what he ought not, and I will be arguing that we cannot see such moral status in anything like simple arithmetical terms - that we have no clear notion of what kind of moral status would come at the top of a unitary scale of moral goodness as applied to persons. It will be my contention that the agent himself can be good in more than one way as he does what he ought, and refrains from doing what he ought not; that these differing types of goodness cannot sensibly be compared; that a being with only one of these types of goodness would not be

unsurpassable, and yet that it is not possible for a being to have more than one of these types of goodness at one and the same time. I develop these points by means of an example, and by applying to the example the results of extended discussion of B-wants and of the notions of explanation and understanding of actions.

The First part of the Argument

While driving home, Jones sees Smith lying in the road; it is pouring with rain outside, and Jones has a bad cold; also Jones is in a hurry to get home so that he can see his favourite T.V. programme. Jones realises that Smith may well be very ill and needs help; there is no one else in the vicinity; Jones judges that, all things considered, he ought to help Smith - helping Smith would be the right action, all things considered. He accordingly goes ahead and helps Smith. At no time does he believe that he will enjoy helping Smith, or believe that he will get any kind of pleasure from helping Smith - in brief, he does not have an experiential B-want to help Smith.

In contrast to the first Jones, we can imagine a second Jones. The latter sees Smith lying in the road while he is driving home, as before. The second Jones also notices that it is pouring with rain outside - he also has a bad cold, and his favourite T.V. programme will soon be on at home. However, the second Jones is very upset on seeing Smith in the road, and he wants to help Smith. (Shortly, we will have to investigate what sense of 'want' is in question here, and whether, in any sense, the first Jones 'wants' to do what he ought to do). The second Jones, when deciding to help Smith, does not consciously judge that he ought to help Smith - though we may suppose that the situation of the second Jones is sufficiently similar to that of the first Jones for helping Smith to be that which is the right thing for him to do, all things considered. The second Jones in fact forms the intention of doing that action which he wants to do, where his want has in some sense arisen from his emotional response to the situation.

A considerable part of the first part of my argument will consist in a discussion of how we would appraise morally the first Jones vis a vis the second Jones. But in order to do so, I need to make some general points about (a) wants, and (b) explaining and understanding actions. I begin with the latter.

The Nature of the explanation and understanding of actions

I want to distinguish between two levels at which we understand actions, linked with two levels at which we explain actions. Whilst the distinction is, I contend, a genuine one it is admittedly artificial in the sense that in common speech we frequently combine the levels together in varying mixtures.

The first level. At this level, explanation and understanding of actions involves beliefs and intentions only. Imagine that we wanted to explain and understand Jones' shooting of Smith, which took place yesterday at 12 o'clock. We can cite Jones' reasons; at the colloquial level these reasons may be framed in terms of 'wants'. For example, we may say that Jones shot Smith because he wanted to kill Smith. This could form part of a first level explanation if we understand 'wanted' in its pure D-want sense. The full first-level explanation runs: Jones shot Smith because he intended to kill Smith, and he believed that shooting him would very likely result in his death.

Explanations at the first level should ultimately cite the widest intention, or, as I shall sometimes say, the motive. In explaining Jones shooting of Smith, in the manner specified above, we are implying that an intention to kill Smith was the widest intention he had. By 'widest intention' I mean that intention which has the greatest 'distance' from any intention, if there were such, to perform the basic action concerned. 'Basic action' is to be understood in roughly Danto's sense¹⁰ - it is an action which is not done through the agent performing a distinct action. If moving my finger is a basic action, then I might press the trigger by

moving my finger, shoot the revolver by pressing the trigger, and kill Smith by shooting the revolver. If I had an intention to press the trigger, this would be 'nearest' to my 'basic intention', if I had one, to move my finger, whilst the intention to kill Smith is the intention at the 'greatest distance' from my basic intention to move my finger. We can supply first level explanations in terms of intentions and beliefs of all¹¹ the actions just mentioned, except one. I moved my finger because I believed that this would press the trigger, which would fire the revolver, which would kill Smith, and I intended to kill Smith; I pressed the trigger because I believed that this would fire the revolver, which would kill Smith, and I intended to kill Smith; I fired the revolver because I believed that this would kill Smith and I intended to kill Smith. But once we reach the action of killing Smith, which probably involves the widest intention - viz. the intention to kill Smith, there is no more explanation to be had at the first level. Though there might be if we changed the example slightly - perhaps I have the wider intention of killing everyone I meet whose name is Smith or the wider intention of getting myself imprisoned, etc. Then we could go on with first level explanation and understanding for one more stage - we could say that I killed Smith because I believed that his name was Smith, and I intended to kill everyone named Smith; or - I killed Smith because I believed that such an act would get me arrested and imprisoned, and I intended to get myself arrested and imprisoned. Ultimately, however, first level explanations come to an end with the widest intention cited. Nevertheless, it seems to me that once we have the agent's motive, or widest intention, there is often room for explanation and understanding of a different kind - of just why the agent should have such an intention. If we feel, having been supplied with an explanation, a full explanation at the first level, that we still do not understand the agent, then we are not merely expressing dissatisfaction with the fact that the chain of explanations at the first level has come to an end. We want the intention of the agent to be made intelligible to us - we require, in fact -

Explanation and understanding at the second level. Here, we start with a statement of the agent's widest intention or motive. In many cases we then supply the agent's reasons for forming the intention in question. Broadly speaking, a belief cited in explanation at the second level which is referred to as the agent's reason (for forming his intention) may be characterised as follows; it is such that it 'accounts for', or 'explains' or 'makes intelligible' the formation of an intention without either (1) there being any strict logical relation between the reason, the intention, and the action, or (2) there being any need for further desires of the agent to be mentioned. Second level explanation does not seem to me to have any one form - or even to fall into just a few well-defined categories. This should become clear shortly as I discuss examples.

Whilst second-level-explanation 'reasons' can, at least in principle render intelligible the formation of an agent's intention without the introduction of a desire, there will be cases where it just is true that A-wants, B-wants, and emotional states of the agent are involved. Unless these are brought in, full second level explanations of such cases will not be had. In other cases again, we do not mention the agent's reason for forming the intention, for he has no reason; but we simply mention the A and B-wants that he has (for which he has no reasons) and this, on occasion, can be enough to make the forming of the intention in question intelligible. There are also cases where no explanation of an action at the second level is forthcoming at all, and I will mention some of these shortly.

A case where we do need to cite the agent's reason is Jones action in shooting Smith. Jones' reasons for forming the intention to kill Smith are - e.g. that he believes Smith to have seduced his wife and ruined his career. It may also be true that Jones has a non-experiential, and even an experiential B-want to kill Smith. But I doubt that mentioning such wants, in this example at least, improves our understanding of why Jones

formed the intention in question; the reasons why he would B-want to kill Smith would be the same reasons why he forms the intention to kill Smith at all.

Of course, Jones may have shot Smith, or formed the intention to shoot Smith, 'because he was angry'. He could have formed the intention to shoot Smith for the reasons mentioned above, without being angry, but in a very natural case, the intention is accounted for at the second level in a more circuitous fashion by means of an emotion and a B-want - viz. Jones was angry because he believed Smith to have seduced his wife and ruined his career; he had a strong B-want to kill Smith because he was angry - and all this accounts for the fact that he formed the intention to kill Smith. The emotion and B-want component of an explanation at the second level becomes very important when we shortly examine the case where Jones helps Smith 'from compassion'.

Examples of second-level explanation where agent's reasons of the kind quoted above are not forthcoming may involve, among other things, 'appetites' - e.g. hunger, or 'natural curiosity'. For instance, 'He formed the intention to eat the cake because he was hungry'. I think this second level explanation should be rendered as follows: 'He formed the intention to eat the cake because he both A-wanted and B-wanted to eat it'. (True, he might have a reason for the B-want - he might believe that he would enjoy eating the cake because he had had cake before and enjoyed it - for instance. But a second level explanation which just cites hunger, where there are no such reasons as these, could be perfectly satisfactory as it stood). Or again - 'The child formed the intention to go and see the next room out of curiosity' means 'The child formed the intention to go and see the next room because he B-wanted to do so'. No reason for the B-want need be given, and such a second level account could be perfectly satisfactory as it stands.

(Colloquially we sometimes use the word 'reason' in these sorts of cases too - for instance, we might say: 'The reason he ate the cake was

that he was hungry': 'The reason the child entered the next room was curiosity', etc. But as I have been using 'reason' and will continue to use it in the context of second-level explanations, a 'reason' is a specific belief of the agent, whereas 'hunger', 'curiosity' and the like, cannot intelligibly be identified with beliefs).

Candidates for kinds of actions where no second-level explanation is forthcoming are the following, although I will not discuss them beyond making a few brief remarks. They are: actions involving weakness of will, impulsive actions, and habitual actions. If Jones judges that he B-wants more than anything else to do X, does not think there is any reason why he ought not to do X, and yet fails to do X, we have an example of akrasia. There is a sense in which his action is 'inexplicable' - that is, I would contend, no explanation at the second level is to be had for it. If an old man just in front of me lurches out into the road in the path of an oncoming lorry and, quick as a flash, I whip out my arm and thrust him back, we cannot explain my forming an intention to save the man - it all happened too quickly and impulsively for a second level explanation to be available. Or again, if I tread on the left side of the fifth stair because the right side squeaks - I may do this for the thousandth time without thinking - out of habit - and we would not expect there to be an account forthcoming of 'why I formed the intention to tread on the left side of the fifth stair'.

More about B-wants

It will be recalled from Chapter 2 that four 'kinds' of wants were distinguished. Within the class of B-wants, I discussed two types: experiential B-wants and non-experiential B-wants. I now want to talk about what I suggest is a subcategory of non-experiential B-want, which I will refer to as a moral B-want. Suppose that I think that I ought to do A. I may in the light of this want to do A. If this want is indeed a species of non-experiential B-want, then its general form may be expressed as: I believe that I will be pleased if I do A. In Chapter 2 however, it became clear that we must provide for expressions of non-experiential B-wants which take care of cases where I cannot anticipate

being around to have a reaction at or after the time that the wanted state of affairs obtains - for instance - the want to sacrifice my life, the want that the liberals be in power in the 22nd century, and the like. And indeed, there is no difficulty in providing such expression since; ex hypothesi, non-experiential B-wants do not relate to any experience I may anticipate having as any kind of causal consequence of the wanted state of affairs. To take care of cases such as when I think I ought to sacrifice my life, and non-experientially B-want to do this in the moral sense, we can put matters thus for the moral B-want that p; either - I believe that I will be pleased that p and/or I believe that I will be pleased once I am certain that p will obtain - once I am certain, for instance, that I am going to do A.

If I am justified in thinking that I will be pleased to do A, my justification will consist in certain correct beliefs I have about A; where this is a case of a moral B-want these beliefs will also be my reason or reasons for thinking that I ought to do A.

Consider what should be an untroublesome instance: suppose I think I ought to go and see my aunt. My reason for thinking this is, we will stipulate, that it will keep my promise. And we will say that I have a moral B-want (a type of non-experiential B-want) to see her. In a natural case, I would have other kinds of B-wants here too - I might believe that I would enjoy going to see her, for instance. But let us stipulate that none of these are present. My moral B-want to go and see my aunt will simply be the belief that I will be pleased to go and see my aunt. Perhaps, however, the want might take a more negative form. In so far as I believe that I ought to go and see my aunt, I might anticipate that I will be displeased if I do not go and see her. So my moral B-want to go and see her might be this: I believe that I will avoid being displeased-at-omitting-the-action-going-to-see-my-aunt, just so long as I do go and see her.

Suppose, to make the example more troublesome now, that I think that

going to see my aunt will involve such terrible traumas that I will undergo personality changes; I anticipate that these will be so drastic that I cannot believe now anything about what attitude I will take to anything after the change. We then have to express matters somewhat tortuously, viz. (1) the positive form: I believe that I will be pleased once I am sure I am going to see her, and this attitude, so I believe, will persist for as long as I am sure, and up to the time when my drastic personality change will occur. (2) the negative form- I believe that I will avoid that attitude of being displeased that I would have, were I to become sure that I was not going to see my aunt, this attitude persisting until my change.

My reason for my moral B-want to go and see my aunt, if I have such a want, will be the same as my reason for thinking that I ought to go and see my aunt. If I do in fact go to see her, we might provide a second level explanation of this in terms of my realisation that it will keep my promise. Even if I do have a moral B-want to go and see her, the addition of this fact to the second-level explanation of my going to see her does not improve that explanation. I might have gone to see her, thinking that I ought, my reason being that I think it will keep my promise. But the latter is also the reason why I have a B-want in this case, if I have one at all.

Thomas Nagel has drawn our attention to wants of this kind which are 'consequentially ascribed' ¹². To avoid misunderstanding, it must be emphasised that my moral B-want - viz. my belief that I will be pleased to go and see my aunt, or my belief that I will avoid being displeased at not going, is not itself the second-level explanation reason why I go; it would be redundant to cite a moral B-want in a second level explanation of my going. The reason why I go (in the case as described, at any rate) is that it will keep my promise, and that is also the reason for my moral B-want, if I have such a B-want at all.

We are now ready to tackle the examples of the two Jones who help

Smith, mentioned earlier. The first Jones has as his widest intention to pick his neighbour out of the road, and perhaps take him to hospital. We explain this intention at the second level as follows. He forms the intention because he believes Smith to be ill, and that if he acts quickly and helps Smith, Smith may avoid pain, and will soon receive the medical help he needs. And these beliefs are, of course, the reasons why Jones thinks that he ought, all things considered, to help Smith. We can, if we like, ascribe to Jones a moral B-want in this case; but consideration of this want does not improve the second level explanation of the formation of Jones intention and of Jones action.

If we now turn to the second Jones, we must, however, tell a very different story at the second level - a story in which emotion and a certain kind of B-want figure essentially in the explanation - factors which do not appear at all in the explanation of the first Jones' action. When the second Jones sees Smith lying in the road, he forms the intention, as before, to help Smith. Why is this? Because he feels sympathy or compassion. As a result of his emotional response to the situation (or, if you like, as part of that emotional response) he forms B-wants to help Smith - B-wants which may be of a very positive character, and may include both experiential and non-experiential B-wants, where the latter would be wants other than moral B-wants. He believes that he will be pleased, happy, even that he will enjoy helping Smith. His reasons for his emotional response and for his B-wants are the same reasons that the first Jones had for forming the intention, but when we give a proper second level account of the second Jones' intention, we get to the intention by means of the emotional response and the B-wants.

It is clear, I think, that the first Jones may be morally good to help Smith. True, he ought to help, ex hypothesi, and he recognises that he ought. Nonetheless, he does do what he ought to do, despite the fact that he has beliefs which could become strong reasons for him to form intentions

which would conflict with any intention to help - viz. his belief that it is pouring with rain outside, that he has a bad cold, that his favourite T.V. programme will soon be on at home, and so on. If the first Jones had no such reasons in favour of forming intentions which would conflict with his intention to help Smith, we would be disinclined to award him much in the way of moral credit; as I remarked at the beginning of the section, we only sometimes think that someone is good to do what they ought to do. Quite often it is not particularly good of them to do what they ought to do. It is rather that it would be distinctly bad of them if they failed to do what they ought to do. If the first Jones has many beliefs which could, potentially, figure as powerful reasons in favour of his forming intentions which would conflict with his intention to help Smith and yet, even so he focusses on those reasons why he ought to help Smith, forms the intention to help, and does indeed help, his moral goodness will be greater than if he did not have such potentially troublesome beliefs, or so it would seem.

The second Jones, according to the description, has not had to make any 'effort' to help Smith; he has not had to struggle to keep before his mind those reasons why he ought to help Smith, as opposed to those beliefs which might become reasons for his forming intentions which conflict with his intention to help. It seems, then, that in virtue of this 'effort' the first Jones has something morally good about him that the second Jones lacks. Yet, on the other hand, the second Jones is apparently in the commendable state of mind in which no 'effort' is required. He is such a 'nice person' that a natural and spontaneous wave of feeling accounts for his forming the intention to help Smith. It is surely morally good that the second Jones feels compassion for Smith, and, accordingly, has various non-moral B-wants to help him. There is a moral value in the second Jones, in virtue of his emotional response, which is lacking in the first Jones.

In view of all this, would it really make sense to assert that the first Jones was morally superior to the second, or the second superior to

the first? Would it even make sense to say that though their respective moral goodnesses were different, they were in some sense, of 'equal' value? I would want to ask - better in what respect? Equal in what respect? For the goodnesses concerned seem to be 'incommensurable'. Furthermore, it seems to me that we would require an unsurpassable being to have both kinds of goodness. The possession of either one on its own seems quite inadequate for an unsurpassably good being. Yet, with respect at least to any one action, it is impossible, as we understand it, for an agent to have both kinds of goodness. If he acts on a wave of compassion, he has not had to make the praiseworthy struggle to keep clear his vision of what he ought to do and to put aside or 'silence'¹³ beliefs which could become reasons for forming intentions to do otherwise. On the other hand, if he has to struggle to keep clear his vision of what he ought to do, then he is not experiencing a praiseworthy wave of compassion or sympathy.

It might be objected at this point that an unsurpassable being must be like the first Jones, and not like the second; since being like the second Jones is not open to an unsurpassable being for, as traditional thinking about God has it, God would be limited in various non-moral ways if he underwent emotions or had desires. I suggest that the claim that he would be limited by having desires amounts to the fear that his freedom of action would be limited if he had A-wants; the envisaged analogy might be with the drug addict reaching for his next dose, which he A-wants, despite strenuous efforts of will not to reach for it. As a matter of fact, I doubt that an omnipotent being could in principle be limited in freedom by such an A-want. No matter how great was its intensity, he could conquer it. And, even supposing that he could be limited in freedom if he were to have A-wants, there seems to be no reason why we should not simply deny that an unsurpassable being would have A-wants of any kind; we can just assert that he would only have B-wants (and D-wants, which are intentions). He would, as an unsurpassable being, have the best of reasons for his B-wants, and so

I cannot see why his having B-wants should be thought to limit his freedom, in any sense of that elusive expression. I conclude that an unsurpassable being could be like the second Jones without being limited at least in any non-moral ways. The having of emotions would only limit such a being if the desires which the emotions inspired would themselves limit such a being; we have seen no reason for thinking that desires would limit in this way.

I now introduce a new complication into the discussion which at first sight might persuade us that, after all, an unsurpassable being should clearly be like the second Jones and not the first. I will conclude, however, that appearances are deceptive here.

Philosophers have pointed out that we do have some long-term responsibility for the desires(=B-wants) and emotions to which we are 'subjected'. If I at this moment undergo an emotion, I cannot by means of an act of will dismiss this emotion from my mind, But by a certain kind of attention to the object of the emotion, I can over a period of time reduce my response, or my disposition to have such a response when I think of the object or encounter it. If I am angry with Jane, for example, I can dwell on what might be the mitigating circumstances of that behaviour which is prompting my anger, and over time come to feel less angry. The same point can be made about a reverse process - from an unemotional state of mind to one of strong emotion; for instance, by dwelling on Susan's good points, I can gradually go from a state in which I do not care about her in the least, to a state in which I feel admiration for her. We have a similar long terms control over our B-wants. If I do not, say, believe that I will be pleased to help Smith, I could choose to think about the matter more carefully - I could dwell on the possibility of relieving Smith of discomfort or pain, etc. Then in time I may come to believe that I would be pleased to help Smith after all. (And since there is a tendency for some types of B-wants to be self-fulfilling, i.e. if I believe I will be pleased if p is q, this in part, brings it about that I am pleased that p is

q - I can bring it about that I actually will be pleased to help Smith, by dint of long term effort).

So, returning to the second Jones who acts from compassion; if we add that this Jones has over a period of time been trying to work on his emotions and desires, so that he 'naturally' responds favourably to - e.g. people in distress, we might be inclined to say that this second Jones is morally superior to the first Jones as originally described.

In so far as this is a clear result - a 'victory' for one sort of moral goodness over another - it unfortunately does not transfer to the case of an unsurpassable being. For suppose that such a being did indeed have emotions and desires, especially of these kinds which we would wish to say were morally good. There would be no question of his 'working on them' in the manner envisaged for the second Jones. An unsurpassable being would be, among other things, omniscient and omnipotent. Hence, he would be capable of the maximum amount of reflection upon those features of a situation which make such and such an emotion 'appropriate' to it, and all this in an instant of time. If it were indeed clearly 'better' for a being to act on feelings of compassion, as opposed to acting because of his perception of these features of the situation and of the action which were the reasons why he ought to do the action, then we may imagine that an unsurpassable being would feel, say, compassion, as soon as the situation demanding it arose. There would be no question of his acting initially because of his perceptions of the reasons why he ought so to act, and later, after working on his emotions and desires, acting from a B-want which arose from his emotional response to the situation.

I would have thought that in so far as we were sure that the second Jones was better morally than the first, it was because he had made an effort to acquire the better emotions and dispositions. It is true that we value the emotions and desires in themselves. It is also true that the first Jones lacks them. But it is not clear that the second Jones is better than the first just on that count. The latter has, after all,

something else. He makes the effort, at the time of his decision, to disregard beliefs which could (1) become reasons for his forming conflicting intentions, and (2) could become reasons for 'baser' desires and emotions. So it is the work put into altering emotional dispositions and desires over a period of time that inclines us to say that the second Jones is the superior, morally speaking. However, in the case of an unsurpassable being, this 'effort factor' is ruled out. An unsurpassable being resembling the second Jones would be a matter of brute fact. The being would not have grown morally over a period of time, with this state as the fulfilment of his labours.

What beliefs would an unsurpassable being have to put aside or 'silence' as potential reasons for his forming intentions which would conflict with his intentions to do as he ought? I suggest that the belief of an unsurpassable being that an action A would bring about his own suffering could figure as a reason for that being to form an intention which would conflict with his intention to do A.

There is a tradition in Christian Theism, at least, that God cannot suffer. Penelhum,¹⁴ in his brief discussion of a related point, comments that it is not certain whether a being who suffers distress because he knows that his creatures are in pain is a greater being or a lesser being than one who is unmoved. My response here is that we must keep a firm grip on the point that an unsurpassable being is a person. We can grant freely that he will be a very different sort of person from any CRB. But if we deny that he can suffer, we are, I suggest, pushing the concept of divine personhood beyond intelligible bounds. And if we denied the capacity for suffering we would also have to deny that an unsurpassable being had positive B-wants. Generally, if I B-want that p is q, then if it turns out that p is not q, I may be aware that I am missing being pleased (or whatever) that p is q. And the more I had anticipated being pleased (etc.) that p is q, the greater I would be displeased if it is not. If it were suggested that I could

believe that I would be pleased in some sense or other that p is q, and then, in the clear knowledge that p does not turn out to be q, feel nothing - no regret, disappointment, etc. I suggest we no longer understand what was meant in the first place by my belief that I would be pleased if p is q. If it were denied that an unsurpassable being could suffer in any way, then, this seems to rule out his capacity to have positive B-wants. I find it difficult to imagine how such a being could be regarded as a person at all.

Further, if it were thought that an unsurpassable being must love any rational being he creates - that a being who did not love the persons he created would be surpassed by a being who did - we could also argue as follows. If he loves his creatures, this entails that they have the capacity, at least in principle, to make him suffer. If they do not have this capacity, we may doubt the reality of the love. It is true that, without this capacity, the unsurpassable being could still wish his creatures well - do his best for them, and make them as happy as possible. But if they could not, in principle, make him suffer, he would be at an emotional distance from them. Their unhappiness, their wicked deeds, their responses to him - all would be incapable to making him suffer in any way. There could not be a full relationship of love between him and them, or so I would contend. God's capacity to suffer need not be regarded as a weakness - as somehow making his creatures more 'powerful' than he is. Indeed, his capacity to suffer and to bear it would be a strength, which a being who could not suffer could not in principle possess.

To sum up the first part of the argument in this section; an unsurpassable being must not only do what is right and never do what is wrong. He must also be in the 'best' state of mind, morally speaking, all the while. I have urged that 'best' suggests a unitary scale which is inapplicable here; that if we could have 'scales' at all, there would be at least two; that an unsurpassable being would apparently have to be

at the top of both, yet it is impossible to be at the top of both. I conclude that CRB's cannot understand the nature of unsurpassable goodness; in the later chapters I go on to follow up some of the implications of this.

The second part of the Argument

This deals with the performance by an unsurpassable being of those good actions of which it is not true to say that he ought to do them, all things considered. First, let us be clear that an unsurpassable being would indeed perform such actions - i.e. he would not merely possess moral perfection, as earlier defined. To see this, imagine a man who always did what he ought to do, all things considered, no matter what the cost was to himself, and never did what he ought not. He would of course excite admiration. But compare him with someone else, who not only did what he ought (and never did what he ought not) but who was constantly seeking out opportunities for performing acts of extraordinary kindness, generosity, and braveness - acts which he was in no way obliged to do, and yet which never interfered with his performance of those actions which were such that he ought to do them. Surely it is evident that the moral goodness of the second man exceeds the moral goodness of the first man. I believe that we can transfer this result to the case of an unsurpassable being - the latter will not only do all that he ought, and refrain from doing what he ought not - he will also act beyond the call of duty - he will perform acts of supererogation. In addition to moral perfection, an unsurpassable being must possess an extra dimension of supererogatory goodness.

It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for an act to be one of supererogation that it be a morally good action, and it not be an action which I ought to do. For as Richard Price points out,¹⁵ whilst action A may not be such that I ought to do it, perhaps I ought to do a reasonable number of actions from a certain set of actions which includes A. For example, suppose I ought to help people in the third world to a modest degree. It is not the case that I ought to give to this particular charity;

though if I did, I would be doing part of what I ought to do - viz. helping the third world to a modest degree. Yet, perhaps, giving to this particular charity would be a good action. So, giving to this charity could be both good and not something which I ought to do, and yet it may not be an act of supererogation to give to it.

Giving to the third world might be described as an 'imperfect duty'. David Heyd describes the difference between imperfect duties and supererogation like this '...an imperfect duty to perform an act - type A implies that it is a perfect duty to do either (act token) a_1 or a_2 or a_n , (but) a supererogatory act - type B does not mean that it is our duty to perform any act token of B'¹⁶. (In Heyd's terminology, if I have a perfect duty to perform act token a_1 , then I ought, all things considered, to do a_1).

Hence we could specify an act to be supererogatory if (1) it is a morally good action, (2) it is not an action which I ought to do, (3) it is an act which it is morally good of the agent to perform, and (4) if it is part of a disjunction of acts one or more of which we ought to do, all things considered, where it does not matter which, then we must already satisfy this requirement by performing an act or acts from the disjunction other than A.

When our first Jones reflected that Smith was ill, lying in the road, and clearly needed help, he was dwelling consciously on those reasons why he ought to help Smith. So long as he kept the beliefs which were those reasons firmly and consciously in mind, other beliefs of his, such as his belief that it was pouring with rain, that he had a bad cold, that his favourite T.V. programme would be coming on soon at home - these would have no chance of becoming reasons for him to form the intention not to help Smith. The reasons he has for thinking that he ought to help Smith are very cogent; after all, they enable him to realise that if he does not help Smith it will be morally bad of him. Such reasons have the power to 'silence' beliefs of other kinds which might have become reasons

for his forming intentions which would conflict with his intention to help Smith.

Consider now that soldier who falls on the bomb to protect his comrades from the explosion. We explain his intention to protect his comrades from the explosion at the second level, I suggest, in terms of a B-want, generated perhaps by a wave of emotion. The role of the B-want and/or the emotion seems to be crucial. For the soldier's reasons for acting (the reasons which would be cited in a second level account of his action) which consist of his beliefs about the situation - that his comrades will be saved, and perhaps be enabled to live out many more years, that they will be able to return to their wives and families, etc. are not in themselves of a character to 'silence' other beliefs. The latter would be such as could become reasons for the soldier to form an intention which would conflict with his intention to protect his comrades from the explosion - such as the belief that if he falls on the bomb he will experience an agonising, if very quick death, his belief, if he rejects life after death, that the explosion will involve his annihilation - that he will never see his wife again, and so on. After all, the soldier's reasons for falling on the bomb do not justify him in thinking that he will be morally bad if he refrains from falling on the bomb. Nonetheless they are 'powerful' reasons - certainly sufficient to 'override' reasons he might have for forming conflicting intentions. Because the agent's reasons for performing an act of supererogation A, 'override' rather than 'silence' reasons for forming intentions which would conflict with the agent's intention to perform A, the presence of the 'extra element' - an emotional response, is crucial in enabling a satisfactory second level explanation of the performance of A to be given. We cannot rule out the possibility of a situation in which there is a satisfactory second level explanation of some supererogatory act where this is performed in 'cold blood' - i.e. not on a wave of emotion at all. But the reasons for action in such a case would

have to be very compelling indeed, whilst lacking the power to 'silence'.

When we turn to explaining those acts of supererogation of which an unsurpassable being must in principle be capable, I would contend that we cannot in principle supply a satisfactory second level explanation of all of these. We must imagine that, to be unsurpassable, a being must in principle be prepared to perform an act of supererogation even if he anticipated that it would involve him in infinite suffering. A being who 'counted the cost' - who said to himself; 'thus far, and no further' - who would not act if the act in his estimation was for him too heavy a burden would not be unsurpassable. He would be surpassed in goodness by a being who refused to count the cost; who would, at least in principle, act no matter how great was the cost he anticipated to himself.

An incarnational theology might involve a claim that something like this has actually occurred; that God became man - a man who was crucified and rose from the dead. On this line of thought, the suffering that this involved is unlikely to be restricted to the physical suffering involved in crucifixion, which though very great was still finite. It would rather include the 'spiritual abasement' required to become an embodied person and live, though an unsurpassably good being, in a community of sinful creatures. The idea might well be here that in a sense in this act God involved himself in 'infinite' suffering; that no limit can sensibly be set to the cost to himself in this act. We do not, of course in the present work wish to commit ourselves to a particular theology; this is merely an illustration.

More generally, however, we might well think that an unsurpassable being would wish to encourage his creatures to be loving and good. Some crucial modes of encouragement which yet allowed the creatures to retain their freedom could well involve God in being seen to suffer; God makes himself the ultimate good example, showing his creatures that he is prepared to risk the worst in the way of suffering in the pursuit of goodness. This might be the only way available to God of influencing creatures in

certain states towards the pursuit of goodness. It might have to be that God was prepared to risk any amount of suffering; any restriction on the 'quantity' he was prepared to undergo would, if discerned, undermine his efforts to persuade his creatures towards the pursuit of virtue.

Much of this, philosophically speaking, is by way of speculation. The general point is that an unsurpassable being must be prepared to undergo infinite suffering in his performance of acts of supreme supererogation. Now it will be recalled that in the case of the brave soldier, his reasons at the second level for acting would not 'silence' reasons for not acting, but they would prove 'stronger'. But how could it be, in the case of an unsurpassable being, that his reasons for forming an intention to perform some act of supreme supererogation could prove 'stronger' than the reasons he would have for refraining from that act in the most extreme case - namely his belief that it would involve him in infinite suffering? Now it may be that some of the speculations in the above paragraph make some kind of sense to us at the second level. But at best we scarcely possess a full second level comprehension of the matter. We do not understand, for instance what it could be about the action of persuading a creature to pursue virtue, which could provide an unsurpassable being with reasons for performing the act of persuading the creature - reasons which would prove stronger than those reasons which there might be for refraining from the act - viz. the anticipation of infinite suffering.

Even if we add to the account that the unsurpassable being would react emotionally to the situation, and that this would involve him in having strong B-wants to perform the act of supererogation, this still does not make it intelligible to us that he can overcome in his mind the thought of infinite suffering. The crucial difficulty here is that the reasons for acting have to prove stronger than the reasons for not acting. Silencing reasons involves, as I said before, the thought that if the agent turns aside from the action he will be morally bad. But in the present case, the

unsurpassable being would not be morally bad to refrain from the act of supererogation; this permits the reasons for not acting to get a real hold on him, and necessitates them being overcome as opposed to being silenced.

It is my contention, then, that CRB's are barred from a full understanding at the second level of that type of action of which an unsurpassable being must surely be capable in principle. It does not follow from this, however, that no such extreme acts of supererogation could exist at all.

To sum up the main burden of the argument in this section; an unsurpassable being must, in addition to possessing moral perfection, possess moral goodness to a supreme degree. But CRB's cannot fully understand the nature of this supreme moral goodness, either as it is found in the unsurpassable being as a person in the course of his acting as he ought, or as it is expressed in acts of supererogation. It is evident that the understanding failure of the former differs somewhat from the understanding failure of the latter. Resembling both the first and the second Jones looks to a CRB, at least, to be logically impossible. It is in this sense that the CRB cannot understand how God could be good in the way that both the first and the second Jones are good. On the other hand, performing the most extreme act of supererogation in no way looks logically impossible. It is rather that the CRB cannot conceive of a satisfactory second level explanation of such an act. I will have more to say about different modes of understanding and understanding failure in the chapter on belief.

A traditional qualifier to many of the divine properties has been 'infinite' - 'infinitely good', 'infinitely loving', 'infinitely wise', and so on. It might be thought that a neat phrase could capture the point that God must have a degree of moral goodness (say) which cannot be surpassed. But my criticism of this qualifier, in the light of the present discussion, is that it suggests 'more of the same' goodness, love, and so on.

Yet it may be plausibly argued that the explanation of the fact that CRB's cannot understand the nature of moral goodness as found in an unsurpassable being is this; that the goodness in question is not simply 'more of the same' but contains an element which is different from any of the kinds of goodness that a CRB can understand.

If moral goodness is 'objectively based' (See Chapter 2 for definition) then so will be unsurpassable moral goodness, which, from now on I refer to as transcendent goodness. Transcendent goodness will be possessed by God in virtue of his possession of other properties, some of which would be classed as 'non-moral' whatever, if anything, that ultimately comes to. If divine goodness differs in some way from all other goodness, then those divine properties in virtue of which divine goodness is possessed should include properties different from any which in principle may be found within the creation. There is an implication here that God is ontologically transcendent if he possesses transcendent goodness. Furthermore, associated with some aspects of CRB's to understand the nature of moral goodness in an unsurpassable being, is their inability to say in what it consists. Talk of transcendent goodness merely labels the perplexity; it does not specify any property.

The following chapters take up some of the results obtained so far concerning the transcendence of God, and examine potential philosophical problems to which they may be thought to give rise.

NOTES

- 1 'The Idea of the Holy' p42 Pelican Books 1959
- 2 op cit
- 3 Ross, Sir David (1930) 'The Right and the Good' Oxford U P
- 4 Ross would not say this kind of thing, of course
- 5 My view of 'prima facie' owes a considerable debt to J. Searle
'Prima facie Obligations' in 'Philosophical Subjects',
ed Van Straaten, Oxford U P 1980
- 6 c.f. J. McDowell 'Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives'
P.A.S.S. 1978
- 7 'A Theory of Human Action' Princeton U P 1970. See also L. H.
Davis, 'Theory of Action', Ch2, Prentice Hall 1979
- 8 A. Plantinga, 'God, Freedom and Evil' p90-91 George, Allen and
Unwin 1975
- 9 op cit p91
- 10 E. G. 'Analytical Philosophy of Action', Cambridge U P 1973
- 11 If we were engaged in explaining a basic action which was just
that, and which did not 'generate' other actions, then a first
level explanation would merely cite an intention. In the
example under discussion, however, it is appropriate to mention
a belief about what actions will be generated by the basic
action, when explaining the basic action - e.g. the belief
concerning what happens when I move my finger.
- 12 c.f. 'The Possibility of Altruism', especially Ch 5. Clarendon
Press Oxford 1970
- 13 McDowell's phrase, op cit. But my use of 'silences' is not his,
though inspired by him. It must be taken on its own merits.
- 14 c.f. 'Religion and Rationality' p153 Random House 1971
- 15 'Review of the Principle Questions in Morals' p120ff Oxford
Clarendon Press 1948
- 16 'Supererogation' p121-2 Cambridge University Press 1982

CHAPTER FOUR
ANTI-REALISM AND MYSTERY

1. INTRODUCTION

Whilst it is clear that unsurpassability entails a degree of mystery, it is less clear, perhaps, what particular degree is required. For example, must an unsurpassable being be mysterious to CRB's in this life, but not so in the hereafter? Or again, if an unsurpassable being is mysterious to CRB's could this be a mere contingent fact - perhaps a result of divine choice; God hides himself from CRB's for his own good reasons, but he could have done otherwise, with the result that he would not have been mysterious to CRB's at all. Or must any mystery concerned in unsurpassability be stronger than this - of a kind which could not be dispelled even in a beatific vision, or of a kind which even an omnipotent being could not enable CRB's to penetrate?

Other things being equal, a being having a core of mystery which could not be dispelled in principle is greater than a being whose mystery was contingent - mystery that could at least in principle, be dissolved. The *ceteris paribus* refers to the philosophical constraints on mystery; if extreme degrees of mystery are incoherent - such that it would be logically impossible for any being to possess them, then needless to say unsurpassability will eschew such extremes. Broadly speaking, unsurpassability seems to require as much mystery as is logically possible.

I distinguished in Chapter 1 between mystery which involved the transcendence of CRB understanding, and mystery which involved the transcendence of CRB knowledge. In the present chapter I inquire into the limits of mystery in the latter sense, which may be thought to be imposed by anti-realist conceptions of meaning and truth. I discuss whether the level of mystery which is permissible is enough to satisfy the vague but insistent requirements of unsurpassability.

In the first half of the chapter, I make some general remarks on the issues surrounding the realism v anti-realism dispute, and distinguish

between a number of possible realist positions. I then examine the degree to which anti-realist objections succeed against these various positions, and inquire whether the realist views which remain unscathed will suffice for the Theist.

For the purposes of the present discussion, a realist conception of truth is one which, broadly speaking, allows that the truth condition for a sentence may transcend our powers to know that it obtains. This is, of course, a characterisation embracing a number of possible positions about which we will shortly be more precise. As expounded by Dummett¹ Frege's realist account of the meaning of a sentence falls into two parts, sense and force. We can, on this account, detect within a given class of sentences what Wittgenstein once referred to as a 'sentence radicle' - a content or sense which may be common to an assertion, a command, a question, and so on. Consider, for example, the class of sentences: 'The Prime Minister has resigned'. 'Has the Prime Minister resigned?' 'Resign, Prime Minister', 'Would that the Prime Minister resigned', etc. The common content, or sense, might be referred to as 'The Prime Minister's resigning'. The differences between members of this class are those of force - roughly, the kind of speech act which would characteristically be performed with each - assertion, question, etc. The realist closely associates that aspect of the meaning of a sentence referred to as 'sense' with truth conditions. '...to give truth conditions is a way of giving the meaning of a sentence', remarks Davidson².

The anti-realist denies that the truth condition of a sentence, if linked to its sense in the way that the realist claims, can be such that it may transcend our powers to know that it obtains. In outline, his reasoning is that we could not 'grasp' the truth conditions of sentences if they conformed to the realist conception of truth conditions; hence we would be unable to understand the senses of such sentences. Anti-realism is the descendent of logical positivism, which denied the independence of

meaning from knowledge and evidence. The verification principle in its various forms aimed at banning from the class of significant sentences those whose truth values would be, in specified respects, beyond knowledge. The positivists' most plausible defence of the verification principle was to the effect that it embodied, in a precise and explicit form, both common sense and scientific criteria of significance or meaningfulness that were already in use in the linguistic community. Nevertheless, there were few substantial arguments for the validity of the principle, whereas the modern anti-realist does have arguments, as we shall see.

If the anti-realist retains the thought that a grasp of the truth conditions for a sentence constitutes a grasp of the sense of that sentence, he offers replacements for the classical realist conception of truth which are such that, in his view they can be grasped by us - do not transcend our powers of knowledge. For instance, the 'truth condition' for a sentence S may be seen by the anti-realist as a condition in which it is justified to assert S - or perhaps the circumstances in which S is regarded as conclusively verified. The anti-realist may abandon the alleged link between truth condition and sense, opting instead for a connection between the sense of a sentence and the states of affairs which would be ruled out in an assertion of that sentence³. Again, however, the excluded states of affairs would have to be, on the anti-realist view, such that we could 'recognise' that they obtained or know that they obtained. (More on 'recognition' later).

2. FORMS OF REALISM

What precisely is the view held by a realist which Dummett and others wish to attack. I mention ten possibilities, without any real hope that these exhaust the range; (The expression 'sentence' will be shorthand, unless otherwise stated, for the utterance of a sentence by a certain speaker at a certain time in a certain context). R1-9^{are} listed in roughly descending order of 'severity'. To avoid a number of complications

I restrict the discussion for the most part to sentences susceptible of contingent truth.

R1 A sentence could be true even if it were logically impossible for any rational being to have the slightest justification for believing that it was true.

Comment: There are few examples of sentences falling into this category which have the faintest plausibility as claimants for genuine intelligibility, in my view. 'any rational being' includes, of course, a being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, in so far as these are intelligible descriptions. Perhaps some counterfactuals provide slight encouragement to the potential R1 realist, although discussion of such examples is a specialised matter and would take us too far from our present purposes. For instance: 'If an electron had been fired from C at time t, it would have passed through point d'. If genuine indeterminacy reigns here, it does look as though even God could not in principle have the slightest justification for believing it to be true; some may think that, nonetheless, they can understand perfectly well what it would be for the counterfactual to be true.

R2 Certain sentences might be false even where a rational being is possessed of the best possible justification that is available in principle for believing that they are true. Certain sentences, equally, may be true in the face of a rational being's having the best possible justification available in principle for believing them false.

Comment: This view expresses in extreme form a central theme of realist conceptions of truth; the independence of reality from the knower. The troublesome phrase in this version of realism is evidently 'best possible justification'. For it might be thought that the best possible justification was one which was logically indefeasible - that is to say, such that it is logically impossible for one so justified to acquire further beliefs which would render that person no longer fully justified. If so, this would

restrict the extension of 'best possible justification' to that small number (if, indeed there are any at all) of incorrigible sentences. A sentence S is incorrigible for P iff 'p believes S' entails the truth of S itself. No sentences with inferior epistemic status count as logically indefeasible. To see this, consider, for instance, the case where my justification for believing q is p, p entails q, and I believe that p entails q. This looks like a pretty strong justification. But it does not, of course, amount to logical indefeasibility. For whilst it may seem quite clear to me that p entails q, it is possible, for instance, for me to acquire further beliefs to the effect that I have a rare brain disease, which would justify me in doubting my ability to see simple logical relationships such as entailment. This would spoil the logical indefeasibility even if I credited myself with incorrigible access to p itself.

I will not attempt here to set out a clear account of 'best possible justification' - for beliefs in contingent truths; it is anyhow a matter of controversy among epistemologists. I merely wish to observe that in the vast majority of cases such justification necessarily falls short of logical indefeasibility, as defined above. I will have more to say about incorrigibility and its relevance to some of the anti-realist arguments later.

R3 A sentence can be true even when it is logically impossible for any rational being to know that it is true.

Comment: This category of realism would appear to be required, for instance, if we were interested in the possibility of the truth of counterfactuals such as 'If Judas had been offered 20 pieces of silver, he would have refused to betray Christ'. God, if no one else, might (it could be argued) have some evidence for the truth of this counterfactual, but he could not know the truth of it, since such knowledge would be incompatible with human freedom. (I do not pronounce on the merits of such an argument here).

R4 A sentence can be true even when it is logically impossible for any

created rational being (CRB) to have the slightest justification for believing that it is true.

Comment: I suggest that the unsurpassability requirements would be satisfied by a realism at this level - though possibly a realism one or two steps less severe might suffice. I will say a little more to clear this matter up later in the chapter. It looks at any rate as though I will need to argue that an R4 realism escapes the arguments of the anti-realist. The position in question amounts to this: there are truths concerning God which God can know, but which no other rational being can in principle have the slightest justification for believing. I do not think that taking the sense of sentences about, e.g. the remote past, as a grasp of the conditions in which such sentences are true, requires a realism as harsh as R4. It is logically possible for CRB's to have some justification for believing the truth of such sentences, even if, as a matter of contingent fact, there were none around to obtain any relevant evidence. It is logically impossible for any of the CRB's who formerly existed, exist now, and will exist in the future to have any justification for believing in the truth of sentences about the remote past all of whose traces have long since vanished from the universe. But this does not amount to the same thing as it being logically impossible for any CRB to have justification for believing the truth of such sentences, unless it is implausibly thought that each and every one of the CRB's that has existed, exists, and will exist exists of logical necessity at the particular time that he exists.

R5 As R2, replacing 'rational being' with CRB. Either this, or an R4 position would be the standard view held by a realist philosopher; it looks as though Strawson holds this position. '...the grasp of the sense of a sentence can be displayed in response to recognisable conditions - of various sorts; there are those which conclusively establish the truth or falsity of the sentence; there are those which (given our general theory of the world) constitute evidence, more or less good, for or against the

truth of the sentence; there are even those which point to the unavoidable absence of evidence either way. The appropriate response varies, of course, from case to case, in the last case being of the form, 'We shall never know whether p or not'⁴.

R6 A sentence could be true even if it were logically impossible for any CRB to know that it was true.

Comment: Again, the expression 'any CRB' gives a little trouble here. Is this type of realism required for the intelligible sense of sentences about the remote past (before there were any CRB's) or sentences about the remote future (after the last of the CRB's has gone out of existence) where a grasp of sense is equated with a grasp of truth conditions? It is logically impossible for me now to know what happened in 3,000,000,000 B.C. (we suppose that all traces have vanished). But it is only a matter of contingent fact that there were no CRB's around at the time who could have been in a position to know what happened then. I conclude that we do not require a realism as strong as R6 if we wish to understand the sense of sentences about the remote past (etc.) as a grasp of their truth conditions.

R7 A sentence can be true even when it is as a matter of contingent fact impossible for a given CRB or community of CRB's to have the slightest justification for believing that it is true.

R8 Certain sentences might be false even where a given community of CRB's, or a given CRB have the best possible justification available to them as a matter of contingent fact for believing that they are true. Equally certain sentences might be true in the face of a given CRB or community of CRB's having the best possible justification available to them as a matter of contingent fact for believing their falsity.

R9 A sentence can be true even when it is as a matter of contingent fact impossible for a given CRB or community of CRB's to know that it is true.

R10 Rather than realism about whole sentences, we can have realism about the components of sentences; I will simplify exposition here by talking as

though sentences contain only two kinds of components - referring expressions and predicate expressions.

Realism about referring expressions. A referring expression 'R' (e.g. a name, expressions of the form 'the so and so', etc.) occurring in a sentence S belonging to a language L may denote one or more objects even though (specifying now the most extreme realist view of this type) it is logically impossible for any rational speaker of L to have the slightest justification for believing this. We can go on to specify less extreme realisms here, along the lines of R1-9 for whole sentences. For instance, we could have a realism in which we say that 'R' may denote even where no CRB could in principle know that it does, and so on.

Comment: The most severe form of this realism would be more extreme than any yet mentioned. It would entail R1 realism, but would be more extreme than it, since we can, or so it would seem, envisage a sentence whose truth it was logically impossible for any rational being to have the slightest justification in believing, yet containing a referring expression R such that it was logically possible to have some evidence that it denoted something. (It might be thought that evidence that 'R' denoted was as such evidence for the truth of a sentence containing 'R'; I would prefer to say that the truth of the sentence presupposed R having a denotation, and that this could be treated separately).

Realism about predicate expressions. An object may belong to the extension of a predicate P occurring in a sentence S of a language L even though (a) it is logically impossible for a speaker of L to have the slightest justification for believing that it does - (b)...(c) and so on specifying in turn, less and less extreme versions of this realism as before.

Comment: Again, the most extreme form of this realism is more extreme than R1 realism. We could envisage either: (1) that a sentence S contains a predicate P, where P occurs in other sentences, such that it is possible for a rational being to have some justification for believing that an object

belonged to the extension of that predicate, having some justification for believing in the truth of one or more of these other sentences, even though it is not logically possible for the rational being to have the slightest justification for believing in the truth of S itself. Or: (2) a yet more extreme realism, holding that there could be a true sentence S containing a predicate P such that (a) no rational being could in principle have the slightest justification for believing in the truth of S, and (b) no rational being could in principle have the slightest justification for believing that any object belonged to the extension of P by having justification for believing in the truth of sentences containing P other than S itself. It is the form of realism sketched in (2) which the most extreme version of R10 realism about predicates involves.

3. ANTI-REALIST ARGUMENTS

Before we consider some anti-realist arguments in detail, I want to look at a position, related to the ideas involved in R10 realism, which concedes quite a lot to anti-realism, but contends that its arguments concern our understanding of components of sentences rather than sentences as wholes. First, however, to sketch the two basic types of anti-realist argument:

According to the acquisition challenge⁵ many sentences are taught verbally - the trainee is told in what circumstances it is appropriate to use them, or told, in other words, what they mean. But not all sentences can be taught verbally. According to the challenger, the speaker, in other cases, is simply taught in situations of certain kinds that it is correct to utter these sentences - the important point being that the situations are the sort that he can directly recognise to obtain, or observe to obtain. (Later, I will subject the notions of 'recognition' and the like as they occur in anti-realist moves, to close scrutiny). Now suppose we interpret the sense of a given sentence in some of the realist fashions sketched above. The challenger inquires how we could possibly have acquired an understanding of such a realist 'sense'. Consider, for instance, the sentence 'Caesar

stubbed his toe whilst in Kent on June 2nd 55 B.C. 'Let us suppose that, as a matter of contingent fact, no CRB now can obtain the slightest evidence for the truth of this sentence. If, as R7 realists we say that this sentence could, even so, be true, we would claim that our understanding of the sense of the sentence consists in our grasp of the condition in which the sentence would be true, viz. our grasp of what it would be for Caesar to have stubbed his toe on the day in question. But, inquires our challenger, how could we possibly have acquired such an understanding? No training in responding to situations which we can recognise to obtain would have provided us with it. Hence we do not in fact possess it. The challenger may then proceed to offer alternative characterisations of in what our understanding consists.

It is generally agreed that the manifestation challenge goes deeper than the acquisition challenge. I take the broad outlines of a characteristic argument from Dummett's 'What is a Theory of Meaning 11':

- (a) A speaker's understanding of the sense of a sentence consists in a practical ability.
- (b) On the realist view, this understanding is a 'grasp' of the truth conditions of that sentence. In some cases, then, a speaker could manifest such understanding verbally - he could state the truth condition verbally. Dummett argues that this could not always be so - otherwise we could not escape the circle of language.
- (c) Where verbal manifestation of understanding is not possible, in what does manifestation of understanding consist? It is easy enough to answer this question, Dummett thinks, when the truth condition for the sentence in question is one 'which (the speaker) can be credited with recognizing whenever it obtains - that knowledge will consist in his capacity perhaps in response to suitable prompting, to evince recognition of the truth of the sentence when and only when the relevant condition is fulfilled'⁶. The class of such sentences is limited. But for a further class, we can

explain how the speaker manifests his understanding as follows; there will be some kind of procedure which the speaker could carry out in a finite time which if followed would put the speaker in a position in which he can recognize whether or not the condition for the truth of a sentence of the class in question obtains.

(d) The class of sentences covered by (c) excludes a great variety of sentences - the use of the quantifier over an infinite or unsurveyable domain, counterfactuals, sentences concerning regions of space and time in principle inaccessible to us, etc. For such sentences we cannot ascribe knowledge of their truth conditions to speakers since there is no practical ability by means of which such knowledge could be manifested.

(e) This troublesome class of sentences is in fact so large that the source of the trouble, namely, the assumption that to understand a sentence is to 'grasp' the condition in which it would be true, where 'true' is understood in some realist fashion, should be rejected. At this stage the manifestation challenger may proceed to offer alternative characterisations of a conception of truth to the realist conception.

Both the acquisition and manifestation challenges as outlined, treat of the understanding of sentences as wholes. Suppose that their arguments as they stand were conceded. It might nevertheless be thought that some of those consequences of such a concession which would be most distressing to a philosopher of realist temper might be evaded by the following manoeuvre. I sketch a version applicable to the acquisition and manifestation challenges in turn.

First, as regards the acquisition challenge: it might be said that once a speaker has acquired an understanding of the use of a referring expression 'R' in a certain range of sentences, by being taught that it is 'correct' to assert the sentences in situations which he can recognise to obtain, or observe to obtain, he is then able to employ 'R' in other sentences, and to grasp the sense of such sentences, even though the

circumstances in which it is correct to assert such sentences are not recognizable by him. The speaker can lift 'R' from his training sentence, and combine it with other elements to form new sentences whose assertibility conditions he could not have acquired in the way he acquired the conditions for asserting his training sentences.

The intuitive thinking behind this would be that the speaker understands the 'meaning' of 'R' as a contribution 'R' makes to each sentence in which it occurs - there is something common to the contribution 'R' makes to each sentence in which it occurs, and the speaker has grasped this 'common essence'.

The same kind of idea may readily be portrayed with respect to predicate expressions. Second, with respect to the manifestation challenge, the manoeuvre looks like this: it should not be an obstacle to a speaker's grasp of the sense of a sentence that he is unable to manifest his understanding of that sentence as a whole in circumstances he can recognize. This is because he may well be able to manifest his understanding of each of the components of which the sentence in question is composed, in other contexts. He can perhaps manifest his understanding of other sentences as wholes in which components of the problematic sentence may be found. The intuitive thinking is similar to that envisaged for the manoeuvre outlined for the acquisition challenge; the idea is that if a speaker can manifest understanding of a sentence S as a whole, containing, for instance, a predicate expression 'P', he can grasp what contribution 'P' makes to 'S' and hence grasp what contribution 'P' would make to a new sentence, even if the latter was such that the speaker could not manifest his understanding of it as a whole.

Perhaps the 'truth value link realist' developed by Dummett⁷ is a step in this direction. Such a realist, for instance, learns the use of the predicate 'is in pain' in his own case, and thus, according to such a realist, can use it to attribute pain to another person - he can understand the sentence concerned even though, as a whole, it has truth conditions which

he is not able to recognize as obtaining. (Dummett's realist only interests himself in discourse about times other than the present - the suggestion that such truth-value link realism can be extended to the attribution of others's sensations is made by McDowell⁸).

In a recent article, Sklar⁹ is more explicit in a wholesale advocacy of the above manoeuvres for avoiding the most distressing consequences of anti-realist arguments. We use, he says, a predicate in a sentence whose truth condition we cannot get ourselves into a position to recognize obtaining 'by analogy' with the sense that predicate has in other sentences whose truth conditions we can recognize as obtaining. (He concedes that, even if successful, the method of semantic analogy would not help with those problems the anti-realist attaches to sentences involving quantification over an infinite or unsurveyable domain). A similar proposal is advanced in respect of referring expressions.

I now want to argue that Sklar's position, unfortunately, cannot be occupied with any confidence, and hence that we must ultimately meet the anti-realist arguments head on. This latter I intend to do in the final section of the present chapter. First, to tackle the Sklar option. There is a difficulty in principle, to take the suggestion concerning predicates first, about the notion of 'analogy'. It relies on the seemingly uncontentious assumption that a given predicate '-is P' can have a particular sense or meaning, in its occurrence in the utterance of a particular speaker on a particular occasion, and (2) that the speaker can transfer this sense to a new sentence. The assumptions may seem not only uncontentious, but essential to account for speakers' capacities to produce and understand a potentially infinite number of sentences with the resources of a finite set of components. We are compelled, of course, to accept that speakers do possess such a capacity; it is when we come to describe in what this capacity consists that the problems begin.

First let us sketch an 'orthodox' description of part of this capacity

before seeing what is wrong about such a description. In the training/manifestation situation we have a sentence S in which may be found, for instance, the predicate '-is P'. A speaker understands S; hence he understands '-is P'. He understands, that is to say, that '-is P' is applicable to something just when that something possesses the property P. Hence he can understand the meaning of '-is P' even if it occurs in a new sentence whose meaning as a whole is such that he cannot acquire/manifest an understanding of it. The speaker will think that there will be an analogy between the truth condition for the new sentence, N and the truth condition for S; to understand what it is like for something to be P in the truth condition for N, he must look at what it was like for something else to be P in the truth condition for S, and perform an act of analogical transfer.

On one interpretation of the Wittgensteinian rule - following considerations to which I subscribe, the orthodox description just sketched gets matters the wrong way round. On this interpretation, individually and as a community we just do apply '-is P' in new situations. But our applications of '-is P' in fresh instances is not because we discern that there is a manifestation of the property P in the new situation, all the while taking it for granted that '-is P' is applicable just when the property P is manifested. It is rather than we say that the property P is manifested on the new occasion as a consequence of our decision to apply the predicate '-is P' to that new situation. If we speak of '-is P' as having the 'same meaning' in the new situation as in the old, this can only be as a consequence of our deciding to apply the predicate to the new situation as well as to the old. However, nothing in the rule - following considerations entails that our decisions are arbitrary; they are supposed to imply rather that the orthodox account of the way in which they are not arbitrary is mistaken.

If the rule following considerations do indeed show this, Sklar's

position looks shaky. He seems to require things to be as the orthodox description says they are. To see this, consider the following. We can only speak of an analogy between a truth condition (a) and another (b) after we have decided that (b) involves the manifestation of the same property as (a). Yet, according to the rule following considerations, in so far as sense can be made of (b) involving the manifestation of the same property as (a), this could only be as a result of, or consequential upon, our deciding to apply the same predicate, say, '-is P' in (b) as in (a). Hence we cannot be enabled to ascribe the predicate '-is P' in (b) on the basis of what we would see as an analogy obtaining between truth condition (b) and truth condition (a).

I now sketch what I take to be Kripke's¹⁰ interpretation of the rule following considerations; the great merit of his interpretation seems to me to be that it does not itself depend on anti-realist considerations, of the kind that I will be attacking at the end of the chapter - considerations upon which many of the still current 'private language arguments' still seem to depend.

Kripke presents the argument by means of a mathematical example. English speakers use 'plus' and '+' to denote addition. On the orthodox view of what it is to know the meaning of 'plus' or '+', I, as an English speaker, have grasped a rule; the application of this rule 'determines my answer for indefinitely many new sums that I have never performed before'.¹¹ Suppose that '68+57' is a new computation for me. I perform it and get 125 - I think this is both arithmetically correct, and metalinguistically correct - 'plus, as I intended to use the word in the past, denoted a function which, when applied to the numbers I called '68' and '57' yields the value of 125'.¹²

Suppose someone suggests that, as I used 'plus' in the past, the answer I intended for 68+57 should have been 5. I attempt to reject the suggestion by saying I am following the rule I followed on previous occasions. The

difficulty now arises in determining what that rule was, since I can only have thought of a finite number of applications of it. Perhaps 'in the past I used 'plus' and '+' to denote a function which I will call 'quus' and symbolize by '@'. It is defined by: $x @ y = x + y$, if $x, y < 57$,¹³
 $= 5$ otherwise

Though I would, of course, reject this extraordinary proposal, and would be 'right' to do so, it is not facts about my past usage that compel or justify the answer 125, rather than 5; nor instructions I gave myself in the past; ex hypothesi the computation '68 plus 57' is not included in such facts or instructions.

The difficulty posed by the rule - following arguments is the making sense of our common sense notions that our present usage conforms with our previous usage - viz. that we are following the same rule as we did in the past. Since what happened in the past can come under an indefinite number of descriptions. It could be supposed, in turn, that an indefinite variety of rules were being followed. Hence we cannot say that the answer '5' is wrong on the basis of 'facts' about previous usage of 'plus' or '+' of the form - I followed such and such a rule for the use of 'plus' or '+'.

Kripke reminds us that the rule- following considerations are not, (of course) restricted to mathematical examples. For instance, I think, perhaps, that I know the rule for the use of 'table', so that I can apply the expression to 'indefinitely many future items',¹⁴. I might think, then, that it is settled in advance on the basis of my grasp of the rule for 'table' that the term in question would apply to a table found at the base of the Eiffel Tower. But before I actually go to the Tower, and employ, or fail to employ the expression, is its applicability really settled in advance by my previous usage? My previous usage might be said by a sceptic to be as follows; in the past, by 'table' I meant tabair, where a 'tabair' is anything that is a table not found at the base of the Eiffel Tower, or a chair found there.

As I understand it, the rule-following argument does not attempt to

establish that there is no sense whatever to the thought that matters are in some sense 'settled in advance'; it rather attempts to establish that there is no sense to the thought that matters are settled in advance by previous usage seen as following an established rule of the form, e.g. apply '- is a table' just when the property of being a table is manifested. And on Wittgenstein's view, content is given to assertions that, e.g. an individual has mastered the concept of addition, in so far as the individual's responses agree 'with those of the community in enough cases, especially the simple ones (and if his 'wrong' answers are not often bizarrely wrong, as in '5' for '68+57', but seem to agree with ours in procedure, even when he makes a 'computational mistake')',¹⁵.

It is worth emphasizing that there is nothing epistemological about these arguments; the problem is not - how do I know that I am following the same rule now as I did in the past? The problem is rather that we cannot make sense of the assertion that I am following such and such a rule on the basis of what I have done in the past. If we want to speak of following a rule at all, then we will have to start with the applications, and describe them, if we choose, in rule-following terms; we must not think that we make the applications as a result of following a rule.

The same points made above in regard to predicate expressions may be applied to referring expressions - even names. I argue in the next chapter that despite the undoubted force of arguments deriving from advocates of causal theories of reference against descriptive theories of reference, in order for a speaker to refer to an existing object O with a referring expression 'R', even where 'R' is a name, he must have at least one true belief of the form 'O is the thing, whatever it may be, that is p' (where p is some property). Hence, following the rules for the use of 'R' will involve, according to the orthodox way of looking at the matter, applying 'R' to an object only when it is p. We have seen that the orthodox view gets things the wrong way round as regards predicate expressions, on

the basis of our understanding of the rule-following considerations - that we can only speak of the same property being manifested/encountered again as an (at least partial) consequence or our decision to apply the same predicate expression again. A necessary condition for the applicability of a referring expression 'R' will be the applicability of a predicate expression. But the applicability of that predicate expression will be required before we can say that p is manifested again. Hence it cannot be part of a speaker's understanding of 'R' in a sentence whose truth condition he is not capable of observing/recognizing, that the referent of 'R' has the property p, this manifestation of p being grasped by analogy with other manifestations of p which the speaker is capable of recognizing or observing.

Accordingly, attractive though the Sklar proposals may seem at first sight to a philosopher of realist temper who also respects the force of anti-realist arguments, they fail to deliver the goods. Sklar's escape route proving ultimately to be of no help, we must meet the anti-realist argument head on. Before we do, it should be noted that it does not follow from our criticisms of Sklar that there is no sense in which we can manifest understanding of e.g. a predicate '-is p' in a sentence S whose truth condition we are incapable of observing/recognizing, by manifesting understanding of a sentence S' also containing '-is p' whose truth condition we are capable of observing or recognizing. Nor does it follow that there is no sense in which we can be trained in the use of '-is P' in the course of acquiring understanding of a sentence S containing this predicate, and proceed to use '-is P' with understanding in a further sentence S' whose truth condition is such that we could not have acquired understanding of S' in the way that we acquired understanding of S - viz. by observing its truth condition to obtain. It is just that Sklar's explanation of how this is possible falls foul of the rule following considerations.

4. THE RECOGNITION OF TRUTH CONDITIONS, AND INCORRIGIBILITY

So far, we have followed common anti-realist practice by making rather free use of expressions such as 'observe', 'recognize', and the like. In my view, however, it is the licence with which anti-realists use these expressions which proves to be the focus of the ultimate weakness of both the acquisition and the manifestation challenges. I now argue that both challenges rest on an erroneous picture of the 'recognition' of the truth condition of a sentence, which Dummett foists on to the realist. I show that according to Dummett's own understanding of 'recognition', his preferred anti-realist conceptions of verification and falsification suffer equally from the challenges which are purportedly damaging to realist conceptions of truth.

Dummett's paradigm of the manifestation of a speaker's understanding of a given sentence is that its truth condition can be recognized 'whenever it obtains' or 'when and only when the relevant condition is fulfilled'. The speaker could, for instance, show his recognition of the truth condition of the given sentence by uttering the sentence. Dummett's argument seems to be this. Were it merely logically possible for a speaker to manifest recognitional behaviour, when the relevant truth condition did not obtain, or, equally were it merely logically possible for a speaker to fail to come up with the recognitional behaviour, when the truth condition for the sentence in question did obtain, then the speaker simply would not possess a grasp of what it is for that truth condition to obtain. For, if some kind of grasp were still insisted upon, Dummett challenges the realist who insists on this to specify in what this grasp consists since, *ex hypothesi*, it cannot be manifested. In sum, Dummett seems to think that a speaker cannot fully understand the meaning of a sentence, if that sentence is such as to allow the logical possibility of error where the speaker asserts that sentence with 'full justification' or, indeed, if it is such as to allow the speaker the logical possibility of error when he fails to utter the

sentence at all. On Dummett's favoured alternatives to truth conditions for what is understood when the meaning of the sentence is understood - viz. verification conditions or falsification conditions, the claim seems to be this. When a speaker 'recognizes' the verification condition for a certain sentence, there is nothing left for him to be wrong about; the verification condition cannot obtain and yet the sentence fail to be 'true' in an anti-realist sense, for that sense would, in this instance, amount to nothing over and above the sentence being conclusively verified.

Dummett's mistake is, I think, his refusal to count as a manifestation of the understanding of a sentence, behaviour produced by a speaker when that speaker fails to possess incorrigible knowledge of the obtaining of the truth condition of that sentence. His mistake comes to the surface when we enquire whether verification conditions or falsification conditions could possibly be superior to 'realist' truth conditions in respect of being such as never in principle obtaining unless the speaker thinks he recognizes them, and always then. On the standard realist view such as R5, a speaker can on occasion know or recognize that a truth condition obtains, despite the fact that when he holds the best justification in principle available to him, it is still in principle possible for him to be mistaken. There can, on this view, be cases where he really does know that the truth condition obtains, despite the fact that it could have turned out, given the nature of the justification on which he is relying, that he was wrong.

For example, he, S, can know that there is a table in front of him where his justification for believing that there is a table in front of him - viz. full advice from the relevant senses, is defeasible - meaning, in this context, that it is logically possible for him to have further evidence which, if added to his original justification would not then any more amount to conclusive justification, and perhaps not even to any kind of justification. For example, S could have discovered (though he didn't) later on the same day that he recognized there to be a table in front of him, that he was suffering

from a rare brain disease which causes table hallucinations. If S had discovered this, he would then no doubt have proceeded to claim, correctly, that he had not known after all, earlier that day, that there was a table in front of him. On the standard realist view under consideration, it does not follow from this possibility alone, that where S does not discover that he is suffering from a rare brain disease (or whatever), that he does not know that the table is there, even though his epistemic state at the time of the correct table belief is identical at that time to the epistemic state of someone who later discovers that they are suffering from the disease.

Dummett must think that the situation is different if we dispense with truth conditions of the realist type, and turn, for instance, to verification conditions. The thought presumably is that if S recognizes the condition which conclusively justifies him in asserting that the table is there - i.e. that condition which 'conclusively verifies' the sentence 'There is a table in front of me', then S cannot in principle be mistaken. S can get into a position in which no further evidence could in principle turn up which would defeat S's justification for believing that the verification condition obtains. S could of course at times think that he was justified conclusively in his belief that the verification condition obtained, and be wrong - the anti-realist need not deny that. But the latter makes the important additional claim, that it is, at least in principle, possible for S to be fully justified in his belief that the verification condition obtains, where 'full justification' amounts to incorrigible knowledge.

Yet surely it is impossible for S to observe incorrigibly that the verification condition obtains. This is because it is impossible for S to observe incorrigibly anything at all, except, perhaps, in an extended sense of 'observe', that he exists¹⁶. To make this point quite clear, I will rehearse one or two examples of a familiar type. Let the potential verification condition be 'It seems to me that something hot is touching my

hand' - chosen of course since sensation reports have traditionally been candidates for incorrigibility. I am blindfolded, and someone tells me that they are about to touch my hand with a red hot nail. It then does seem to me that something hot is touching my hand; I accordingly believe that 'It seems to me that something hot is touching my hand' is true, or, to put it another way, I believe that such and such a verification condition obtains. My blindfold is then removed, and a deception is revealed - the nail which touched my hand was in fact very cold. There now seem to be at least two possibilities; I may think still that it really did seem to me as though something hot was touching my hand. But equally, I may now believe that it did not, after all, seem as though something hot was touching me, but as though something cold was touching me. Such a belief seems to make perfectly good sense. An adherent of an anti-realist version of the rule following considerations might claim that we could not in principle discover when I was 'right' in my claim that it seemed to me as though something cold (or hot) was touching my hand; hence that no sense could be attached to the claim that I might make a genuine mistake at the time about whether it seemed to me that something cold, rather than something hot, was touching my hand. But such argument depends on the anti-realist premiss (arguments for which I am at present attacking) that what (say CRB's) cannot in principle discover to be the case is not something that intelligibly could be the case at all.

Another possibility for me when the deception is revealed is for me to admit to a 'verbal error' - I can say 'I meant at the time to say that it seemed to me that something cold was touching my hand, but I slipped up, and said at the time that it seemed to me that something hot was touching my hand'. Some philosophers find it impossible to distinguish between 'verbal errors' and 'genuine errors' about how things seemed to me. I can say little more than that I have no difficulty in understanding this distinction, even though I will admit that in many of the cases that are

actually likely to occur, the borderline between verbal mistake and genuine error is not an easy one to mark.

My general contention here is that I can make mistakes in my assessment of whether a given verification condition obtains: it is possible for that verification condition not to obtain even when I think it does; it is possible for that verification condition to obtain even whilst I do not 'recognize' that it does - even when the verification condition in question involves how I am 'appeared to' visually, kinaesthetically, etc. Such verification conditions were the best candidates for incorrigibility (apart, perhaps from those conditions for 'degenerate' existence sentences referred to above, and discussed by Lehrer). If they fail to make the grade, as I think they fail, the host of other verification conditions with which we deal, for sentences involving physical object sentences, etc. have no chance of pretensions to incorrigibility.

It follows from all this that, as far as the manifestation challenge is concerned, verification conditions and falsification conditions are in the same boat as truth conditions. It suggests that a grasp of, say, the verification condition for a sentence may be possible even though that condition may in principle obtain on occasion and the speaker not recognize it, or, in principle at least, fail to obtain on occasion when the speaker thinks that it does obtain. Dummett ought to say that there can be no such grasp, since we cannot, in his view, say in what practical ability a speaker could manifest such a grasp. If, of course, there can be understanding without incorrigible 'recognition' or 'observation', then we might as well stay with realist truth conditions as embroil ourselves with anti-realist notions of verification conditions or assertibility conditions; the latter do not accord with the 'requirements' of anti-realist accounts of meaning any more than the former do.

As regards the acquisition challenge, we may argue against Dummett and his ilk in similar fashion. Dummett has difficulty in understanding how a

speaker could have acquired a 'grasp' of the truth condition of a sentence if it is supposed that this condition might be such, that, no matter the circumstances in which the speaker is placed, it could in principle, at least, obtain and the speaker fail to 'recognize' that it does, or fail to obtain even though the speaker is quite certain that it does obtain. If there is a difficulty here, it is not a difficulty in particular for truth conditions as envisaged by the standard realist - e.g. of the R4 variety - it afflicts so called anti-realist alternatives too.

Some may object to my treatment of Dummett here, saying that Dummett himself never speaks of incorrigibility. Surely, they may say, he must have had in mind some other contrast between realist truth conditions and anti-realist verification conditions (or whatever) than that the latter enable incorrigible recognition, and the former do not. My response is this. If he, or other anti-realist writers intend a different contrast, what is it? If, for instance, he thinks of verification conditions as open to 'direct' observation, whilst classical realist truth conditions not necessarily being so, it is notoriously difficult to get clear about the meaning of 'direct'. Perhaps we need to look again at the nature of the acquisition and manifestation challenges to see what could be meant. They seem to be saying that to understand a truth condition it would have to be possible to get it entirely within one's grasp - for there to be no more, as it were, than met the eye. For, if not, the thinking seems to go, the behaviour which constitutes understanding would not be 'directly tied' to the truth condition itself, or the training would not be tied to the truth condition itself, but only tied to 'symptoms' of the truth condition or 'evidence' of the obtaining of the truth condition.

But what would this 'direct link' be? Non-inferential observation or recognition? Even if we could make sense of that, there is nothing about the absence of inference in an observational process which will guarantee that, e.g. the speaker produces recognitional behaviour 'when and only when the relevant condition obtains'. And there is nothing

intrinsic to the process of inference which implies that, if I observe a truth condition to obtain, going through a process of inference as I do so, then I do not 'really' have that truth condition 'fully within my grasp'. I conclude that Dummett does require for his argument the notion of incorrigible recognition, and that it is because this is not possible in the vast majority of cases, and because anti-realist alternatives to classical realist conceptions of truth are in no better a position that his challenges fail.

5. HOW MYSTERIOUS IS GOD?

Even the most extreme form of mystery scarcely seems to require a realism strong than R4 - viz. - that there are truths concerning God for which no CRB can in principle have the slightest justification in believing. It must be admitted that, as we noted in Chapter 1, occasional thinkers such as Eriugena have, perhaps, espoused even more severe versions of mystery than this. It is only if such views entail the most extreme type of R10 realism - that, e.g. a predicate could be true of God even though in principle no rational being could have the slightest justification for thinking that it did, and no rational being could in principle have the slightest justification for thinking that the predicate in question applied to anything else, that a manifestation challenge, for instance, becomes a serious threat. For then, all logically possible forms of manifestation of understanding seem to have been ruled out.

But unsurpassability surely requires no more than that the being in question has a core of mystery which cannot in principle be dispelled by CRB's. Writers who have gone further than this have had other motives which we need not share. I conclude that anti-realist arguments present no threat to the realism required by the mystery of an unsurpassable being, where mystery is understood in its knowledge limitation sense.

NOTES

- 1 As in 'Frege - philosophy of language', Duckworth 2nd Edition 1981
- 2 'Truth and Meaning' p310 Synthese 17
- 3 c.f. Dummett 'What is a Theory of Meaning 11' p 124 in 'Truth and Meaning', ed. Evans and McDowell, Clarendon Press Oxford 1976
- 4 'Scruton and Wright on anti-Realism, etc.' p16-17, Aristotelian Society 1976-7
- 5 A version of which may be found in Dummett's 'The Reality of the Past'. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society n.s. 69 (1968-9) p239-258
- 6 'What is a Theory of Meaning 11' p80-1
- 7 In his 'The Reality of the Past'
- 8 'On 'The Reality of the Past'', in 'Action and Interpretation' ed. Hookway and Pettit, C.U.P. 1978
- 9 L. Sklar, 'Semantic Analogy' Philosophical Studies 1980 p217-234
- 10 S. Kripke 'Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language' in 'Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein' Ed. Block Blackwell 1981
- 11 op cit p242
- 12 ibid
- 13 op cit p243
- 14 op cit p248
- 15 op cit p286
- 16 Lehrer 'Knowledge' p86. And see his whole discussion of incorrigibility. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1974

CHAPTER FIVE
REFERRING TO A TRANSCENDENT GOD

1. TRANSCENDENCE AND THE DESCRIPTIVE THEORY OF REFERENCE

We can have beliefs which are about or of physical objects, people, fictional objects, abstract objects, possibilities, numbers, states of affairs, and so on. For instance: I believe that my house has a green front door. It may well be that this belief is about, or of, an actual house which belongs to me. Or - Jones believes that the next door neighbour's daughter has blue eyes; Jones belief may possibly be about or of a certain girl who lives next door. Similarly we can have desires, hopes, expectations, doubts, etc. which may be about or of such items. I say: 'My father is 66'. It is possible that I have said something about, or of an actual man who is my father. I say: '4 is the square root of 16'. I have said something about, or of the number 4, etc.

In any tenable version of Theism, the Theist requires that he is able to have beliefs which are of or about God, and that he has the general capacity to conduct discourse which is of or about God. We may contrast two philosophical accounts of the words 'of' and 'about'. The first springs from the descriptive-intentional theory of reference, held by Frege, and championed in modern times by philosophers such as Strawson, Searle, and Dummett. And the second arises from the 'new' theory of reference advanced by Kripke, Donnellan, Putnam, Kaplan, and others. Although the proponents of these views sometimes present them as incompatible rivals, I will not assume this to be so here. The descriptivist would provide the following account of about and of where we say: 'Jones belief that the next door neighbour's daughter has blue eyes is of, or about a certain girl, say Jane', viz. Jones thinks that there exists something which is the next door neighbour's daughter, and he believes that whoever is the next door neighbour's daughter has blue eyes: and - that girl Jane is the next door neighbour's daughter. Jones belief is true, or false, of Jane. Suppose Jones says: 'The next door neighbour's

daughter has blue eyes'. Then, again on the descriptivist view, Jones has said something of, or about, Jane, for instance, if she is the next door neighbour's daughter. Generally, if a description d is used as a referring expression in a sentence, and a property is attributed to the referent of that subject term, then we can identify a given existing individual A with the referent, and pronounce that something has been said of or about A , just when the description d is applicable to A .

Where a proper name is used instead of a description as the subject term in a belief or an utterance, various descriptivist accounts are possible; I outline two. Consider the sentence (S). 'Jane has blue eyes'. S can be of or about an actual girl Jane where: a community of speakers within which the name 'Jane' has currency associate with that word a number of beliefs of the form - Jane is whoever is the p_1 ; Jane is whoever is the $p_2 \dots p_n$ (not every individual in that community believing that Jane has all the properties $p_1 \dots p_n$, but each individual having a cluster of beliefs taken from the set, where there is sufficient overlap between the clusters for the name 'Jane' to have a clear use in that community) - and the actual girl Jane possesses 'sufficient' or 'most' of the properties involved in the community's cluster of beliefs.

A second type of descriptivist account concerns only the individual, not the community, and is applicable either to beliefs or utterances. Jones may have said something of or about a certain girl Jane in an utterance of the sentence S , if he has a number of beliefs of the form - 'Jane is whoever is the $p_1 \dots p_n$ ', and Jane herself is all or most of the things Jones believes. Similarly, if Jones believes that Jane has blue eyes, then his belief may be of or about Jane herself if Jones has a number of beliefs of the form 'Jane is whoever is the $p_1 \dots p_n$ ' and Jane is most of, or a sufficient number of these things¹.

Searle characterises the beliefs held by Jones and/or the community in the above sketches - beliefs e.g. of the form 'X is whoever/whatever is

the p' as beliefs that such and such 'identifying descriptions' are applicable to X. He understands 'identifying descriptions' as follows: 'At the extremes ...(they)...fall into two groups; demonstrative presentations - e.g. "that over there" and descriptions in purely general terms which are true of the object uniquely - e.g. "the first man to run a mile in under 3 minutes 53 seconds". Both the pure demonstrative and the pure descriptive are limiting cases...most identifications rely on a mixture of demonstrative devices and descriptive predicates - e.g. "the man we saw yesterday"².

The descriptive-intentional account of 'about' and 'of' would be applicable to Theistic belief and discourse as follows. Taking the second 'individual based' account first, which can cover both beliefs and utterances; consider Jones' belief that God is looking after him. Jones' belief is of, or about a real existent God if - Jones associates with 'God' the beliefs that he is whoever is $p_1...p_n$, and, the real existent God does have these properties $p_1...p_n$. Similarly, suppose Jones says 'God is looking after me'. Then Jones has said something of or about such and such an existent E, if Jones believes that God is whoever is $p_1...p_n$, and E is $p_1,,,p_n$.

The descriptivist account which brings in the community would allow Jones to have said something of or about God in: 'God is looking after me' if 'God' is associated in Jones' speech community with a cluster of beliefs of the form 'God is whatever is the p', and a real existent, God, fits these beliefs.

It will not have escaped notice that in the application of the descriptivist's account of 'about' and 'of' to the context of belief and discourse about or of God, the expressions 'sufficient' and 'most' were omitted. This is a point I must now take up - first by reverting to non-theistic contexts, where descriptivists employ these expressions when, for instance they claim that most of the beliefs of, say a speaker

associated with the proper name 'N' must be true of an existent E if his utterance 'N is @' is to be about, or of E, they imply that a looseness of fit is permitted, perhaps even to the extent that the speaker might have a few beliefs associated with 'N' which are false of E, and yet that speaker might still be saying something about or of E. Searle's theory of proper names seems to permit this, though he does not discuss the possibility that some of the beliefs in question might be false. His view of when a speaker's utterance 'Aristotle was four feet tall' is of or about the formerly existing Greek philosopher comes to this: The speaker associates with the name 'Aristotle' one or more beliefs of the form 'Aristotle is whoever is p', taken from a disjunction of beliefs of this type whose members are made up from the beliefs of the community at large associated with the name 'Aristotle'. The speaker must believe 'enough', 'sufficient', or even 'most' of the disjuncts, but we cannot, in Searle's view, be precise about how many of the disjuncts the speaker must believe³.

Now even if we are in broad agreement with the descriptivist account, it may be argued that we ought to distinguish among those beliefs that the speaker might associate with 'Aristotle', and suggest that some of them are more 'important' than others. Though it is not easy to get clear about the notion of 'importance'. It might be defined by reference to the belief most commonly held in the community in association with the name 'Aristotle' - but there are clearly problems with this suggestion. For instance, the beliefs that Aristotle's local community associated with 'Aristotle' were probably not the beliefs that we, in a twentieth century speech community, associate with that name - ours being things like: 'Aristotle is whoever tutored Alexander the Great', 'Aristotle is whoever authored the Nicomachean Ethics', etc.⁴

One move might be to identify 'important' with 'essential' (in its technical sense as defined in chapter 1). Then we might say that looseness of fit between beliefs and object about which or of which a given belief or assertion is supposed to be, should not be permitted to extend to the objects

essential properties. Surely, it might be argued, someone who wishes to have a belief of or about an item cannot fail to believe that that item has such and such an essential property which it does in fact have. Even more evidently, it might be said, surely someone who wishes to have a belief or make an assertion which is of or about a certain item could not at the same time believe that the item lacks a certain property which in fact it essentially possesses. The same point could be made on the 'individualist' account given by a descriptivist for saying of, or saying about. And the same point in terms of the descriptivist account which brings in the community would go as follows. Looseness of fit would not permit beliefs of the form 'N is whatever is @', where @ was an essential property, to be entirely absent from the linguistic community in which 'N' is supposed to be current. Even more so, it does not permit the belief that, for instance 'N is whatever thing it is that is not @' to be current.

To take the points again in an example: if, for instance as good descriptivists we were assessing whether Jones' belief that Aristotle was four foot tall was of, or about the formerly existing Greek philosopher, and we ascertained that Jones failed to associate with 'Aristotle' the belief that he, whoever he was, was a person (the property of personhood being of course an essential property of Aristotle), or, worse still, we ascertained that Jones believed that Aristotle, whoever he was, was not a person, we would conclude that Jones' belief was not of or about the formerly existing Greek philosopher. If Jones said 'Aristotle was four feet tall' and we made similar discoveries about Jones beliefs we should, so the argument runs, conclude equally that Jones has not said anything about or of the formerly existing Greek philosopher, if we are concerned with the descriptivist account given for 'about' and 'of' on the individualist basis. On the 'community' account, the example would go like this. Jones says 'Aristotle was four feet tall'. We ascertain that neither Jones nor any of the rest of his speech community associate with

the name 'Aristotle' the belief that Aristotle, whatever it was, was a person. So we are forced to conclude that Jones said nothing of or about the formerly existing Greek philosopher.

If we are determined to be descriptivists, whatever version of a descriptivist-intentional view that we adopt, things look decidedly unhealthy when we come to the case of God. One version of descriptivism will say that there cannot be believings of or sayings of God without beliefs in all God's essential properties. We saw in chapter 3 that not only Jones but any speech community of CRB's of which Jones might be a part will be necessarily limited in various ways with respect to certain of God's essential properties. If we accept that much of what a CRB cannot know or cannot understand about God is explained by God's ontological transcendence, it will be certain properties that God essentially has and that everything else essentially lacks, that CRB's cannot know about or cannot understand. If understanding failure precludes belief, then, on a descriptivist account of about and of it is impossible for CRB's to say things of God or to believe things about God. Whether, and in what sense understanding failure precludes belief are questions I take up in the next chapter. But even if we resolved this matter in favour of the descriptivist Theist, there is still the knowledge limitation to contend with. It seems to imply that only if Jones, or the community, depending on the descriptivist view we are taking, has true beliefs about all God's essential properties, will Jones beliefs or utterances be of or about God. Since Jones, and any other CRB are barred from knowing that all these beliefs are correct - barred even perhaps from having any justification for thinking they are all correct, it will be more by good luck than good judgement, as it were, that Jones beliefs or sayings will be genuinely of or about an epistemologically transcendent God. This is a most undesirable result.

Even if it is quite wrong to saddle the descriptivist with the modification of the original Searlian view, the modification being to the

effect that absence of belief about an item's essential properties may be an obstacle to having beliefs of or about that item, we can make the same kind of point as we have outlined in the forgoing paragraphs once more, whilst substituting expressions such as 'important', 'significant' for 'essential'. For instance, if we as descriptivists observe that neither Jones nor any of his speech community associate with the name 'Aristotle' the 'important' property that Aristotle was a person (and surely this property should come out as important, whatever criterion we use for assessing importance) then it is at least arguable that we ought to say that Jones belief or assertion is not of or about the Greek philosopher.

The results of chapter 3 suggest that it is impossible for CRB's to know that a number of their beliefs about God involving what by any standards will be 'important' divine properties are true. It was argued in chapter 1 that the taint of mystery cannot be restricted to any one clearly defined area of the divine nature; hence the chances are that at least part of that aspect of the divine nature which be be regarded as 'important' is afflicted with some degree of mystery. If Jones' set of true beliefs of the form 'God is whoever it is that is p1, 'God is whoever it is that is p2,' etc. cover those substitutions for p1, p2, etc. which involve all God's 'Important' properties, this will be a matter of sheer luck. For, as we have just seen, at least some of God's 'important' properties will be such that Jones could not know that God possessed them and even such that Jones could not have the slightest justification for thinking that God possessed them. Hence it will only be by 'good luck' at most that Jones belief, or Jones assertion, that, say, God is looking after him, will be of or about an actual supreme being, if there is one. Furthermore, if in some sense inability to understand God precludes belief, the descriptivist will have to come to an even more disquieting conclusion as far as the Theist is concerned, and say that CRB's in general cannot have beliefs or make assertions which are about or of an epistemologically

transcendent supreme being.

A descriptivist who disliked this result might decline to be saddled with the modification to his doctrine which attempts to 'weight' properties one against another. He might stay with what is apparently the Searle view, insisting that so long as there is some degree of fit, things will be fine. I find this version of descriptivism implausible, but all the same, even if we accept it, it still has consequences which the Theist would dislike. There will always be a risk that Jones' set of beliefs of the form 'God is whoever it is that is p' etc. will have an insufficiently satisfactory 'degree of fit' with the properties of a supreme being, if there is one. The supreme being must be epistemologically transcendent, and vague as the notion of 'satisfactory degree of fit' may be, it looks perfectly possible for Jones to lack many of the possible true beliefs of the form 'God is whoever it is that is p' - so many, in fact, that Jones belief or assertion that, for instance, God is looking after him would not be of or about the supreme being, if there is one.

Here in outline, then, is the reason why the Theist who has realized the implications for transcendence of crediting the object of his devotion with unsurpassability, should avoid a wholesale commitment to a descriptive-intentional account of 'about' and 'of'. My next task is to rehearse at some length, philosophical considerations which should persuade us that the descriptive-intentional account cannot be wholly correct for 'of' and 'about', at least when they are employed in contexts in which real existents are involved (as opposed to fictional objects, abstract objects, and the like, for which the descriptive account may well be correct). Beliefs and utterances which are meant to be of or about God are meant to be of or about him qua real existent.

In section 2 I intend to argue (1) that 'of' and 'about' come in a range of strengths, and that the 'strongest' senses require causal links between an object O and a belief or an utterance which purports to be of

or about 0, and (2) that if we do have the strongest sense of 'about' or 'of', then, though the believer or speaker still requires at least one true belief of the form '0 is whatever it is that is p' an appreciable degree of falsity and/or lack of certainty as to the truth is possible as regards other beliefs held of the form '0 is the thing, whatever it is, that is p'. Hence, I go on to contend, the Theist should look to the strongest sense of 'about' or 'of' when he has beliefs or utterances of or about, God; he should look to causal links of some kind between God and the Theist's beliefs or utterances. Then it will be permissible for there to be a substantial 'lack of fit' between the theist's corpus of beliefs of the form, 'God, whoever he may be, is p', and a real unsurpassable being, while at the same time the Theist will be able to have beliefs or make assertions of or about that unsurpassable being.

2. OF AND ABOUT

There is nothing original about the view I am now going to advance; it is closely related to causal theories of reference advanced by Kripke, Kaplan, and Donnellan⁵ and I draw heavily upon their insights, together with those of other philosophers working in the same area. For convenience I shall speak mainly of beliefs which may be said to be about or of such and such an item - but this should be taken to do duty for any attitude which may be said to be about or of a given item.

Quine⁶ distinguished between opaque and transparent belief. He claimed to discern at least two possible truth conditions for (1) 'Tom believes that Cicero denounced Catiline'. In (a), the transparent condition, Cicero is believed by Tom to have denounced Catiline or, to put it in manner favoured by Quine; Tom believes Cicero to have denounced Catiline. Using my 'of' or 'about' gives clumsy but equivalent versions - i.e. Tom believes of Cicero, that he denounced Catiline; or, Tom believes about Cicero, that he denounced Catiline. The position of 'Cicero' in (a) according to Quine, is purely 'referential'. Other referring expressions which denote the same

individual may be substituted for it *salva veritate* - e.g. 'Tom believes that Tully denounced Catiline'. In (b), the opaque truth condition, on the other hand, the initial referring expression that Tom would employ in an expression of his belief cannot be substituted for *salva veritate*. If Tom does not believe that Cicero is Tully, then his claim not to believe, say, Tully denounced Catiline must be given full credit. On the Quinean understanding of (b) Tom is not related by believing what he believes to any person, let alone Cicero. It is no part of the truth condition that any other person exists at all.

It would be a mistake to think of transparent belief and opaque belief as two different kinds of belief. (Quine may not have been clear on this). It is rather that we have two different kinds of report of a belief. As far as I know this important point is due to Searle⁷. (1), the verbal formulation of a report of what Tom believes, has at least two distinct truth conditions. The condition for the truth of the transparent report includes external elements in addition to the 'state of mind' of the believer, Tom, and attends not at all to the terms which the believer would regard as adequate to express his belief. The condition for the truth of the opaque report, on the other hand, is only concerned with the state of mind of the believer; it attends to those expressions which the believer himself would regard as satisfactory expressions of what he believes, and that is why co-referring expressions are not substitutable *salva veritate*.

If we attempt to express these two truth conditions in formal terms, we can 'quantify in' to the expression of the transparent condition, but we cannot do so into an expression of the opaque condition. So the former becomes (2) (Ex) (Tom believes that x denounced Catiline) and the latter (3) Tom believes that (Ex) (X denounced Catiline). (2) could be read as: there is someone of whom, or about whom Tom believes that he denounced Catiline, whilst (3) could be expressed thus; Tom believe that there is someone such that he denounced Catiline.

In my view we can make exactly the same kinds of remarks concerning contexts of reported speech; thus we can have (4) 'Tom said that Cicero denounced Catiline' as a report of what Tom said with either a transparent or an opaque truth condition. In the former we could say - Cicero was said by Tom to have denounced Catiline - or Tom said of, or about Cicero, that he denounced Catiline. The opaque truth condition (by far the most common, I imagine, unlike the case of belief) attends essentially to the question whether Tom would accept the form of words used by the person reporting what Tom said, as an apt expression of what Tom said. If the opaque truth condition obtains, Tom is not thereby related to any person, let alone Cicero. The quantification point is similar too; for the transparent condition for reported speech we have, e.g. (Ex) (Tom said that x denounced Catiline) and for the opaque condition - Tom said that (Ex) (x denounced Catiline).

Some previous discussion in this area tended to assume a simple dichotomy between opaque and transparent reports of, say, belief. Quine, at least, clearly saw that matters were more complex than this, even in the Cicero example. There is the question, for example whether 'Catiline' occurs referentially - whether, that is to say, he is such that Tom believes of him that he was denounced by Cicero, and accordingly whether 'Catiline' can be replaced by a co-referring expression *salva veritate*. Loar⁸ and Strawson⁹ among others, in their more recent discussions, draw our attention to the fact that there is not just one non-opaque truth condition for a belief report such as (5) 'Philip believes that the liberal candidate will be elected'. We could, of course, have a report which is purely opaque - viz. Philip believes that there is someone such that he is the liberal candidate and he will be elected. Once we go beyond Philip's state of mind in our report of his belief, we have a number of choices¹⁰. (These are not entirely free choices). We could say that a certain person, whoever he is, who answers to the description 'the liberal candidate'¹¹ is

such that Philip believes of him that he will be elected. Or again: a certain person, whoever he is, who answers to the description 'the liberal candidate' is such that Philip believes of him that he is the liberal candidate and he will be elected.

It would be appropriate for us, as Philip's interpreters, to make such reports if we believed that there was someone of whom, or about whom Philip had his belief, but we did not have any particular individual in mind - if we merely believed an existential proposition and were not seeking to link Philip's belief to a particular individual whom we would identify in our report. In contrast to these, there is yet another non-opaque truth condition for (5), which is: Jones (say) is such that Philip believes that he is the liberal candidate and that he will be elected, or that man (if he is present so that we can point to him, for example), is such that Philip believes that he is the liberal candidate and that he will be elected. We would now be committing ourselves, in our report of Philip's belief, to the truth of the assertion that this particular individual, whom typically we name or pick out with a demonstrative expression, is the one about whom Philip has his belief. For convenience of exposition I will sometimes blur these complexities, and speak as though our belief reports are either opaque or transparent.

A potentially misleading implication of the discussion so far also must be mentioned here; that a given report of a belief - i.e. a report as expressed by a particular utterance by a speaker on a particular occasion has only one truth condition - but this may not be so. The reporter of the belief may be saying that, say Tom's belief is of or about such and such an individual, and also in his report attempting to indicate a form of words which Tom would accept as an expression of his belief. Thus failure of substitution salva veritate is not a sufficient condition for the absence of the transparent truth condition. What we can say, I think, is that the presence of substitutivity is a sufficient condition for it to be the case that the

person who is reporting, say, Tom's belief is including as part of the truth condition for his report elements in the external world over and above merely 'what is in Tom's head'. Again, in later exposition, I will speak mainly as if the truth conditions do not combine in this way, but are only to be thought of individually.

The opaque/transparent distinction is closely associated with the distinction between de dicto and de re belief. Sosa¹² makes this distinction in the following terms, which I think are seriously misleading.

'Belief de dicto is belief that a certain dictum (or proposition is true, whereas belief de re is belief about a particular res (or thing) that it has a certain property. (And similarly for knowledge, desire, etc. and for more complicated cases'.

This misleads since it suggests that there are two kinds of belief in connection with the de dicto/de re distinction; if there are kinds of beliefs, this has nothing to do with the de dicto/de re distinction. All beliefs (presumably) are beliefs that a certain dictum (or proposition) is true, and - I would want to say - some of these beliefs are beliefs about a particular res (or thing) that it has a certain property. Following Searle, as I did earlier with the opaque/transparent distinction, I would want to apply the de dicto/de re distinction, not to beliefs, but to reports of beliefs.

One simple criterion for whether a belief report is de re, is whether quantification into the clause governed by the belief construction is permissible. So, imagine that in 'Jones believes that Smith's murderer is insane' we are to decide whether quantifying into our report is permissible. One way of settling the matter is this. If we, as reporters of Jones belief believe that there is an individual who is Smith's murderer then we can make our report in such a way that quantifying into it is permissible. If we do not believe this, then quantifying into our report of the belief is not permissible. So, more indirectly, the criterion for de re belief under consideration is whether we, as reporters of the belief, think that the

referring expression following 'believes that' denotes. If we think that 'Smith's murderer' denotes, then we report Jones belief de re, regardless of whether Jones knows anything about the individual denoted, and regardless of whether there is any kind of 'connection' between Jones and that individual. So we are prepared to report that there is an individual of whom, or about whom, Jones has his belief.

But is the question of the denotation of the referring expression following 'believes that' the only matter to be considered? The criterion seems rather too simple. Perhaps we can have a de re belief report and a correct use of 'about' and 'of' where this is the only consideration. But I would want to argue that we can have ^a much stronger sense of 'about' and 'of' when the event or state which is, say, Jones believing that such and such a referring expression denotes, is in some way caused by the actual denotation of the said referring expression, ultimately if not immediately. Whether or not such a connection obtains will be a matter of contingent fact; a necessary condition for our justifiably reporting Jones as having a belief about or of a particular individual in the strongest sense of 'about' or 'of' is that we have good grounds for thinking that the causal linking does obtain. This does not mean that we would have to have any notion of the details of the causal linking. And the latter is always, I think, a matter of degree. The 'Smith's murderer' example is on the borderline between cases where there is a full-blooded causal link of the 'right kind', and cases where there is no causal link whatever. When reporting Jones belief in this instance, we probably suppose that he knows at least one thing about the individual about whom he has the belief - that he is Smith's murderer, and we would suppose that Jones' knowledge is in a sense caused by the murderer - viz. by the murderer actually committing the crime; he causes there to be a bloody corpse which subsequently causes certain perceptions in Jones; or, alternatively, causes perceptions in others who then cause Jones to have the information that they have, and so on. So far,

these are merely preliminary remarks; I will now discuss a series of examples to justify and explore the claim that a causal link is required for the strongest senses of 'about' and 'of'.

There are various kinds of examples of alleged de re belief report which leave out the 'appropriate' causal connection. In the first category I consider, the referring expression which follows the 'believes that' construction in some sense has a guaranteed denotation. I do not mean a logical guarantee; I wish specifically to exclude examples such as '9', which necessarily denotes 9 so long as we retain our present conventions. I am thinking rather of 'ordinal properties' such as 'the shortest spy', 'the tallest man', 'the fourth largest freshwater lake', 'the first man to step on the moon', and so on. In theory, no property of this kind is such that only one item possesses it because of the logical possibility of two or more spies of the same height, two or more lakes of the same size, two or more men stepping on to the moon simultaneously, etc. Kaplan suggests that we could, nevertheless, devise quasi-ordinal properties which would be possessed only by one individual, if possessed by anything at all. We could use the

'well-known fact that two persons cannot be born at exactly the same time at exactly the same place (where the place of birth is an interior point of the infant's body). Given any four spatial points, a,b,c,d, not in a plane we can use the relations t_1 is earlier than t_2 , and p_1 is closer to a (b,c,d) than p_2 to order all space time points'.¹³

We could then make up properties of spies, for instance, which only one spy could possess. So without entering into this complicated type of qualification every time, I will assume for the sake of argument that expressions such as 'the shortest spy', 'the tallest man', and the like are such that only one individual could possess them.

Thus it may appear that 'the shortest spy' must denote something. We then arrive at Kaplan's¹⁴ notorious 'Ralph believes that the shortest spy is a spy'. If our believing that the referring expression following the 'believes that' construction denotes, is our criterion for our reporting

Ralph's belief de re, then we can so report it here. Our de re report may be construed as follows: we are saying that there is an individual of whom, or about whom, Ralph believes that he is a spy.

Most would agree that something has gone wrong in this example.. I suggest that two things are wrong. The first, which I will not discuss, is that it is hard to imagine a sensible context in which anyone would make such a report of Ralph's beliefs¹⁵. The second is the thought that we would be happy to report Ralph's belief de re even though we might believe that Ralph has never met any spies in his life, nor met anyone else who has, seen any pictures of spies, read any reports about spies written by people who had seen spies, etc. (Perhaps Ralph thinks a priori that if there are nation states, etc. then there must be spies). In brief, the odd thought is that we would be happy to report Ralph's belief de re despite our belief that there is no causal link between the shortest spy, and Ralph's believing that 'the shortest spy' denotes. 'Odd' here, does not entail 'incorrect', however. If someone wants to insist that a de re report is permissible, I would not argue the point, but I would insist that the sense in which Ralph's belief is about the shortest spy is a weak one.

Of a similar character is Sosa's 'Shorty' story¹⁶. (Sosa is pursuing a very different line from the one I am taking here).

'...suppose a sergeant, after consulting with higher authority, returns to his platoon and says to the shortest man "Shorty, they want you to go first". Actually, the desire expressed by the higher authority was that the shortest man go first'.

(Sosa fails to add that the higher authorities presumably believe that there are no men in the platoon who share the lowest stature). Now, up to a point, it is perfectly legitimate for the sergeant to speak as he does to the man in his platoon. There is a weak sense in which the authorities' want is of or about the shortest man in the platoon and that is Shorty. Yet in the stronger sense of 'about' and 'of' for which I am campaigning,

the authorities do not have an attitude which is of or about the actual man addressed by the sergeant; it would be reasonable for Shorty to respond to his sergeant. 'You say they want me? But they've never even heard of me, let alone met me'.

We could move towards the stronger sense by degrees; the sergeant is in the general's office, describing each of the men in his platoon, and naming each man as he does so. The general hears from the sergeant about the shortest man - the sergeant tells the general that, among other things, the man answers to the description 'the shortest man'. So the actual individual Shorty is causally linked with the general's belief that 'the shortest man' denotes a man in the platoon about whom the general has heard from the sergeant; the sergeant has seen Shorty on many occasions - so Shorty has caused the sergeant to have perceptions and beliefs; the sergeant in turn has passed on information to the general, causing the general to believe that 'the shortest man' denotes a certain man who has properties p, q, etc. In a more direct case, the general is looking at the platoon himself and thinks to himself, on noticing Shorty, 'I want that man to go first'. There is a clear causal link between Shorty and the general's 'that man'.

Good cases for a total absence of causal connection, yet where 'of' and 'about' are permitted, may be thought to be found among 'future objects'. Adapting another of Kaplan's examples, Jones dubs the first child to be born in the 21st century 'Newman 1'. He forms beliefs about the child, based perhaps on his theories of the likely nature of child socialisation at that point in time - for instance, he believes that Newman 1 will be bad-tempered. If we rule out the possibility of universal atomic holocaust, and add any qualifications that may be required to ensure that there could (logically) be only one 'first' child, then it seems that 'Newman 1' is 'bound' to have a denotation. Accordingly we can report Jones belief *de re* as follows: there is, or will be, someone of whom or about whom Jones

believes that he will be bad-tempered. Donnellan¹⁷ suggests that it would be

'incorrect to say to John who turns out to be the first child born in the 21st century "I believed about you some twenty five years before your birth..." (that you would be bad tempered)'.

I do not quite agree with Donnellan; it would not be obviously incorrect for Jones to say this to John. On the other hand, there is certainly something odd here, which Donnellan is trying to make plain. One could imagine a response from John, akin to Shorty's. 'You had no beliefs about me in particular; it would not have mattered who was the first child born in the 21st century, as far as you were concerned. My brother, for example, might have been born before me; then you would have been talking to him and not me'. My own diagnosis of what is odd about this case should by now be obvious; the actual individual John cannot causally affect Jones' belief twenty-five years previously.

D. W. Stampe¹⁸ suggests an interesting example in which it might appear that we could have the strongest sense of 'about' and of 'of' in a belief about a future object. This would be in a case where the belief is caused by something which also causes the existence of the future object. (Stampe is not discussing belief, so I adapt his example considerably in my account). Suppose Jones believes that a storm will take place at 2 p.m. His belief is caused by the barometer indicating a fall in pressure; this in turn is caused by the fact that the air pressure really is falling. And that fall of air pressure itself will cause, let us suppose, the storm. Jones can have a belief about, or of, this particular storm, so the argument goes, in view of the common cause; and it is a belief about it in the strongest sense. This is shown, it is claimed, if we suppose

'the conditions suddenly change, the barometric pressure rises and the clash of fronts does not occur, but now, conditions again change, and some causally quite independent meteorological development brings in a storm, just at two o'clock.¹⁹

Stampe seems to think it is quite clear that this would not be the storm Jones originally believed would occur at two o'clock. Stampe describes his judgement as 'intuitively clear' - it is not clear to me, since it would appear to rest on some kind of necessity of origin doctrine for storms '...could this very storm have been caused by a different clash of fronts?' We seem to hear the Kripke of 'Identity and Necessity' inquiring. I would have thought that the answer was - yes it could. And so I reject Stampe's example.

A more convincing instance²⁰ might be where we had a collection of car parts which were going to be made, say in 1998 into a car. We might have a belief about this car - say that the car will break down in the autumn of 1999. There is a sense in which the present existence of the car parts are 'partial causes' of the future car, and they are also a causal element in my belief that 'the car' will have a denotation - viz. something which will be a car, with properties p, q, etc. I would admit that my present belief is about that future car in a fairly strong sense, if not the strongest possible sense. Despite these examples, it is clear that in the majority of cases, we only get strong 'abouts' and 'ofs' where causal chains run from objects in the past to present beliefs.

The second group of examples I want to consider concerns situations where the believer, or the possessor of whatever attitude is in question, etc. is fortuitously correct in his belief. I will not dwell on these, since causal theorists have made these sorts of cases very familiar. Jones believes that the man on the other side of the room drinking champagne is happy. The man he is actually looking at is drinking water, but is indeed happy. There is another man on the other side of the room - his glass is concealed - he is drinking champagne, and he also is happy. Imagine that we as interpreters report Jones belief *de re* - we would permit quantification into our report of his belief, and say that there is a man about whom, or of whom, Jones has a belief, if we were relying solely on the *c* criterion that

we believe that 'the man on the other side of the room drinking champagne' denotes; perhaps we earlier saw the glass which is now concealed, etc. But surely, in this case, matters have gone so far adrift that such a de re belief report is positively wrong; the man over there drinking champagne is not a man about whom Jones has his belief. Perhaps, in this situation Jones does not have a belief about anybody. Perhaps his belief is about the actual man who is drinking water. What prompts these thoughts is the fact that there is not, ex hypothesi, a trace of causal connection between the man drinking champagne, and Jones' belief.

Unfortunately, as discussions of causal theories have shown, it is only too easy to cook up far fetched complications in such examples - e.g. Jones cannot see the water drinking gentleman directly - he is seeing a reflection of the man in a mirror, the presence of which Jones is unaware; it is the champagne drinking man who has placed the mirror in a strategic position. So the champagne drinking man is - in a devious way - a causal factor in Jones' belief; yet we would want to say that he is the 'wrong sort' of causal factor, and that he is still not the individual about whom (in the strong sense) Jones has his belief, or of whom Jones believes something. I will not attempt, in the present discussion, to say what the 'right kind' of causal linking is; clearly a causal connection of some kind or other is not a sufficient condition for the strong sense of 'about' and 'of' which I am urging exists in regard to real objects and people. I would want to say that the 'right kind' of causal connection is a necessary condition.

I now try to disentangle the question of whether someone may be reported as having a belief about a thing, in the strongest sense of 'about' from questions of the scope of referring expressions in contexts of propositional attitudes. This involves re-tracing ground already covered, but in different guise²¹. In 'Jones believes that a man in a brown hat is a murderer', we may intend, in this report, that 'a man in a brown hat' should

have smallest scope. If so, I would want to maintain that the report only covers Jones' state of mind; we might report him in this way even if we did not think there ever had been a man in a brown hat, and that the whole thing was a figment of Jones' imagination. On the other hand, we might intend the description to be given largest scope. Then we would have: concerning a certain man in a brown hat; Jones believes of him or about him that he is a murderer. Now it does appear that the latter reading is just about possible even where there is no causal connection between the man in the brown hat and Jones beliefs. Although we may wonder, as we did earlier in other examples, what grounds we could have for interpreting Jones as having this belief, and we might feel disinclined to allow the widest scope for the description in our report of his belief unless we had grounds for thinking that the right kind of causal connection between Jones and the man in the brown hat obtained. However, there are no hard and fast decisions to be made here; if we did allow the wide scope construal of our report, where we had no ground for thinking the causal connection obtained, we could not be accused of a definite error. My concluding observation on this is as before; were there the appropriate causal link, Jones could believe something, or say something of, or about, the man in the brown hat in a stronger sense than if there were not.

Similarly, the question of whether the referring expression following 'believes that' is a rigid designator, is independent logically from the question of whether there is the right kind of causal link between the object about which the belief is held and the belief, allowing for the strong sense of 'about' or 'of'. To understand this, consider the following. In what Devitt describes as an 'abnormal' case, divers might name the heaviest fish in the sea 'Oscar', though they have never encountered this fish, and, as far as they know, neither has anyone else. Nonetheless, 'Oscar' rigidly designates the particular fish which is, as a matter of fact,

the heaviest fish in the actual world. 'Oscar' designates that fish in all possible worlds in which it exists. For 'Oscar' satisfies Kripke's 'test'²³ for rigid designation. Oscar might not have been the heaviest fish in the sea; but it is not the case that Oscar might not have been Oscar. Now, one of our divers might believe that Oscar preferred depths of greater than 10,000 feet. We have the 'believes that' construction, followed by a rigid designator. We have, or so I would maintain, the weak sense of 'about' or 'of' when we say that the diver has a belief about Oscar or of Oscar; ex hypothesi there is no causal contact between Oscar and the diver - nothing that the diver believes about Oscar has, in the explanation of his having that belief, the actual fish Oscar himself. In other cases, on the other hand, we can have 'believes that' followed by a rigid designator, and a clear causal link. I conclude that the question of rigid designation is independent from the question of the existence of causal links.

I now want to develop a more extended example, inspired by Sosa's 'Shorty' story mentioned earlier. Let us imagine that the tallest man in the world is named Lanky. He is a member of an obscure tribe that lives in the Amazonian jungle. His tribe has no contact with the outside world. No one in the world community apart from his tribe has any knowledge of his existence, let alone of his height. His tribe are perhaps aware that he is their tallest member, but they have no more grandiose beliefs about him, having no opportunity to compare his stature with that of members of other communities. Two doctors in New York discuss the medical characteristics that the tallest man in the world will have. They decide, for convenience and quite coincidentally, to refer to the tallest man in the world as Lanky. They elaborate theories about what other physical features very tall people will have - that they will have weak hearts - that they will have spinal defects, and the like. One of the doctors, Dr. Jones, believes, on the basis of these theories, that Lanky has a weak heart.

Now if, per impossibile, the actual Lanky were to come to know that Dr. Jones had this belief 'about' him, let us try to imagine Lanky's reaction. 'If I had not grown so tall, and my brother had developed the supreme stature instead of me, then Dr. Jones belief would have been about my brother and not about me. If Dr. Jones belief is about me at all, then, it is scarcely about me in any very strong sense. It is only if I myself am a causal factor (of the 'right kind') in Dr. Jones having that belief, that his belief can be about me in the strongest sense. Now it is not that Dr. Jones belief, which includes, in particular, the belief that 'Lanky' denotes a certain individual who has properties p, q, etc. is not about me (strong sense) unless we can say that he would not have had his belief unless I had helped, however distantly, to cause him to have it. After all, many types of causes could have effected his belief. It is rather that, as a matter of fact, I must be a causal factor in his having the belief in question if I, or anyone else, is to be able to report him correctly as having a belief about me in the strongest sense. To cite a specific implication: had the course of history been exactly the same as it in fact was, with the sole change that I, Lanky, never existed, then either Dr. Jones would have had his belief or he would not. If the latter, then Dr. Jones is about me in the strong sense; if the former, then Dr. Jones is probably only believing something about me in the weaker sense'.

There are one or two points that could be quibbled over here. First, it would be perfectly possible for Dr. Jones belief to be over-determined; for there to be two sets of conditions each of which, without the other, would be sufficient for the belief in question to occur. For example, there might be a psychoanalytic cause of Dr. Jones' belief and a cause which somehow involves Lanky himself. Either might be alone sufficient for Dr. Jones belief. Perhaps, then, Lanky ought to say: 'Had the course of history been exactly the same as it in fact was, with the sole change that I, Lanky, never existed, then either Dr. Jones would have had his belief, or he would not.

If the latter, then his belief is about me in the strong sense. If the former, then Dr. Jones belief is probably about me in the weaker sense. But if there was all along another condition which was sufficient for the doctor's belief to occur, then it is not clear, given that the doctor would retain his belief in a possible world in which I am absent, whether his belief is about me in the strong sense or in a weaker sense.

Second, we might wonder whether the course of history could remain exactly the same with the sole change that Lanky never existed. Perhaps a clause should be added by Lanky to the effect that this change, together with the minimum of other changes which would be necessitated by his absence, are being envisaged by the counterfactual's antecedent.

We can now add details to the initial example, taking one step at a time, so as to steer it towards situations where the strongest sense of 'about' and 'of' prevail. (1) A reliable report reaches the doctors that the tallest man in the world lives in the Amazon basin; a member of the Guinness Book of Records staff, McRosser, happens to be passing through the area - the first white man to visit. Though he measures Lanky's height, he has no time to take in any of Lanky's other details. (2) As (1), but McRosser also manages to photograph Lanky, and sends a print to the doctors. (3) As before, and McRosser also goes to see the doctors himself, and tells them of his encounter with Lanky. (4) As (3) plus the result that Dr. Jones goes to visit Lanky himself, taking with him diagnostic equipment. On the basis of the visit, he forms the belief that Lanky has a weak heart.

In all the situations (1) to (4) it seems fair to say that Dr. Jones has a belief about Lanky, or a belief of Lanky. It seems clear to me, at any rate, that in the example as originally described, only the weak sense of 'about' and 'of' is involved, whilst in (4) the strongest sense of 'about' and 'of' is involved. I would not care to say at which point the sense changes - there may be no definite point. If pressed, I would say that even in (2) the strong sense is present. In (1) I am not entirely certain.

Yet Dr. Jones even here can believe that 'Lanky' denotes a certain individual who is the tallest man in the world and who is that individual in South America about whom there has just been a report. Hence the real Lanky is in the causal ancestry of Dr. Jones belief about what 'Lanky' denotes, suggesting that the strongest sense of 'about' and 'of' may well be present.

It might now be objected that the stronger sense of 'about' and 'of' simply means that the believer has more beliefs about the object of his belief, and that causal links between his beliefs and the object are irrelevant. Thus, so it might be argued, in (4) Dr. Jones will have far more beliefs about Lanky in the end, than he would have in (1). I would agree that as we move from the example as originally described, towards the situation as portrayed in (4), Dr. Jones does acquire more beliefs. But I would maintain that this is not the point. We could have imagined, if we had wished, that even in the situation as originally described, Dr. Jones believed a large number of things 'about' Lanky - not only that he has a weak heart, but that his toes are splayed in such and such a way, that his bones have such and such a calcium content, that his backbone has such and such a curvature, and so on. The real Lanky would still be entitled, it seems to me, to make a response similar to the one suggested above, and to deny that the strong sense of 'about' is involved.

The objector could make a further move. He could point out that we have restricted the doctor's beliefs to general medical features of the tallest man. Suppose, however, that we added to the original situation beliefs involving certain individuating properties of Lanky; thus Dr. Jones might believe that Lanky was born at such and such a time and place, that he killed an alligator on January 12th 1980 at such and such a place, and so on. The view that the more beliefs Dr. Jones had about Lanky, the nearer he would be to the strong sense of 'about' and 'of' could then be maintained.

I would doubt that it is even intelligible to ascribe to Dr. Jones such beliefs. But even if I am wrong about this, and Dr. Jones could in

principle have all sorts of weird and wonderful beliefs about Lanky Lanky's original response would still seem to have considerable force: 'If I had never existed, the course of history otherwise remaining the same, you would still have had these beliefs - that I was born in such and such a time and place, etc. This decisively suggests that your beliefs are not about me then in the strongest sense.'

Before returning to the question of beliefs and utterances about an epistemologically transcendent God, I want to relate the foregoing discussion to the dispute between those philosophers who might be styled neo-Fregeans, and causal theorists, concerning what it is for a belief to be about or of one object rather than another, or what it is for an utterance to be about or of one object rather than another.

On the Fregean side, Searle²⁴ still claims that a speaker's intention to refer to one object rather than another can be entirely characterised in terms of that speaker's intention to refer to the thing, whatever it is, that has such and such a property or properties. Loar²⁵ says something similar. A belief being about a particular object is simply a belief about the thing, whatever it may be, that satisfies an individual concept. For Loar, 'satisfying an individual concept' is just the having of certain properties; he singles out three groups as especially important. Firstly, there is a perceptual group of properties - e.g. the thing, whatever it is, that I see, or saw, hear or heard, and so forth. Secondly, there is the comprehensive property of satisfying a complete 'dossier' - a very detailed specification which an object might fit - and thirdly, there is the property of being 'the such and such which is called N, or the such and such referred to by x'²⁶. Schiffer²⁷, whose views resemble Loar's, claims that the property or properties concerned are not purely qualitative, but contain an essential indexical element of the form - the thing, whatever it is, that has such and such a unique relation to the person who has the belief in question.

Wittgenstein²⁸ remarked: 'If God had looked into our minds, he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of'. Yet it is precisely this that is claimed by the philosophers of the last paragraph, or so it might be thought. McDowell, quoting Wittgenstein with approval, remarks:

'...rummaging through the repository of general thoughts which ...we are picturing the mind as being, God would fail to find out precisely whom we have in mind. Evidently that (mythical) repository is not the right place to look. God (or anyone) might see whom we have in mind, rather, by - for instance, seeing whom we look at as we speak - seeing relations between a person and bits of the world, not prying into a hidden place whose contents would be just as they are even if there were no world - is (in part) what seeing into a person's mind is'. 29

And at the end of the same paper he says:³⁰

'One cannot intelligibly regard a person as having a belief about a particular concrete object if one cannot see him as having been exposed to the causal influence of that object in ways suitable for the acquisition of information (or mis-information) about it'.

Now I have been arguing that a causal linking between an actual object or person, and the belief of someone who has a belief about that object or person in the strongest sense, is a necessary condition for that strongest sense. This may appear to put me at odds with the most extreme Fregean position. In this, as I have characterised it, for my belief or utterance to be about an object X in any sense of 'about' worth having it is sufficient for me to believe correctly that X is whatever it is that has such and such a property. Whereas on my view, the Fregean will get at best a very weak sense of 'about' here.

In the paper from which I have quoted, McDowell concedes that Jones must have some beliefs or other of the form 'X is whatever it is that is p' if Jones is to be able to have beliefs about X, but he claims in extreme Kripkean fashion that all such beliefs might be false. Here I think he goes too far. He is concerned to reject what he calls 'psychologism' - to reject the need, in particular, for special kinds of mental occurrence

whenever we have a belief about a certain real object. For example, speakers do not, he argues, consult an internal recipe to see whether an object they actually encounter is that object about which they believed that it was, say, *p*, whether the 'internal recipe' is thought of as a conscious mental representation, or something more tacit and implicit. He thinks it is enough, if say Jones is disposed to manifest such and such recognitional behaviour towards *X*, disposed to respond 'intelligently (with understanding) to uses of the name on the part of others, in speech acts construable as being about...(*X*)',³¹. I would agree that this might well be enough. But given an appropriate dispositional account of belief (like the one I support in the next chapter) might this not just be having at least one true belief of the form '*X* is the thing, whatever it may be, that is *p*'. If so, this would in part vindicate the Fregean line on the matter and count against an extreme Kripkean view.

Further compromise with the Fregean might be effected. He might be persuaded to insist on a special *M*-set of properties *m*₁...*m*_n which would play the following role. When Jones believes that *X* is @, and his belief is of or about *X* in the strongest sense, his beliefs of the form '*X* is whatever it is that is *p*' must include at least one true belief where the value of *p* comes from the *M*-set. *M*-set properties should include reference to perceptions and/or memories. When substituted in beliefs of the form '*X* is whatever it is that is *p*' we would obtain: '*X* is whatever it was that he saw', '*X* is whatever it was of which he had a memory image', and the like. *M*-set properties could include vague references to perceptions and memories of individuals other than Jones, who have caused Jones to believe that they have had the perceptions or memories. The connections could be more indirect still - to enable Jones, for instance to have beliefs which are strongly about Aristotle. Generally speaking, if we hold causal theories of perception and memory, we would now think that with the insertion of a member of the *M*-set, a causal link was being built in between *X* itself and Jones's believing that *X* denotes such

and such. If the Fregean will say this kind of thing, I have no quarrel with him. If X possesses a property from the M-set, this could provide the basis for Jones to have a belief about X in the strongest sense since, for it to be true that X is the thing, whatever it is, that has such a property, there must be a causal link 'of the appropriate kind' between Jones and the real object X.

3. BELIEFS AND UTTERANCES ABOUT GOD WITH CAUSAL LINKS

Suppose that it is possible for there to be causal links of the 'right kind' between, say Jones and God. Then, although Jones, if he is to be able to believe something about or of God in the strongest sense, or say something about or of God in the strongest sense, must have at least one true belief of the form 'God is the thing, whatever it may be, that is p', the rest of his beliefs of this type may not be accurate - and some of them may even be false.

For it seems generally plausible to claim that the clearer the causal links between an object O and a believer, say Jones, the less accurate any beliefs of the form 'O is the thing, whatever it may be, that is p' are required to be for Jones to have a belief about O. The less clear are the causal links, then the more accurate must be beliefs of the form 'O is the thing, whatever it may be, that is p', if Jones is to be able to believe something or say something which is in any sense about O. If, for instance, it would be true to report Jones de dicto as believing that a certain house is on fire, then, if it is clear that Jones is looking at a barn, not a house, and it is the barn that is causing his belief, then it may be right to report Jones de re as believing that the barn is on fire; Jones belief would be of, about the barn in the strongest sense. But there are, of course, limits to this latitude. If, for instance, it would be true to report Jones de dicto as believing that an alien space ship was on fire, then, even if it were clear that it was the burning barn that was causing Jones belief, it would hardly be correct to report Jones de re as believing

that the barn was on fire; Jones belief this time would not be of, or about the barn.

Generalising from the last paragraph to Theistic beliefs and utterances, we can say the following. Suppose, as we have before, that Jones believes that God is looking after him, or that Jones says: 'God is looking after me'. Jones associates with God the following beliefs - that he is whoever it is that is p, q, r, etc. Or Jones' community in which the word 'God' has currency associate with that name the beliefs that God is whoever it is that is p, q, r, etc. Then, even if many of these beliefs are not accurate, or even false, then, so long as the appropriate causal links obtain between God and Jones and/ or between God and the speech community, and so long as Jones and/or the speech community has some degree, even if quite small, of accurate belief that God is whoever is the p...then Jones can both believe and say things about or of an epistemologically transcendent God in the strongest sense of 'about' or 'of'.

I will not attempt to say much about the nature of the 'appropriate causal link' between believer, utterer, or speech community and God. Causal theorists in general have not found it easy to provide comprehensive accounts of so-called non-deviant causal chains in their characterisations of perception, action, and so on. I see no intrinsic reason, however, why such an account should prove especially more difficult in the present case compared to others. I merely indicate forms of causal linkage that are at least *prima facie* plausible candidates.

It seems possible that God causes beliefs in CRB's through ordinary perceptions they have of the physical universe. They would encounter God 'in virtue of' encountering objects, patterns of events, or whatever, - items which are causally related to God in an appropriate way. I follow Frank Jackson in his discussion of the 'in virtue of' relation³². A car is red in virtue of the body of the car being red. A car touches the kerb in virtue of some part of the car touching the kerb. Jackson lives in

Australia in virtue of living in Melbourne. I see the table in virtue of seeing its top. I hear the aeroplane in virtue of hearing a thunderous sound. I sense the earthquake in virtue of sensing the vibration in my chair. Jones (perhaps) meets/encounters God in virtue of seeing a beautiful sunset; in virtue of having a loving relationship with a friend, etc.

It also seems possible that God causes beliefs of the kind in question through the having by CRB's of special experiences, of the type reported by mystics; or that God causes the beliefs 'directly' - that is to say, in the present context, that CRB's acquire the beliefs without having any kind of sensory experience, and God enters into the causal explanation of the acquisition of these beliefs 'in the appropriate way'. And there are further possibilities still; but I cannot explore them thoroughly here.

4. KNOWING WHO GOD IS

Even someone who had followed sympathetically the whole of the argument of this chapter so far might feel uneasy, and try to express the uneasiness as follows. You have said how Jones beliefs or assertions could, at least in principle, be of or about an epistemologically transcendent being, even where Jones beliefs as regards that being are for the most part inaccurate or false. But you have said little of matters from Jones point of view. Can, for instance, Jones know who God is if he is epistemologically transcendent, and, if so, how? My response to this question, which constitutes this, the final section of the present chapter, will turn out in the end to cover little new ground - the main points will turn out already to have been made in the earlier examination of 'about' and 'of'. But some study of the notion of 'knowing who' should serve to advance matters a little further. I acknowledge much help from a paper entitled 'Knowing Who' by Steven Boer and William Lycan³³. Their paper is long and complex; I draw upon their insights by providing my own simplified versions of their views where appropriate.

We may distinguish initially between two kinds of situations, type (a)

and type (b) in which a person, say Jones, knows/does not know who someone is.

Type (a): I first describe the paradigm cases, and then elaborate to take in less central cases. Jones has a person P in sight. If P is in a group, then Jones can pick him out from his fellows. Jones may say, pointing at P: 'I know who P is'. 'P' would be a name. Jones says: 'I know who Smith is' - (pointing at Smith). 'He's the son of the Archbishop'. Jones is not compelled to use a name - he might instead employ a demonstrative: 'I know who that man is (pointing). He's the son of the Archbishop'. Or, for instance, Jones hears two men talking in the next room. Again, he can say: 'I know who Smith is' (meaning the one with the high-pitched voice that both he and his friend can hear). 'He's the son of the Archbishop'. Or: 'I know who that man is - the one with the high-pitched voice. He's the son of the Archbishop'. The name or demonstrative picks out someone currently being perceived.

Moving now to more indirect forms of (a). Jones sees P in a crowd, and could have picked him out - the crowd was close enough for Jones to see each individual clearly, and so on. We bracket consideration of whether Jones knows who P is - whether, that is to say, he could have pointed to P and said, for instance, correctly - 'I know who P is. He's the son of the Archbishop'. Instead, we focus on a conversation which takes place later. Jones still has a clear memory of the people he saw, and can describe them individually. He outlines P's appearance to Smith, and inquires: 'Do you know who that was?' Suppose that Smith does know - i.e. knows something of the kind 'That must have been the son of the Archbishop'. Then Smith knows who P is in an essentially similar fashion to the way in which Jones knows, if he knows at all, in the paradigm case initially described. Smith knows who that man is, where 'that man' rigidly designates the individual described by Jones, and there is a causal link of the right kind between the man, and Smith's utterance of the expression 'That man' which goes

through Jones via his memory.

Jones might of course inadvertently provide a description of someone whom he did see and could have picked out, but who was not the individual he intended to tell Smith about - an individual he also saw. Suppose it is purely fortuitous that the description Jones uses fits the individual K that he did not intend to talk about. Then, surely, Smith cannot know who K is - since Jones will not have spoken in the strongest sense of or about K - a conclusion of course argued for in this chapter. Suppose on the other hand that K is in part causally responsible for Jones' use of the description he produced, despite the fact that Jones himself did not intend to speak of K. Then, perhaps, Jones may still know who that is in a fashion resembling our type (a) paradigm; only, however, if it is plausible to claim that Jones spoke of (in the strongest sense) K, despite his failure to intend to do so.

These remarks are, of course, more in the way of elementary appeals for a view of reference which includes a causal element. We need to note that the kind of causal effect exerted by individuals on those who claim correctly to know who they are may be of a great variety of kinds; other kinds of causal influence still will not entitle anyone to know who the individuals are. The chain of causes from an individual to someone who knows who that individual is could be very extended and indirect. Jones and Smith in the twentieth century could wonder who it was that Aristotle saw - if we imagine that Aristotle saw someone one particular January morning in Greece, and recorded this fact. If Jones knows who Aristotle saw, this could still be, I would maintain essentially a case of knowing who resembling the type (a) paradigm.

Where Jones does know who P is in an (a) type situation, he will know something of the form 'P is the q', where 'the q' is some description or other. For instance, Jones might know who P is if he can say, correctly, 'That man is the Town Clerk'. 'That man is the owner of the fleet of taxis'

and so on. Boer and Lycan argue that if Jones knows that P is NN, where 'NN' is a proper name, then, ultimately this will not amount to Jones knowing who P is unless Jones knows who NN is. For if Jones did not know who P was, and was told that P was NN, this would only help Jones if Jones already knew who NN was. Whereas, if Jones did not know who P was, and was told that P was the q, this might well be sufficient; Jones need not know who the q is in some further sense.

The idea is that something of the form 'P is the q' will ultimately silence and satisfy a questioner who wants to know who P is, whereas an answer of the form 'p is NN' is essentially incomplete. Similarly, if Jones knows that P is x where x involves demonstrative reference to something being perceived, or to something which was perceived, x being something like 'the man I saw last week down by the river', 'the man Jane heard whistling at 2 o'clock this morning', there is again a sense in which this does not help Jones to know who P is unless he already knows, for instance who the man he saw last week down by the river is - that he is the son of the Archbishop, or whatever. Obviously, in some contexts, knowing that P is the man seen down by the river last week could well be said to be knowing who that man is; I am not trying to restrict the uses of 'knowing who', but to discuss the characteristics in particular of type (a) knowing who. The essential incompleteness of answers of the form 'P is x' also shows up as follows: if Jones does not know who P is, where P is in clear view of him, it will not help Jones to know that P is the man seen down by the river last week unless Jones already has a satisfactory answer to the question: 'Who was the man you saw down by the river last week'?

The point not yet touched on is what values 'q' can take in answers of the form 'P is the q'. If Jones does not know who P is, an answer like 'He's the man with 10,000 hairs on his head' is unlikely to be satisfactory. I discuss this shortly.

I turn now to the second kind of situation (b) in which Jones knows

(does not know) who the *q* is, where 'the *q*' is some description. In a paradigm case, Jones is confronted with a group of people. He wants to know who the son of the Archbishop is - i.e. he wants to know which of that group is the son of the Archbishop. If he eventually comes to know, in this situation, who the son of the Archbishop is, he will be able to point perhaps to a certain person and say 'I know who the son of the Archbishop is. That man is the son of the Archbishop'. Jones may have a name, rather than a description in mind - perhaps he wants to know who Smith is - i.e. he wants to know which one of them is Smith. This is not essentially different from the case where he wants to know who it is that answers to a given description, since he will hardly wish to know who Smith is unless he associates with 'Smith' at least one description.

We can describe more indirect cases of knowing who in (b) type situations also. For instance, Jones might have Smith describe to him occasions on which Smith saw various people, and Jones might wonder who was the son of the Archbishop. He might wonder, in other words, which of the people that Smith saw was the son of the Archbishop. He might eventually come to know that a certain individual, on the far left of the group of people that Smith saw down by the river last week was the son of the Archbishop. Boer and Lycan suggest that the most frequent answer to the question 'Who is the *q*' in (b) type situations introduce a name. 'Who is the Archbishop's son?' 'Jones'. 'Who is the owner of the fleet of taxis?' 'Snodgrass'. But, they claim, though it is the most frequent answer it is essentially incomplete, relying as it does on people already knowing who Jones or Snodgrass are (for instance) in an (a) type situation as described above. People will need to know at least one thing of the form 'Jones is the *p*', or 'Snodgrass is the *r*'.

Clearly, the situations envisaged as (b) types, where the answer to 'Who is the *q*?' involves pointing someone out will be relatively few in number. If we accept that the most frequent answers to questions of the

form 'Who is the q'? introduce names, which in turn require knowing who in an (a) type situation, it is upon the latter that we should concentrate. Before doing so, I will mention very briefly a third type of situation that Boer and Lycan discuss where the 'knowing who' locution appears; I can know who the f is if I know that the f is the g, where 'the f' and 'the g' are both descriptions. Jones knows who the highest paid official of Puddletown is. He knows that the highest paid official of Puddletown is the town clerk. Jones knows that the heir to the throne is the Monarch's eldest son, etc. These are essentially general, and need not be about existing individuals at all.

It is possible, however, as Boer and Lycan point out, that, say 'the heir to the throne' could be taken to have wide scope;³⁴ in which case Jones knowledge would be as follows: concerning the individual who is in fact the heir to the throne; Jones knows that he is the Monarch's eldest son. Such knowledge might well be a species of (a) type knowing who. It need not be (a) type knowing who, all the same. Remember Dr. Jones, who might well have had the following item of knowledge: the tallest man in the world has a weak heart - one version of which would reasonably be expressed as: concerning the individual who is in fact the tallest man in the world - Dr. Jones knows he has a weak heart. But the absence of any causal link between Lanky and Dr. Jones in this example means that it cannot be (a) type knowing who.

I would argue that it is necessary for the Theist to be able to know at least in principle, who God is in an (a) type situation. We need to see why this is so. For it might be thought that we could know who P is in a satisfactory enough way by knowing that P answers to a certain set of descriptions. And if we could bracket off considerations relating to God's mystery, which I argued at the beginning of this chapter militated against the descriptivist-intentional account of 'about' and 'of' in the context of belief and discourse about God, it might be thought that we could

know who God is by knowing that he answers to a certain set of descriptions.

I can know who Othello is in the fashion presently being envisaged, certainly. But this is not a happy parallel. Could we not know who Moses was (is) in this way too? For the purpose of much discourse about Moses, it does not matter whether he is thought of as someone who really existed, or instead as some fictional character out of the bible. So, up to a point, we can know who Moses is in a similar fashion to the way in which we know who Othello is.

But once we are concerned in our discourse to talk about Moses as someone who really existed, things change. It must be possible for someone to know who Moses was in an (a) type situation when Moses was alive. In the paradigm case, then would have had him in view. Pointing to him, they would have been able to say, correctly, 'He is the q' or 'He is the r'. Though cases deviating appreciably from this paradigm may be envisaged. For instance, someone could know who P was in an (a) type situation even where no one ever knew that that man - i.e. someone they could see or hear, or even, more weakly, remember seeing or hearing - was the so and so. Imagine that P was a hermit - his mother alone and unconscious during his birth on a desert island, dying immediately after giving birth to him. P lives his life in solitude on the island. After his death, when his corpse has been devoured by wild animals, passing archeologists discover evidence that someone lived in a cave on the island. They might correctly be said to know who P was in an (a) type situation if they said 'That man is the one who carved the pictures of animals in the stones at the top of the hill'. It would be true that their demonstrative 'that man' would not be causally involved in any direct fashion with the hermit P himself. But it is conceivable that there could be a more oblique causal involvement via the evidence left in the cave. So the demonstrative expression 'that man' could be used to designate that particular man - the hermit - even though they did not have perceptions caused by the bodily presence of the hermit -

even though they were not in contact, however indirectly, with anyone else who had such perceptions.

The objector might acknowledge these points for the example of Moses, etc. But he still might object to the requirement of somekind of causal contact between God and Theists if they are to know who he is. For, the objector might contend, God is an extraordinary being with extraordinary properties. The properties of omnipotence, and of unsurpassability itself could not, in principle be possessed by more than one being. Thus we have no possibility of the kind frequently invoked by causal theorists, that the 'wrong' individual fits the properties that a believer believes something to have, thus turning out on the descriptivist-intentional account to be the individual of whom or about whom the believer has his belief, even though there isn't the faintest causal contact between the individual in question and the believer.

Yet if this were the best way of knowing who God is - if the possibility of knowing who God is in an (a) type situation were unavailable, the case of God would resemble the case of the fictional Othello, or the case of an abstract object. Whilst God is, of course set apart from all other existents, and hence the unavailability of an (a) type knowing who might not be thought to be to his philosophical discredit, it is a point that should give us pause to think. There is a logical or categorial difference between e.g. fictional objects and real objects, or between abstract objects and real objects. The characterisation of 'categorial difference' is an abstruse matter. Even without this, however, it seems obvious to me that God should be more like tables, chairs, human persons, than like fictional objects and abstract objects. Yet in this crucial area of 'knowing who', God, according to our objector, resembles fictional objects and abstract objects rather than the 'real objects' of the universe. This alleged feature of God seems to me to give him the wrong ontological status. To retain the 'concrete reality' of God, however

different this may be from all other particulars, we must insist on the possibility of knowing who God is in an (a) type situation.

When the Theist knows who God is in an (a) type situation, he knows something of the form 'God is p', where p is some property. But our study of transcendence suggests that there may be difficulties about this. If the Theist could get by so long as there was one value for p, and it did not matter much what this was, all would be well. However, maybe more than one value is required, and maybe these values should involve crucial properties such as divine goodness. Yet CRB's are limited in respect of their knowledge and understanding of these properties.

I now argue that this difficulty is not insurmountable. Boer and Lycan put forward the view that knowing who someone is always includes a reference to a purpose - knowing who someone is for such and such a purpose. '...the question 'who is'? often leaves us in doubt as to what to say by way of reply. If our background knowledge about the questioner and the context of utterance provides no strong clues as to his purpose in asking, we will inquire 'Why do you want to know?'³⁵

If the purpose is locating P, then knowing he is the fourth son of the Duke of Puddletown is useless, whilst knowing that he is the man in the kitchen peeling potatoes may do very well. If the purpose was - to ascertain P's family connections - whether he is of common stock, or whether he is of the 'quality', then 'He is the fourth son of the Duke of Puddletown' may be fine.

For what purposes does the Theist require to know who God is? Certainly not to 'locate' him, if God is thought of as omnipresent. The broad purposes of the Theist seem to be worship and prayer. What is it, then, to know who God is for the purpose of worship and prayer? It might be thought that knowing just one or two items of the form 'God is p' would not be sufficient; that a CRB, to know who God is for the purposes in question would have to know all that must be true of God if he is to be an

unsurpassable being. And since this is impossible, because an unsurpassable being must be mysterious, CRB's could not know who God is for the purpose of worship, and hence could not worship.

This line of thought may be countered as follows: in the last section of Chapter 2 I concluded, it is true, that the worshipper must think of the object of his worship as unsurpassable. Suppose, then, that to know who God is requires the worshipper to know that he is unsurpassable. Whilst this would mean that the worshipper must know that the object of his worship has a certain nature in virtue of which he is unsurpassable, it does not follow that the worshipper is required to have detailed knowledge of all the aspects of that nature. Perhaps the CRB could acquire the belief that God is unsurpassable, with some appropriate causal link between God and that CRB, in a way which did not involve the CRB in acquiring true and accurate beliefs about the entire divine nature and 'concluding' that the object of his worship, in virtue of such a nature was unsurpassable. I do not think, then, that there is any good reason to think that there is a sense of 'knowing who' from which a CRB is barred when confronted with the case of a mysterious God, a limitation which would prevent worship. In the following chapter, however, I will need to consider the difficulties attached to answering the distinct question - what is it to know who God is for the purpose of joint worship - and, more generally, what is it to know who God is for the purpose of being able to think of others as worshipping the same God as I am.

I have argued in this chapter that if a causal element is built into the account given of the expressions 'about' and 'of' in the context of utterances and beliefs of or about God, then no intractable philosophical problems are posed by God's epistemological transcendence. I have also argued that though there may be senses in which Theists do not "know who God is", if, for instance, knowing who is understood as knowing all about someone, there is no good reason to think that Theists cannot "know who God is" for the

purposes of worshipping him and praying to him, even if he is epistemologically transcendent.

NOTES

- 1 see G. Evans, 'The Causal Theory of Names', p193-4 in 'Naming, Necessity and Natural Kinds', ed S. P. Schwartz, Cornell University Press 1977
- 2 J. Searle, 'Speech Acts', p86 Cambridge University Press 1969
- 3 op cit p168 ff
- 4 Kripke discusses the 'weighting' of properties p64-5 and p82 ff of 'Naming and Necessity', 2nd edition, Blackwell 1980
- 5 Kripke op cit. and 'Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference' in Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language' Eds. P. A. French, T. E. Uehling and H. K. Wettstein, University of Minnesota Press 1979 (A)
D. Kaplan 'Quantifying in' reprinted in 'Reference and Modality' Ed. L. Linsky, p112-144 Oxford University Press 1971
K. Donnellan, 'Reference and Definite Description', Philosophical Review 75 (1966) 281-304
'Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions' Synthese 1970 p335-358
'Speaking of Nothing', Philosophical Review, 1974 p3-32
'Speaker Reference, Descriptions, and Anaphora' p28-44 in (A)
'The Contingent a priori and Rigid Designators' p44-60 in (A)
- 6 'Word and Object' p145 ff
- 7 A point made by Searle when discussing de dicto and de re belief, p157 ff in 'Expression and Meaning', Cambridge University Press 1980
- 8 B. Loar, 'Propositional Attitudes', Philosophical Review 1972
- 9 P. F. Strawson 'Belief, Reference and Quantification', Monist 1979
- 10 I use Strawson's example and explain alternative non-opaque truth conditions with considerable help from his p158 op cit. However, I have excluded his term 'direct reference' - my own versions may not be equivalent, and must be judged on their own merits
- 11 'the liberal candidate' - context is supposed to ensure the unique applicability of this expression. See Strawson op cit p144
- 12 'Propositional Attitudes de dicto and de re' p883 Journal of Philosophy 1970
- 13 Kaplan 'Quantifying in' op cit p127
- 14 op cit p126 ff
- 15 Schiffer makes this point in 'Naming and Knowing, p69 in (A)
- 16 op cit p890
- 17 'The Contingent a priori and Rigid Designators' p56-7 in (A)
- 18 'Towards a Causal Theory of Linguistic Representation' p85 in (A)
- 19 ibid
- 20 Suggested to me by Dr. B. Smart
- 21 With some adaptation, this paragraph owes much to Kripke's 'Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference' p8 in (A)
- 22 I adapt this for my purpose from 'Singular Terms' p196 Journal of Philosophy 1974
- 23 'Naming and Necessity' p49
- 24 'Expression and Meaning' p144 ff
- 25 B. Loar 'The Semantics of Singular Terms', Philosophical Studies 30 (1976) 353-377
- 26 op cit p364
- 27 'Naming and Knowing' in (A)
- 28 'Investigations' p217 Blackwell 1958
- 29 'On the sense and reference of a proper name' p154 reprinted in 'Reference, Truth and Reality', ed M. Platts 1980

- 30 ibid p162
- 31 ibid p150
- 32 'Perception' p15 ff Cambridge University Press 1977
- 33 'Philosophical Studies' 1975
- 34 They don't speak of 'scope' but talk of descriptions occurring
 'referentially' (Donnellan) which they identify with rigid
 designation - a risky move which I would rather avoid.
- 35 op cit p328

CHAPTER SIX
TRANSCENDENCE AND BELIEF

1. INTRODUCTION

I suggested in Chapter 3 that an unsurpassable being would to some extent be beyond the powers of CRB's to describe him. In the present chapter, one of my aims is to defend the philosophical respectability of CRB beliefs concerning such ineffable aspects of God - that is, to defend and account for the possibility of beliefs which cannot be expressed in language. Let me first explain why I think that this is important for the Theist.

If a community of Theists were restricted to the possession of beliefs about God which were in principle expressible in a language mastery of which CRB's were capable, such beliefs might well be insufficient to enable CRB's to view each other as worshipping, or even discussing, the same being. A parallel situation might be two hunters, H1 and H2 discussing lions: H1 discusses lion l1, and H2 discusses lion l2. It might in fact be true that both H1 and H2 have beliefs of or about a certain lion Leo, and that both H1 and H2 are speaking of, or about, that certain lion Leo, where 'of' and 'about' are occurring in their strongest sense, as discussed in the last chapter. There would be causal links of an appropriate character between Leo and H1, and between Leo and H2, etc. But it may well be thought that for H1 to regard H2 as discussing, and as having beliefs concerning the same lion as he is discussing and has beliefs concerning, H1 must see H2 as having a number of beliefs of the form 'The lion in question is whatever it is that is p, whatever it is that is q', etc. - beliefs which H1 himself has. H2 must see H1 in similar fashion. Without a sufficient number of shared lion beliefs, it may be argued, H1 and H2 might never be able to see each other as thinking and speaking of the same lion, even if they are in fact doing so.

An objection to this line of argument is the following. It could be contended that just one shared belief of the form 'The lion is whatever it is that is p' would do, so long as p was selected from a certain group of

properties. Examples from this group would be: '- is whatever it is that I saw by the river at midday yesterday'; '- is whatever it is that I heard devouring a carcass in the thicket at 10 o'clock this morning', etc. An important feature of this group of properties is that they have causal elements built into them, if we accept a causal theory of perception. And given this, it might be argued, should H1 and H2 share just one of these beliefs, they could each feel justifiably sure that the other was thinking of and speaking of the same lion, in the strongest senses of 'about' and 'of'. The objection might go on to concede that without a shared belief from this special group, H1 and H2 would need to share a reasonable number of beliefs of the form 'The lion is whatever it is that is p'.

Unfortunately, even if this would do in the case of the hunters and the lion, it will not do for a community of Theists. For apparently analogous properties of God to '- is whatever it was that I saw by the river yesterday', though (perhaps) available, do not pull off the same trick. Suppose that Theist A believes that the being he is discussing is 'Whatever it was that I encountered yesterday while watching the beautiful sunset', and takes it that the 'encounter' involves some kind of causal influence of the object of his encounter on his, Theist A's beliefs. Suppose that Theist B believes the same kind of thing, and that each are aware of the other's belief. Now the obvious difference between this and the lion case is that the lion property could only be possessed by one lion, and each hunter will know this. But there is nothing about '- is whatever it is that I encountered yesterday while watching the beautiful sunset', which guarantees that only one being possesses such a property - and I cannot see that either Theist could suppose otherwise.

It might well be that both Theists encounter the one and only unsurpassable being, in some sense of 'encounter' whilst watching the sunset, that God caused them to have certain beliefs, and that both now are in the general state of being able to have beliefs and to make statements of, or

about God in the strongest senses of 'about' and 'of'. But taken alone, their belief that God is whatever being it was that they encountered yesterday does not justify either of them in thinking that the other is thinking of speaking of the same being.

The suggestion could be made at this point that Theist A might believe that the being about whom he is talking is - both whoever he encountered yesterday whilst looking at the sunset, and is omnipotent. Theist B might have a similar belief. If so, the suggestion might continue, it would be perfectly reasonable for A to take B as having beliefs about and making statements about the very same being about whom A is making statements and having beliefs. It would also be reasonable for B to make the same move vis a vis A. For (we will continue to assume) it is logically impossible for two omnipotent beings to exist at one and the same time - and we may impute an understanding of this point to both A and B. Hence, the present suggestion might conclude, this is as far as we now need to proceed with the question of what beliefs are required for A and B to see each other as worshipping one and the same God. We need not, for instance, worry about whether A and B have to share, knowingly, beliefs that they do not fully understand or beliefs that they are unable to express, and so on.

Now in response to this suggestion, I would agree that if A is able to see B as believing that the being about whom he is talking (etc) is both whoever it was that he encountered yesterday whilst gazing at the sunset, and whoever it is that is omnipotent, then, if A has similar beliefs about a certain being, it is very reasonable for A to see B as talking (say) about that same certain being. And vice versa. But I would want to contend that A cannot properly interpret B as believing that the being he encountered on the previous day (etc) is whoever it is that is omnipotent in isolation. Theist A would also need to be able appropriately and intelligibly, to see B as having a number of other beliefs about the being in question as well. I would want to claim that we cannot be wholly precise about the required

extent of these further beliefs, and hence we do after all need to go on and worry about whether Theists are going to have to have beliefs which they cannot wholly understand, or beliefs which they are in principle unable to express. Let me explain.

We must think of the matter from, say A's point of view. A tries to attribute to B beliefs according to some 'principle of humanity'. Very probably on such a principle, A will try to attribute to B beliefs for which B apparently thinks he has some grounds or justification; he will interpret B as having beliefs also which apparently cohere with B's other beliefs - at least for the most part. Now in what circumstances would it be appropriate and intelligible for A to interpret B as believing that B's encountered object is omnipotent? It is easy to imagine circumstances in which A can appropriately interpret B as having beliefs that the object of his encounter is very powerful indeed. Such circumstances might be, for example, circumstances in which he can appropriately interpret B as believing that his encounter had such and such experienced features.

We need not, I think, engage in discussion of the precise definition of omnipotence; let us assume that there is a degree of power that may be possessed by a being that could not be exceeded; and that an unsurpassable being would possess this, or as much of it as would be compatible with the rest of his nature. Omnipotence in this sense would (of course) be a much more extreme attribute than the attribute of being very powerful.

It is very difficult to see what experienced features of an encounter, taken alone, would lead B. to believe with any justification that the object of his encounter was omnipotent, and not just very powerful indeed. So A could not really make any sensible imputation to B of the belief that B's encountered object was omnipotent and not just very powerful indeed, if A were relying solely on what B apparently got from his encounter. And, anticipating argument to come, it would scarcely be enough either; should A grasp that B is disposed to say 'God is omnipotent' or even that B is

disposed to 'assent inwardly' to the proposition that God is omnipotent, for A to interpret B appropriately as believing that the object of his encounter (whom he calls God) is omnipotent. Surely A must suppose B to have other beliefs in addition about the object of his encounter, for A appropriately to interpret B as having the belief that his encountered object is omnipotent and not just very powerful indeed. I will spend a little time developing this point.

Believing that the object of his encounter is omnipotent is probably, for B, believing roughly that the object of his encounter has as much power as it is possible to have. It is believing that the encountered object has a degree of power that is unsurpassable. (Most theists, and we will assume that A and B are part of this majority, will not have in mind a good philosophical account of omnipotence when they believe that the object of their worship is omnipotent).

What are the circumstances, then, in which A may appropriately interpret B's words and actions as expressions of a belief in the omnipotence of his encountered object, as opposed to the expression of a belief that his encountered object is very powerful indeed? It seems to me that A needs in addition a justification for interpreting B as having a general belief in the unsurpassability of his encountered object. If B has such a general belief, then A can see this belief of B as influencing what belief B has about the degree of power possessed by his encountered object. But of course, we need also to consider the nature of the circumstances in which it is appropriate for A to interpret B as having this general unsurpassability belief. Again anticipating to some extent argument to come later it would scarcely be enough should A grasp that B is disposed to say 'God is unsurpassable', or even inwardly to assent to the proposition that God is unsurpassable. A needs in fact to see B as having a number of beliefs about the nature of his encountered/worshipped object, from which B can see himself as 'moving' with some justification to the belief that the object

is unsurpassable. B will have a sort of bi-partite belief structure in his mind, the elements of which provide each other with mutual support. (Hopefully the whole edifice has in the end independent support also). B's belief about the nature of his encountered/worshipped object prompts him to believe that the object is unsurpassable. But at the same time the process is also working the other way. B's general belief in the unsurpassability of his encountered/worshipped object influences some of the detailed beliefs he has about the object's intrinsic nature.

I do not think that we can lay down just how comprehensive must be the corpus of belief that A sees B as having, before A can see B as having a fully fledged belief that the object of B's worship is unsurpassable. A would probably take the view that unlimited comprehensiveness is ruled out by God's transcendence. The point is, however, that unsurpassability stems in part from aspects of God which cannot be captured in language. Though we cannot pronounce conclusively on the matter, saying that if A is precluded from seeing B as having beliefs concerning those ineffable aspects of God, then A cannot see B as believing that the object of B's worship is unsurpassable, it surely would be a disturbing result for the Theist if it could be shown a priori that any attempt to interpret a fellow theist as having an inexpressible belief would be doomed to failure. If we could achieve some grasp of just how it might be that A could see B as having in expressible beliefs about God, this would be, at the very least, to do something towards defending the possibility that A regard B as worshipping the same God as A, even if that God is epistemologically transcendent.

For Theists to be able to regard each other, then, as worshipping the same God, they must consciously share a substantial number of beliefs about his nature. It follows that each Theist must have a reasonable number of beliefs about the divine nature to share at all - even if these beliefs cannot cover in a comprehensive fashion all aspects of the divine nature. It would not be possible to restrict the area of the divine nature covered

by such CRB beliefs to that which is entirely within the understanding capacities of CRB's for two reasons. Firstly, because, as we have seen we cannot draw clear lines between aspects of the divine nature which are comprehensible and aspects which are incomprehensible. Secondly, because a central aspect of God, namely his goodness, about which CRB's surely will have some kind of beliefs, does not lie wholly within the compass of CRB understanding, as we saw in Chapter 3. The second task of this chapter, then, will be to examine how far God's incomprehensibility precludes belief. I hope to show that at least some of the barriers we have discovered to understanding the divine nature are not barriers in quite the same way to the having of beliefs about those aspects of the divine nature.

Thus the work of this chapter takes the following form. In sections 2 and 3 I embark upon a general discussion of the concept of belief, out of which I develop a loose dispositional account of belief, which I try to show is compatible with the existence of inexpressible beliefs. In section 4 I distinguish between different kinds of incomprehensibility, arguing that whilst some kinds do preclude belief as I understand it, others do not, and that not all the understanding failures to which the Theist is destined fall into the former category.

2. THE NATURE OF BELIEF

Consider 'Jones believes that p'. Let us exclude from discussion any of the possible truth conditions for this sentence which are 'transparent', 'de re', or whatever, taking in features of the world distinct from Jones in addition to something about Jones himself. It is then natural to think that there is also a truth condition for this sentence which purely concerns itself with Jones; that this sentence may be true just when Jones is in a certain kind of state, a state which disappears when Jones no longer believes that p. It is equally natural to think of this state as something of which Jones can, at least in principle, be aware. Traditionally, such a belief report would be characterised as reporting Jones attitude to a proposition. The

implication is that when Jones has an attitude, he is in a certain state. When his attitude changes, he undergoes a change of state. (I will follow Armstrong's usage of the expression 'state' to mean - the possession of a property for a certain length of time - the property being non-relational and such that 'there is some classification of the object relative to which the state is an accidental or changeable feature of the object'¹).

Now if Jones has an attitude to a proposition - or indeed any kind of attitude at all, it must surely be possible in principle for him to be introspectively aware that he has this attitude. If not, we could scarcely understand what it would mean to attribute an attitude to him. (If I am barred from introspective access to my unconscious attitude A, this arises from the contingent nature of my psyche. I would contend that I am not barred in principle from access to A. An alternative way of looking at this is to say that 'X has an unconscious attitude A' only speaks in a certain way of behaviour patterns to be expected from X, and that this represents a considerable divergence, say on the part of the Freudian, from the orthodox meaning of 'attitude').

For the Theist who espouses the possibility of inexpressible beliefs, this 'natural' view of belief presents problems. For on the 'natural' view of belief we are characterising, when Jones has an inexpressible belief, he must still have a certain attitude to a certain proposition, which will involve him in being in a certain type of state. On the natural view, Jones ought in principle to be able to be introspectively aware of this state - of his having the said attitude to the said proposition. But some account of in what introspective awareness would consist, were it to occur, is required. Could Jones 'have the proposition in mind', or 'entertain the proposition'? It might, for example be suggested that he could somehow employ private mental imagery - visual or auditory imagery, for example, to 'represent' the proposition in his mind. But if he could in some such way employ imagery to 'represent' the proposition in his mind, when enjoying

introspective access to his having the appropriate attitude to the proposition, it is very difficult to understand how it could be that, at the same time he might be unable in principle to employ verbal representation in any CRB language mastery of which, in principle he is capable, whether 'mentally' or orally. In sum, the point is this. If Jones can have introspective access to his having an attitude to a proposition, there must at least in principle be some way in which he could 'represent' that proposition in his mind. But if he could in principle so 'represent' the proposition, it is very difficult to see how at the same time that proposition could be inexpressible in principle in any CRB language.

Accordingly, in this section, I want to argue against the 'natural' view of belief characterised above. In brief, the view says that when Jones believes that *p*, he has an attitude to a specific proposition - he has a belief with a certain specific content; the having of this attitude is his being in a certain type of state; he in principle can be introspectively aware that he is in that type of state. If Jones believes that *p*, and Brown believes that *p*, then their beliefs on this view have the same content; however much they may differ from each other in other ways, they will at least resemble each other in both being in a certain kind of state. If Jones believes that *p* at *t*, and later, at *t* + 1 also believes that *p*, then whatever else has changed, he is in a certain type of state at *t* + 1 which is the same type of state that he was in at *t*.

I argue first against the claim that Jones believing that *p* can be identified with Jones being in a certain state of type @. (I will refer to this claim as realism about specific belief ascriptions). I try to expose the weakness of the undoubted psychological motivation that exists for making such an identification. Secondly, I argue against the view that beliefs have a specific content - a view more than suggested by the presence of the word 'proposition' and a view which is closely associated with realism about specific belief ascriptions. If the 'natural' view of belief can be

shown to be untenable, then the way is open for consideration of an alternative view which would not preclude the having of inexpressible beliefs.

Before objecting to realism about belief ascriptions, we need to understand more clearly what it is, and the motivation of those who adhere to it. I begin with an example which does not involve belief, whose realist character is pretty evident. 'X is cubical' is true, if it is true, of an object in virtue of a certain three-dimensional property of that object - in virtue of that object being in such and such a type of state - i.e. a state of being cubical. The essence of a realist conception of 'X is cubical' in the sense of 'realist' that I want to employ in this chapter, is as follows. That state of the object in virtue of which, say, 'X is cubical' is true, is at the same time that state of the object in virtue of which 'X is not cubical', is false. (The point of this should, I hope, become clear fairly soon).

I disagree with the view formerly held by Dummett,² that bivalence is a mark of realism. Strictly, my view is that bivalence may be a sufficient condition for realism, but is not a necessary condition. The reason for my disagreement that I want to mention here concerns the essential vagueness of some empirical predicates. Imagine a series of colour shades - a,b,c,d,e,f,g, etc., in which the shades next to each other are observationally indistinguishable, whilst the shades at a distance from each other are observationally distinguishable. Imagine also that the distance from a to g is sufficient for 'a is red' to be true, and for 'g is red' to be false. Then as realists we say that there is something about a in virtue of which 'a is red' is true, and there is something about g in virtue of which 'g is red' is false. But there will be shades in between - perhaps c and d of which it is neither true that they are red, nor false that they are red. If we tried, in a Fregean spirit, to tighten up the predicate ' - is red' so that, say, shades up to and

including d were red, whilst shades after that were not red, we would in fact be changing the sense of our present predicate. Furthermore, there are reasons for supposing that the tightening up manoeuvre could not, in principle succeed³. So we could be realist, for instance about colour predicates, without insisting that, of a given shade, it was either true that it was red, or false that it was red, etc. On a realist view, we may be able to say of a proposition attributing a given colour to a given shade that; it is false that the proposition is true, and false that it is false.

Let us now proceed to a realist characterisation of (N) 'Jones believes that p'. On the realist view, if (N) is true, then Jones is in a specific state of a certain type in virtue of which it is true, and in virtue of which 'Jones does not believe that p' is false. At a given time, if we ask whether or not Jones believes that p, an affirmative or a negative answer may, on this view, be objectively correct. If the affirmative answer is correct, this excludes the correctness of the negative answer, and vice versa. The realist about belief ascriptions might still concede that at a given time t, there might be no correct answer to the question: 'Does Jones believe that p'? This might be so because of an irremedial vagueness in the concept of 'believes that p'. It would then be false that the proposition that Jones believes that p was true, and false that the said proposition was false.

A non-realist characterisation of (N) simply denies the realist claim. At a given time t, it may in some fashion be 'appropriate' (this to be explained in the detailed working out of the non-realist theory) to say 'Jones believes that p'. But whatever this 'appropriateness' amounts to, it does not rule out the possibility that in principle, at least, it would be just as 'appropriate' for Jones or someone else, at that time t, to claim that Jones does not believe that p. A realist prejudice, which I shortly attempt to undermine, grounds our language about belief; in consequence we may well feel at this point that the non-realist account sketched here 'must' be wrong; that if it is 'appropriate' to say that

Jones believes that p at t , then anyone who denies this is straightforwardly contradicting the first assertion.

Why should we be realists about belief ascriptions? As I say, common idiom clearly indicates that we are. 'I used to believe in God but I no longer do so' suggests a persisting state of mine, which has now vanished. 'They discovered that Jones believed that his son was dead, though Jones himself claimed to believe that his son was still alive'. This suggests that 'Jones believes that his son is dead' is true in virtue of some state of Jones. 'Only Jones knows what he really believes' once more suggests that there is a state of Jones in virtue of which such and such belief ascriptions will be true; this time, the implication being that Jones is the best authority as to the nature of these states.

I want to suggest that our psychological motivation for realism about belief ascriptions rests on an analogy we assume to exist between belief ascriptions and pain ascriptions, or ascriptions of other mental states of which we are 'directly aware'. I will first explain this, and then argue that it is merely psychological - that the motivation it provides us is not soundly based.

Many belief ascription realists would, I think, be happy to compare 'Jones believes at p ' with 'Jones is in pain'. Now realism for pain ascriptions is surely correct. 'Jones is in pain' is true of virtue of some type of state of Jones; also in virtue of his being in that type of state, 'Jones is not in pain' is false'. We do not say that, no matter what type of state Jones is in, either he is in pain or he is not in pain, for there may be essentially vague borderlines between pains and itches, pains and tickles, etc. We feel especially certain of realism for pain ascriptions since we can know in our own case that we are in pain. If, at t , Jones is in pain, he can know 'directly' that he is. Our conviction that we have direct and certain access to states of being in pain, etc. means that we can almost literally feel the impossibility of the joint truth, of

'I am in pain' and 'I am not in pain'.

The 'directness' of our access here is important, and yet this expression is notoriously difficult. Accordingly, I will speak, instead of 'direct' and 'indirect', of 'mediate' and 'immediate' objects of awareness - conscious mental states such as being in pain falling, of course, into the 'immediate' category. I follow Frank Jackson in making the immediate/mediate distinction in terms of the 'in virtue of' relation. (See Chapter 5, section 3 for brief remarks on this). Jackson defines a mediate object of perception for a person S at time t as occurring if and only if S sees x at t, and there is a y such that ($x \neq y$) and S sees x in virtue of seeing y. And he explains that an immediate object of perception is one that is not mediate⁴. I shall assume that it is legitimate to generalise from Jackson's 'perception' to a more unspecific 'awareness' which can include perception.

Pain, then, on this definition, can be an immediate object of 'perception' or awareness; I need not be aware of my pain in virtue of being aware of something else. I could perhaps become aware that I was in pain in virtue of my being aware of something else; pain could in principle be on occasion a mediate object of awareness for me. But this would be exceptional. So Jones, say, can^{be} immediately aware of that in virtue of which 'Jones is in pain' is true; he can, as it were, inspect directly the condition that makes 'Jones is in pain' true, and 'Jones is not in pain' false. Belief realists may well think that having an attitude towards a proposition, this characterised as some kind of state of the individual believer to which he has introspective access and for the existence of which he is the best authority, is like being in pain. They think that Jones, say, can inspect directly the condition that makes 'Jones believes that p' true. It must be admitted that there is some sense in which we can, on occasion, know in our own case whether or not we believe that p. So if the realist account of belief ascriptions is wrong, then a non-realist account of 'knowing in my

own case that I believe that p' must be forthcoming. But first, we must examine the objections to the realist account.

I am going to argue that one difference between pain and belief is that I cannot be immediately aware that I believe that p; I can only be immediately aware that I believe that p. Whereas I can be immediately aware that I am in pain. Now I can, of course, be immediately aware of a conscious feeling of conviction that p, or of assent to the proposition that p. But it will be my contention that feelings of conviction, and the like, cannot be identified with beliefs, and hence, though I can of course become aware on occasion that I believe that p in virtue of being aware of feelings of conviction, etc. this awareness will not be an immediate awareness.

If believing that p were identical with having a conscious feeling of assent, then whilst asleep or unconscious, I would no longer believe that p, or alternatively, would believe that p in some other sense. This is a standard point; it would be highly implausible to claim either that I do not believe things when unconscious, or to claim that I do believe things when unconscious, but in some other sense than the sense in which I believe things when conscious.

Further, if believing that p were identical with having a conscious feeling of assent, then it would be impossible for me to have that feeling of assent, and yet not believe that p. But this is not in fact impossible at all. Consider the following. At time t I feel convinced that I believe that the gun in my hand is loaded; I have immediate introspective knowledge of my feelings of assent to the proposition in question. At a later time t+1 I find myself, as it were, though retaining my feelings of conviction, deciding to perform one or more actions which are such that, given the rest of my stock of beliefs at t+1, and my intentions at t+1, I would not perform those actions if I 'really' believed at t+1 that the gun in my hand was loaded. At t+1, I intend to shoot Jones, and I have the appropriate stock

of beliefs about the properties of guns, human susceptibilities to death from penetration by bullets, and that Jones is a few feet away from me. Given all this, if I 'really' believed at $t+1$ that the gun in my hand was loaded I would pull the trigger; yet at $t+1$ I take out ammunition and try to load the gun. A number of accounts of my situation over the period t to $t+1$ might be true; I will sketch two. On the first account, I never believed even at t that the gun in my hand was loaded; my subsequent actions 'show' this; on such an account, I might think that feelings of conviction that p were a good guide as to whether I had the belief that p , but that sometimes I had these feelings even when I did not in fact believe, and I might conclude that in this instance I made a mistake at time t about what I believed. On a second account, I could say that I have changed my mind since t ; at t I really did believe that the gun in my hand was loaded, but at $t+1$ I no longer believe that p . Surely, it is logically possible that either one or the other of these two accounts should be true. And it seems to follow from the mere logical possibility that the first account is correct, that a feeling of assent to p cannot be identical with a belief that p . This point may be reinforced by making remarks which echo Kripke on the necessity of the identity of Hesperus and Phosphorus⁵. If a certain state of mine, which is, as a matter of fact my believing that p , is identical with a certain conscious feeling of assent, then this is not a matter of contingent fact. It is not logically possible for this particular state to be distinct from my conscious feeling of assent. Yet the truth of the first account of the situation portrayed above would mean that my conscious feeling of assent would be distinct from that certain state of mine which was, as a matter of fact my believing that p .

Once we get away from the idea that I have immediate access to the truth condition of 'I believe that p ' in the same kind of way as I have access to the truth condition of 'I am in pain', one psychological motive for realism about belief ascriptions has gone. The ground is prepared for

examining some more definite objections to belief ascription realism, and I turn now to the first of these. There seem to be imaginable situations in which I can both believe that I believe that p , and believe that I do not believe that p , at one and the same time. On the realist view, both of my second-order beliefs cannot be true; at best one of them can be true. I want to suggest that both of my second order beliefs could at least be 'appropriate'.

Suppose that from t_1 to t_n I think I lack the belief that Smith is the murderer; perhaps I think this because, on each occasion within this period when I consciously think about whether Smith is the murderer, I feel that I do not assent to the proposition 'Smith is the murderer'. But suppose also that throughout the same period I feel frightened when I see Smith: I feel I do not want my daughter to marry him, even though before t I was quite happy about this. Ever since t , whenever I have seen Smith I have panicked and run away from him. So, when I dwell on my state of mind with respect to 'Smith is the murderer' I believe that I do not have the belief that Smith is the murderer. When, on the other hand, I focus on my other emotional feelings and on some of my actions, I believe that I do believe that Smith is the murderer. I could switch from one to the other within the period of time that we could call the specious present; to all intents and purposes it looks as though at one time I could both believe 'correctly' that I believe that p , and believe 'correctly' that I do not believe that p . The realist does not want this, since, according to him, when I believe that p , I am in a specific state of a certain type, in virtue of which 'I believe that p ' is true, and in virtue of which 'I do not believe that p ' is false.

The belief ascription realist has a possible account of the situation as sketched above. He could claim that the presence of both the feelings of conviction, and the conflicting fears, propensities to certain kinds of actions, and so forth, would be a sign or symptom that I neither believed

that Smith was the murderer, nor did not believe that Smith was the murderer. My underlying doxastic state, he might maintain, would be in a kind of no mans land - objective enough, but just not something in virtue of which 'I believe that Smith is a murderer' would be true, and 'I do not believe that Smith is a murderer' false.

All I want to do is to urge that it is at least possible that the non-realist account is the correct one. After all, were I to have the state of mind with respect to 'Smith is the murderer' alone, without the other feelings of fear, and propensities to such and such actions as described above, then I would have little hesitation in claiming that I did not have the belief that Smith is the murderer. Were I to fail to have such a state of mind with respect to 'Smith is the murderer', and were I also to have the fears and propensities to actions as described, I, or a third party, might reasonably ascribe to me the belief that Smith is the murderer. The fact that it seems at least intelligible that both of my second order beliefs about whether I believed that Smith was the murderer, might appropriately be ascribed to me at one and the same time counts against realism about specific belief ascriptions.

The second objection to the realist account of belief ascriptions is that it has difficulty in providing a satisfactory account of what the states of the person concerned are supposed to be. We have already seen that identification of the having of a specific belief with a conscious state of mind will not do; but of course there are other options open. There are 'realist' versions of dispositional theories of belief; I now want to spend a little time in making some critical observations about them. My main stalking horse will be Armstrong in his 'Belief, Truth and Knowledge'.

In a realist dispositional theory of belief, the having of the belief is identified with the state which underlies the disposition to behave in such and such ways. A comparison is made with the dispositional properties of substances, such as the solubility of salt in water. A given piece of

of salt may never get itself dissolved throughout its life history. Nevertheless, we still may say correctly that it is soluble, and the sense of our assertion may be regarded as being composed of two components. The first of the components consists of the truth of certain conditionals. The antecedents of these conditionals mention possible states of affairs involving the salt being immersed in water. The consequents state whether, and how fast, etc. the salt will dissolve in the water. The subject matter of the second of the components consists of the underlying state of the salt which explains the conditionals of the first component being true of the salt; this underlying state consists of occurrent non-relational properties of the salt - viz. certain aspects of its atomic, molecular and chemical composition.

The idea of underlying states is transferred by Armstrong to belief: the sense of a belief ascription can in the same way be regarded as being composed of two components. The first component is a set of conditionals. Presumably (and I now no longer follow Armstrong) in the antecedents are specified (say) Jones' other beliefs, his intentions, and the physical circumstances of his body. The consequents state what he will do. Now the nature of the second component - the underlying state of the person which explains why it is that the conditionals of the first component do indeed hold, seems to me to be problematic. Armstrong would wish to talk of neurophysiological states and properties, and possibly of events with such properties; a dualist might wish to talk of 'mental' states which were not conscious states. If we took Armstrong's line, however, we could scarcely speak of just one type of state explaining the set of conditionals involved in believing that p; there would surely be very many types of neurophysiological states which could explain a particular set of conditionals, even within one and the same person. And if we think of several people 'having the same belief' we would not necessarily expect, as neurophysiologists, to discover, on investigating their brains, that they

were all in the same type of state; on the flimsy evidence we have at present, it seems that there will be many types of state which could underly' say, believing that p. In short, a type-type state identity theory looks very implausible. If we were going for an identity theory, and attempting to express it in terms of states (this may well not be a good move- an event identity theory might be a better bet, but it is states and properties with which I am concerned in the present discussion), we would do better to attempt a token-token state identity theory. According to this, a particular token state of Jones - from say t to t+1 would be identified with a particular instance of his believing that p, which took place from t to t+1.

On such a view, we have moved a long way from the initially characterised realism about belief ascriptions; we have a multitude of token physical states, explaining the truth of conditionals concerning behaviour, in virtue of which 'Jones believes that p' can be true; also, given the variety of brain constitution, etc. from one individual to another, a token state of Jones when he believes that p need resemble not at all the token state of Smith when he believes that p. We would seem to have lost any way of accounting for what is common to Jones and Smith when they both believe that p, or what is common to Jones at t, and at t+1 should he both believe that p at t and at t+1.

All this, of course, is only if one insists on a psycho-physical identity theory, as Armstrong would seek to do. One might instead, insist that mental properties and states could not be identified with physical states in any fashion. A dualist might allow that the possession of mental properties was supervenient upon the possession of physical properties, but maintain the distinctness of the kinds of properties. (I understand the term 'supervenient' in a standard way: if p type properties are supervenient upon q type properties, then if two objects do not diverge in respect of their q properties, then they cannot diverge with respect to their p

properties; if two objects differ in their p properties, then they must diverge in respect of their q properties. The modal force of 'cannot' and 'must' will depend on the area of theory to which the notion of supervenience is being applied. In meta-ethics, for instance it has sometimes been thought of as a metaphysical or even logical necessity, whilst in philosophical psychology, it is arguably a weaker modality that is concerned, where the necessity would be 'nomological' or 'physical'⁶). Such a dualist, then, might still hold that there was a type of mental state common to all those times when Jones believed that p, and that there was a type of mental state common to Jones and Smith when they both believed that p. Such a mental state need not be thought by the dualist to be a conscious state.

The dualist's reasons for holding such a realism, if derived from alleged introspective access to belief states, do not convince, as I have already argued. His reasons may rather derive from a consideration of the conditionals governing the behaviour of the believer. If so, I now argue that such reasons will not be good reasons. Armstrong is well aware of the differences between dispositional properties such as solubility or brittleness, and the property of believing that p, even if the latter is in some sense a dispositional property. There is, for example, only one type of manifestation of brittleness - the cracking or breaking of the material concerned. There is only one type of manifestation of solubility - the dissolving of the material in the appropriate solvent. But given the kind of antecedent which might be specified in a conditional which is supposed to be true of Jones when he believes that p, virtually any kind of behaviour may figure in the consequent; virtually any kind of behaviour can manifest a particular belief. The only unifying factor of a set of actual and/or possible manifestations of a belief that p, is that they do manifest the belief that p. Armstrong would want to identify the belief that p with the state which underlies these manifestations. He thinks it is possible

for there to be first person access to the occurrent state underlying the disposition, even if that occurrent state is not a conscious state. But we have found no compelling reasons to postulate such a state, and some objections to such a postulation.

So far I have focussed on the word 'state' as it appears in the characterisation of belief that p as an attitude of an individual towards the proposition that p - viz. some kind of state of the individual believer to which he has introspective access and for the existence of which he is the best authority. There is also, however, the question of the 'propositional content' of the belief; the view that beliefs have specific contents. I now turn to a discussion of this, and argue that there is no clear sense in which a belief can have a specific propositional content.

In Armstrong, this issue comes up in the form of a discussion about the beliefs of creatures without language. If someone thinks that beliefs do have a specific content then they clearly require an account of the content of beliefs of creatures who lack language. I first develop the matter in my own way, before turning to the way in which Armstrong seeks to solve the difficulty.

Suppose we wish to report de dicto (see the discussion of the last chapter) the beliefs of a dog. We say, for example, that the dog believes that the X is ϕ . If we construe this report on a reasonably close analogy with our de dicto reports of what a person with a language believes, it suggests that we believe that the 'propositional content' of the dog's belief is that the X is ϕ ; we make no reference to any part of the world external to the dog, as we believe that world to be. An initial problem is immediately evident; when reporting a person's beliefs de dicto, we assume, or even make explicit if necessary, that the propositional content of that person's belief is that which would be expressed by a form of words that the believer would accept as an expression of his belief. In the case of the dog, we are going to have to make a lame remark to the

effect that if our de dicto report of what the dog believes is 'correct', then if it had been the case that the dog understood language, it would have accepted, for example, 'The X is @' as an adequate expression of what it believes. And things get worse, when we reflect, as indeed Armstrong does, that a necessary condition of understanding 'The X is @' is the possession of the concept of X, and of @.

Armstrong's examples might help at this point. (1) A dog digs frantically at the place where he buried a bone; we consider whether it is appropriate to report the dog de dicto as believing that he has a bone buried there. (2) The dog rushes to the door on hearing the master's voice; we consider whether it is appropriate to report the dog de dicto as believing that his master is at the door. I would agree with Armstrong though some would not, that the dog lacks our concepts of burying, bone, his master, and the door, even though I am not entirely clear about the notion of 'having a concept', and must rely on an intuitive understanding of it. So our de dicto report of the dog's belief now includes the curious counterfactual - had the dog understood language and possessed concepts which it in fact lacks, it would have accepted 'The X is @' as an expression of its belief. We might well now begin to wonder what the force might be of insisting that the content of the dog's belief is that the X is @.

Armstrong's way out is that 'in saying that the dog believes that his master is at the door, we are, or we should be, attributing to the dog a belief whose exact content we do not know, but which can be obtained by substituting *salva veritate* in the proposition 'That his master is at the door'⁷. The implication is that there could be an accurate and correct de dicto report of what the dog believes, only we do not at present know what this is. Further scientific investigation may possibly reveal it. The belief report that we do make about the dog, according to Armstrong, is 'de re' or 'transparent' - I use scare quotes since I do not use these

expressions in quite the same way as Armstrong.

S. P. Stich⁸ in criticising this move of Armstrong claims that, in effect, a belief report of the general sentential form 'Jones believes that the X is @' does not possess, as a possible truth condition, the 'de re' condition that Armstrong suggests. Quine's criterion for transparent or de re belief reports, rightly or wrongly is the possibility of substituting co-referring expressions for X salva veritate. But Armstrong's criterion for his 'de re' truth condition is the possibility of substituting for virtually anything in the belief report sentence salva veritate, including predicates. On Stich's view, if we take Armstrong's 'de re' truth condition of the belief report 'Jones believes that the department chairman is going to audit his class' together with (x) (x is going to audit Jones class \equiv x has witnessed the birth of a giant panda in captivity), we can, by substitution, arrive at 'Jones believes that the department chairman has witnessed the birth of a giant panda in captivity'. Needless to say, this is an unfortunate consequence, and suggests that there is something wrong with Armstrong's notion of a 'de re' belief report.

Stich goes on, wrongly in my opinion, to concede to Armstrong that though Armstrong's 'de re' truth condition for belief reports is not possible in english, Armstrong has the 'right' to introduce such a truth condition if he wishes. I am not clear as to the force of 'not possible in english', and I suggest that Stich should not have made the concession anyway, since it would not be intelligible to have a 'de re' belief report truth condition of the kind which Armstrong suggests. The point about de re belief reports of the orthodox type is that when we, as reporters of someone's beliefs, think that their belief is about or of a certain individual, we may choose to report their belief in such a way that we refer to the individual in question with an expression which we believe to denote that individual, whether or not the person whose belief we are reporting thinks that the expression we use denotes the individual they

take themselves to have a belief about. Now suppose that we wished to extend the idea of a *de re* truth condition to properties as well as to individuals. Imagine, for example, that we think that Jones has a belief which is about or of a certain individual, *N*, and about or of a certain property, *Oness*. This requires, not only the intelligibility of supposing that there are individuals in the external world whether or not, and however they are referred to - a straight-forward and uncontentious assumption, but also the intelligibility of supposing that there are certain properties in the world however they are picked out by speakers, and even if they are not picked out at all. Depending on precisely how this thesis is expressed, it may well prove controversial in some quarters; but let us, for the sake of discussion, make this assumption also. So, in our extended *de re* report of Jones belief, we attempt to put not only *X*, but also *Oness* outside the scope of the belief construction, with a result that would go roughly as follows. There is an individual, *X*, and a property, *Oness*, of whom, or about whom, and of which or about which Jones believes that it has that property. In this extended *de re* report, as in the more orthodox type, we need not take into account the way Jones would refer to the individual he takes his belief to be about. Furthermore, we need not, it may be supposed, take into account the particular predicate Jones would employ to ascribe the property he believes an individual to possess.

Now my objection to Armstrong's '*de re*' belief report, and a fortiori to Stich's concession, is that even if we can imagine a kind of extended *de re* belief reporting in which we had freedom in the way we referred to the property concerned in the belief - a freedom which escaped the authority of the believer himself, and which allowed certain predicate substitutions *salva veritate*, this freedom could never extend to the permissability of the substitution of predicates which were merely extensionally equivalent, as in Stich's example, where '- is going to audit the class' and 'has

witnessed the birth of a giant panda in captivity' were regarded as interchangeable. Such freedom is not consistent with our understanding of what it is to report someone's belief.

If we were trying to extend de re belief reporting to properties, the least we could do would be to use an expression which we believed picked out the same property as the one with which the believer was concerned. Thus, imagine that Jones believes de dicto that Susan's eyes are the colour of the sky; we believe that there is such a person as Susan and that she is the neighbour's daughter; in an orthodox de re belief report we could say that Jones believes that the neighbour's daughter's eyes are the colour of the sky. Suppose we also believe that, in this world at least, 'is the colour the sky' ascribes the same property as '- is blue'; then, in our extended de re belief reporting of Jones belief, we might say that Jones believes that the neighbour's daughter's eyes are blue

It is this kind of extension to de re belief reporting that Armstrong could have suggested. It would require, of course, a satisfactory criterion of property identity - a criterion for telling when two verbally distinct predicates ascribe the same property to an individual. Suppose, at least, for the sake of argument, that such an extension is legitimate, and we could use it to report not only the beliefs of dogs, but the beliefs of creatures without language in general. Would not the intelligibility of such an extension still depend ultimately on the possibility of there being a true de dicto report of the creature's belief, even if we, the reporters, do not know what it is? I would have thought that it did.

We are still faced, then, with the problem of in what the content of a belief which would figure in a de dicto report, would consist, when considering the case of creatures without language. It might be suggested that a language C could be developed in which the (say) canine concepts of master, door, bone, etc. were expressed, so that when we said - had the dog had a mastery of C, he would have expressed his belief in such and such a

way, this would give us an account of the content of the dog's belief. For, the suggestion might continue, the counterfactual's antecedent is now no longer bizarre, as was the previous counterfactual considered above, which involved us in considering what would have been the case had the dog understood a human language. We now do not have to imagine the dog transformed, in those seemingly impossible ways required for the dog to master a human language; the hypothesis is merely that the dog articulates in some primitive linguistic fashion, concepts it already possesses.

But even if we could make sense of all this, it only puts the problem back a stage. We now have the problem of saying in our language what the dog language expresses; the content of our *de dicto* report must be able to reflect in some fashion what the dog would want to 'say'. We would need to be able to say in our language what concepts were had by the dog. Now we can bring off such a feat fairly easily when the cases of the 'simplest' concepts are concerned, whose application may be demonstrated ostensively - e.g. colour and shape concepts, and the like. But when we shift no further than to the concept of a persisting individual, it is very difficult to see what it would mean for someone to insist that creatures without language definitely could possess such a concept and that they would have expressed that concept in their own special language had they possessed it. Any behaviour that they might manifest towards, for instance, 'Quine's rabbit', could be seen as manifesting a 'concept' of an individual persisting rabbit, a 'concept' of rabbit states that belong together, a 'concept' of rabbithood that manifests itself spatio-temporally, etc.⁹ An instance that such and such a languageless creature possesses a concept of an individual persisting rabbit as opposed, for example, to the possession of a concept of rabbit states that belong together, and hence that had that creature had its own language it would have expressed such and such a belief in words involving the concept of an individual persisting rabbit, seems to have no possible foundation. There seems to be nothing about the creature

in virtue of which one concept attribution would be correct, and another not. I conclude in general that there are peculiar difficulties attaching to the thought that the beliefs of languageless creatures can have a specific content which could be embodied in a de dicto report of such beliefs. Unless we take the view that languageless creatures do not have full fledged beliefs (and I do not take this view), this result poses a threat for the general thesis that beliefs have a specific content of a kind which can be captured in de dicto belief reports.

I turn now to arguments against the idea that there are individual belief states with specific contents which derive from Quine's work on indeterminacy and holism. Suppose that the following de dicto belief report about Philip is 'true'; 'Philip believes that the liberal candidate will be elected'. Philip believes that there is a certain individual who is a liberal candidate and who will be elected. Now in order that Philip believe that a certain individual exists, he must believe, among other things, that there is someone who is uniquely p , where p is a property. p cannot be a purely qualitative property, otherwise it will not individuate the individual as far as Philip is concerned. For Philip to believe that the certain individual is the one and only one that is p , he must (in many cases tacitly) believe that embedded in p is a reference to an item to which he, Philip is uniquely related. This relationship may consist in the item's spatio-temporal relationship to Philip and/or it may involve Philip's perceptions and memories. So Philip must believe a number of other things in order for him to have the particular belief about the liberal candidate. It would be unintelligible to report Philip as having this belief, and not as having any other beliefs. The individual beliefs cannot 'exist' in isolation from other beliefs. Just how many other beliefs are required is not a question that has a clear answer. Philip's beliefs, like everyone else's, come in clusters which are interconnected and depend on each other, either logically or in 'weaker' relations such as

the inductive relation between evidence and conclusion. Even if Philip has a general belief about a liberal candidate, and not a belief that there is a certain individual who is the liberal candidate and who will be elected - the general belief being - if there is a liberal candidate then he, whoever he is, will be elected, such a belief still could not (logically) be held in isolation. Philip still requires other beliefs which secure, so far as he is concerned, at least, the uniqueness of a constituency for which there might be liberal candidates at all. Furthermore, he must have beliefs about what elections are and about what it is to be a candidate, what it is to be an M.P. and so on. Another example: general beliefs of the kind which might figure in high level laws of physics make no reference, it is often said, to particular individuals. But even if this is true, it is also true (we are told, with great frequency) that parts of theories are inextricably interconnected with other parts; it would be impossible to believe in a certain part of a theory without having at least some beliefs about other parts of the theory.

We may refer here to the distinction between epistemological and ontological holism. It is an ontological holism for which I am arguing in the case of belief; epistemological holism for beliefs would merely say that we could not know that, say, Jones believed that *p* independently of knowing whether Jones also had all sorts of other beliefs. Whereas I am saying that we cannot isolate the content of any one belief and even think of it separately from the content of other beliefs. Were there specific states corresponding to each belief with such and such a content, this would not then be so; one would then have been able to imagine a cluster of beliefs as being composed, as it were, of its atomic elements - the individual beliefs each with their specific contents. The version of holism to which I subscribe appears to indicate that talk of single beliefs is a loose way of capturing something about a person - I will say a little more about this shortly.

Some philosophers might be disposed to realism about individual belief ascriptions on the ground that it is reasonable to ascribe to, say Jones, a belief that p if he says that $\overset{A}{p}$ in 'normal' circumstances - 'normal' meaning not in the course of acting a play - not in a situation where lying might be expected, etc. There might be problems here in the way of explaining 'normal' satisfactorily, but let us accept this ground for belief ascriptions for the sake of argument. Now, I think that holism which focusses on the connections between beliefs about matters of fact, and beliefs about the meaning of sentences, can provide an argument against realism about individual belief ascriptions held on the above grounds.

The well-worn point here is that when we attribute a belief to a speaker on the grounds that he has uttered such and such a sentence, we must at the same time be attributing to him beliefs about the meaning of the sentences he uses, among other things. If Jones says 'There is a mountain in the dining room', this could be seen as a symptom of (1) a belief that there was a chair (say) in the dining room, plus a mistaken belief about the meaning of the word 'mountain', (2) a belief that there is a mountain in the dining room, plus mistaken beliefs about the characteristics of mountains - perhaps Jones has never seen a real mountain, and does not realize that their size would normally preclude his belief being true. Evidently there are further possibilities. In order for Jones' saying that p to manifest Jones' belief that p , Jones must have other beliefs too - it would be unintelligible to insist that Jones saying that p could manifest his belief that p 'on its own'.

An indirect route to realism for individual belief ascriptions could be had, it might be argued, via the notion of intention¹⁰. The first move would be to claim that realism for individual ascriptions of intention is certainly true. If Jones intends to unlock the front door there is some type of state, it might be thought, of Jones in virtue of which 'Jones intends to unlock the front door' is true, and in virtue of which 'Jones does not

intend to unlock the front door' is false. Now if, so the argument continues, Jones performs action A with intention I, then we can conclude that he must have such and such a belief about how he is to achieve what he intends. The plausibility of this may seem to be increased when we reflect that our knowledge of our intentions can be immediate, unlike our knowledge of our beliefs. I can know immediately that I intend to shoot Jones; I do not have to become aware of this in virtue of becoming aware of any kind of inner feeling or state which is distinct from the intention. If I point the gun, press the trigger, and shoot Jones, and I have the intention of killing Jones, then, so the argument goes, I must believe that pointing the gun and pressing the trigger is very likely to effect Jones' death.

My objection to this line of argument is to the presence of the word 'must'. If it is insisted upon in all cases, it appears to rule out the possibility of certain kinds of irrational actions. For example, imagine that I intend to unlock the front door. I take out the back door key and attempt to unlock it. A natural inference on the part of someone trying to understand me, is that I believe that the back door key is the front door key, or that the back door key unlocks both doors, etc. But whilst this is a natural inference it does not have to be 'correct'. I might just be behaving stupidly - I might be drunk or tired. It is true that drunkenness or fatigue might induce within me some very strange beliefs, so that I believe temporarily that the back door key is the front door key, or whatever. But equally, it might not; it might not change my beliefs, but merely cause me to behave in a confused and muddled fashion. I would have standard beliefs about the key - namely - I believe that it is the back door key, that it unlocks the back door and not the front - yet I intend to unlock the front door with it. The confusion or muddle consists in an incongruity of belief vis-a-vis intention. This incongruity could go even further. I might not even believe that the object I have in my hand is a key, and yet still intend to unlock the front door with it. A very peculiar, and

highly unlikely state of mind, we would all agree, but not, I think, to be ruled out a priori.

The phenomenon might be compared with the possession of incompatible beliefs. I can believe both p and not p - though once I consciously appreciate my position, I will rapidly give up one, or both beliefs. The relinquishing of the belief or beliefs need not be an instantaneous process, however, especially if I am very tired, drunk, emotionally disturbed, or whatever. Similarly, if I am able to dwell consciously and rationally upon such an incongruity as the above example envisages between belief and intention, I will relinquish either belief, or intention, or both. But in situations of fatigue, (etc.) I am not in a position to 'dwell consciously and rationally' on my situation.

Hence, whilst there is, of course, an intimate connection between intentions and certain kinds of belief, the connection is not so intimate as to prevent me from having on occasion crazy intentions, given the beliefs I also have. In short, there is no easy route from action and intention to an individual belief ascription which would support the position of the realist about individual belief ascriptions.

I end this section with one or two remarks concerning my own understanding of belief ascriptions. The ascription of a belief to an animal, for instance, is coarse grained. It labels, very crudely, an element in our explanation (in the case of animals, mainly explanation at the first level - see Chapter 3); it did such and such an action; it had such and such a purpose or intention; we say it believed such and such, since believing such and such, with that intention, explains its action at the first level. For instance, consider the dogs' action of removing the contents of the bag and eating them. We consider that the dog's dominant intention was to get something to eat; hence we say it believed that there was something to eat in the bag, since this, together with the intention, explains the dog's action at the first level. There is a blank space in

the first level explanation of the dog's removal of the content of the bag, etc. Once we have assigned a dominant intention to the dog, we fill the blank space when we ascribe a belief to the dog, but there is no precise or determinate type of state of the dog in virtue of which this particular individual belief ascription is true.

I take a broadly similar view of belief ascriptions to persons. To say that 'Jones believes that p' is to make a less than precise gesture at whatever it is about Jones that (a) together with his intentions explains at the first level his actions, and (b) explains at the second level his actions, which will involve accounting for his having the intentions which he in fact has. But the expression 'whatever it is about Jones' does not refer to a specific state of Jones corresponding to his belief that p; it refers, if at all, to Jones total doxastic state (which cannot be viewed as a set of all the individual types of belief states which go with Jones' individual beliefs, since there are no such things as these individual types of belief states). This total state, together with his intentions, explains Jones actions at the first level and may also help to explain at the second level too.

Indeterminacy reigns, in my view, in the following way. There is no one correct answer to the question 'What does Jones believe at time t'? We can say, for instance, that he believes that p at t, if we can put this together with other beliefs we ascribe to him, and add his beliefs to his intentions, to provide an appropriate first level explanation of his action. Jones can do no more than this himself, except in the sense that he may have access to certain data not available to us unless he tells us. He may, for instance, feel he knows that p - he may feel inclined to assent to the proposition that p - he may feel disposed to say sincerely that p, etc. There may be more than one possible explanation of Jones action that is plausible, covers all the data, and so on. It may be that according to a second explanation, it is not the case that Jones believes that p at t.

There is an important dispositional element in our ascription to Jones

of the belief that p. This consists of an indeterminate collection of conditionals of the kind sketched earlier in the discussion of dispositional accounts of beliefs such as Armstrong's. Thus, if we tell someone that Jones believes that p, we are giving them some guide as to the behaviour they may expect from Jones. But it is only a guide at all if that someone has a fair idea of what else Jones believes, and what his intentions are. The conditionals are true of Jones in virtue, perhaps of his total doxastic state; the more central members of the set of conditionals (though no members are essential) concerning themselves with Jones saying that p in certain circumstances, assenting inwardly to p, etc. So, on many occasions when Jones is inwardly inclined to assent that p, then, on the present theory, it will be appropriate for him to claim to believe that p, and it will be appropriate for an interpreter, if he becomes convinced that Jones inwardly assents to p, to ascribe to Jones the belief that p.

The loose dispositional theory of belief ascription I have just sketched seems to me to allow for the possibility of inexpressible beliefs in a way that the realist theories I have attacked on philosophical grounds do not. The loose theory does not imply that there is a special type of state to go with a belief that p; it does not imply, therefore, that, say Jones, when he believes that p, must have access in principle to a certain state of his - a state which is the having of an attitude to a certain proposition - with all the problems this involves if Jones' belief is then claimed to be inexpressible. The loose theory allows that feelings of conviction, etc. may be relevant to whether Jones believes that p, but asserts that it is not essential that, even in principle, the believer should be able to have such feelings.

According to the loose theory, some sets of conditionals concerning (say) Jones' behaviour are 'amenable' to the characterisation 'manifestation of Jones belief that p', where p may be expressed in some form of words. On such a theory, there seems to be no reason to deny that other sets of

conditionals concerning behaviour are also amenable to the characterisation - 'manifestation of Jones belief that ____' where the belief cannot be expressed verbally. There must, of course, be something common to those sets of conditionals which manifest expressible beliefs, and those which manifest inexpressible beliefs, for us to be prepared to talk of belief at all in the second case. What is common? Each set of conditionals is true of Jones, we may suppose, in virtue of his total state at the time concerned. Whatever it is about Jones which grounds each set of conditionals has roughly the same role in the first level and second level explanation of Jones actions, whether expressible or inexpressible beliefs are involved. We thus have a species of a functional theory of belief.

3. INEXPRESSIBLE BELIEFS

In the light of the view of belief so far outlined, I want now to say a little more about how it might be that Theist A could see Theist B as having an inexpressible belief. A move that a Christian Theist (and possibly, other varieties of Theist also) might be inclined to make is this. Inexpressible beliefs can be communicated through the medium of behaviour. A very saintly person for example, who had very rich and detailed beliefs about God might be able to convey some of what he believes through his loving actions towards his fellow human beings.

An initial objection to such a move might be that we are simply imagining a special kind of language that might develop within a community of Theists; language whose components were elements of non-verbal behaviour rather than verbal behaviour. But I would not accept this objection. All forms of language are to some degree intentional. We choose to use actions of certain types with, or without, but mostly with, the assumption of an agreed set of conventions employed by our community, to perform that large array of speech acts with which all language users are familiar. A wide variety of linguistic devices are possible - we don't have to make sounds with our mouths - we could use a gesture system,

etc. And it is also arguable that language - the system of actions that it involves, requires that such actions are performed with special kinds of communication-intentions, and of course, Grice, has so argued. Now whilst the behaviour which the Theist might claim can communicate to someone else the fact that I have an inexpressible belief, and something of the nature of this belief, will be intentional, in the sense that it will consist of genuine actions on my part, such behaviour need not be of a kind about which I can form communication-intentions.

It may also be objected that there is a lack of precision in the description of the behaviour that is supposed to be able to communicate to another, inexpressible beliefs. A description such as 'loving actions' covers a vast range of possibilities. How could it be that 'specific propositions' were conveyed from one individual to another, as opposed say to some vague and generalised manifestation of trust in a loving deity? But such an objection fails to understand the role of behaviour, say on the part of Theist A, as data on which Theist B can build an interpretation of what Theist A believes, etc. A particular action which is not involved in a language system, unlike a particular utterance, is unlikely be itself to indicate the presence of a 'particular belief' (understanding the latter expression, of course in a loose and not realistic fashion). It is rather that that action, set in the context of the rest of the agent's behaviour, and his circumstances as the interpreter believes them to be may prove suggestive.

Now imagine that we see someone treating every person that he meets with the most extraordinary charity and kindness. He excels in this especially, perhaps, when he has been praying to God, or when he has been recently present at an act of worship. He tells us that his widest intention, in each of those actions in which he serves his fellow human beings, is to serve God. On this ground we proceed to ascribe to him such an intention. We now have actions, and a widest intention; we seek to

supply a missing element in the explanation of his behaviour by ascribing beliefs to him.

Supplying the missing element is a complex process inasmuch as we require something which will play appropriate roles in both first and second level explanation of our saintly individual's actions. I want to suggest that it is especially in the second level explanation, where the presence of the saintly individual's extraordinary intentions is accounted for, that the question of inexpressible beliefs will arise. For the actions to be understandable at the second level, our saint needs to believe that God is unsurpassable. This cannot consist merely in a belief in the abstract proposition that God is unsurpassable, but will require beliefs concerning God's intrinsic nature in virtue of which he is unsurpassable.

One adequate second level explanation would bring in the saintly individual's emotional responses, which would generate B-wants to perform those loving actions concerning which he forms his intentions. A complete version of such a second level explanation would include what the saint believes about God which gives rise to his emotional response; and possibly only the inclusion of some inexpressible beliefs about God can account fully for the emotional response concerned.

The saint might act in 'cold blood'; if so, we would have to look to second level explanation of another kind. Perhaps the saint decides, all things considered that he ought to perform loving actions with the intention of serving God. His reasons for forming the intentions to act are the reasons for his thinking that he ought to perform the actions in question. These reasons will consist at least in part of beliefs about God's intrinsic nature. We may find, as interpreters, that a second level explanation which only includes those reasons had by the saint which consist of expressible beliefs would be less than complete; that it is only if the saint is ascribed extra beliefs about God which cannot be expressed that the explanation is completed. There is no way of being more precise about this,

since, as we saw in the earlier discussion of second level explanation in Chapter 3, such explanations do not seem susceptible of regimentation in any neat philosophical theory.

We have not exhausted the range of possible 'cold blood' explanations at the second level. The agent might not think that performing all the loving actions was what he ought to do, all things considered. He might think, rather, that such actions would be good, and that he would be acting supererogatorily if he did them. He would have reasons for thinking the actions would be good; these reasons would account for his forming the intention to perform these acts of supererogation, with the widest intention of serving God. These reasons would include beliefs about God's intrinsic nature, and for a full second level explanation, the 'missing belief element' might have to extend beyond merely expressible beliefs.

To sum up, the idea is that the saint may have inexpressible beliefs about God which could come across to us, his interpreters, through his behaviour, with the aid of which we might achieve a full first and second level understanding of his actions. It is arguable that his beliefs could not be communicated to us in this way unless we also had beliefs about the nature of an unsurpassable being; that we could not, without these, perform an extended application of a 'principle of humanity' that seems to be required here when we strive for understanding at the second level. That is to say, without ourselves believing certain things about an unsurpassable being, we could not as it were put ourselves in the saint's place, and imagine what we would 'need to believe' to form the intentions to act as he does. I take this thought no further in the present work.

All that has been sketched in this section is a mere possibility. I would not care even to attempt to show that it actually happens. But if indeed it is a possibility, we have what we may well require for the possibility of community worship of an unsurpassable being - the possibility of inexpressible belief, and the possibility that one member of a community could reasonably

understand another member as having such a belief.

4. INCOMPREHENSIBLE BELIEF

To understand something is to have achieved something; but it is not obvious that there is something common to the achievements involved in, for instance, understanding a sentence of a foreign language, understanding a person and his actions, understanding the nature of volcanoes, or understanding such and such a mathematical system. This point should make us alive to the importance of grasping the nature of the understanding failure that apparently arises in the case of an epistemologically transcendent God.

I cannot believe that p when I cannot understand what it is that I am supposed to be believing. This is a plausible claim, but we must grasp the nature of my understanding failure. This situation will arise, for instance, when I cannot understand the sentence or sentences which purportedly have the sense that p, or express the proposition that p. We can perhaps distinguish here between my failure to understand a given string of words inasmuch as it does not even seem to make up a sentence which has meaning as a sentence type, and my failure to understand the sense or proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence of whose meaning qua sentence type I seem to have some grasp. In the former category we could cite instances such as 'The cook that the maid that the nurse met saw heard the butler'¹¹. Here, the string of words does in fact make up a meaningful type of sentence, but many of us, at least, find this difficult to grasp. As far as we are concerned, the string of words do not make up a sentence whose meaning qua sentence type we understand. (A standard characterisation of the meaning of a sentence type would be that which is common to it and its translation into a foreign language).

In the second category we have sentences upon the meaning of whose sentence types we seemingly have some grip, but where we cannot grasp the sense or proposition expressed - or, to put the matter rather paradoxically but in some ways more illuminatingly, we have sufficient grasp of the putative

sense to appreciate that there could not in principle be a truth condition for the sentence. Examples are obvious - 'I was born before my grandfather'. 'The chair is red and green all over'. 'I am the barber who shaves all the barbers who don't shave themselves, and I shave myself'.

It is not clear to me, however, that we can draw a hard and fast line between the two categories. There is a substantial class of examples which might be argued to fall into either category. For instance, 'Colourless green ideas sleep furiously'. 'The moon's father washes adjectives', 'The music is hygroscopic'. We could think of these on the one hand, as strings of words which have clear meanings qua sentence types, but also such that, if used in a speech act, we would have no ultimate grasp of the sense or proposition expressed - no grasp of the truth condition for the sentence as used in that utterance. Or, on the other hand, we could quite reasonably think of them as strings of words which just do not make up sentences which have meanings qua sentence types at all.

It may well be thought that it is the incomprehensibility manifested by examples of either of the above categories - most probably of the second category, which arises from God's epistemological transcendence. We have, it may be thought, strings of words purportedly concerning God, which get as far as making up sentence types with a meaning of sorts, but which cannot be imagined to express an intelligible sense or proposition; we cannot grasp the condition which would make such sentences true as used in utterances by Theists. In particular, the line of thought continues, we do not understand the truth condition for 'God is transcendently good'; our failure to understand resembles our failure to understand, for instance 'I was born before my grandfather'. The Theist would say, it might be claimed, that whilst our position with respect to 'I was born before my grandfather' is epistemologically similar to our position with respect to 'God is transcendently good', the latter ultimately expresses a sense or proposition - there is a truth condition for it - whilst the former lacks

these assets.

I now argue that the Theist cannot embrace this kind of incomprehensibility as being involved in the conclusion of the unsurpassability argument, in so far as the Theist is required to believe things about God even where these touch on aspects of God which he cannot understand. I try to show in particular that our failure to understand 'God is transcendentally good' is not in fact entirely of this kind.

I just cannot imagine what it would be like to believe - even to think I believed, that I was born at a time before my grandfather. Nor can I conceive of a situation in which I would interpret someone else as having such a belief. A well-worn move at this point is to claim that I can at least have a second-order belief; the belief that 'I was born at a time before my grandfather' expresses a true proposition; the same trick can allegedly be turned in regard to third person belief ascriptions; if Jones says, with evident sincerity and being apparently of sound mind, etc. 'I was born at a time before my grandfather' then I might say that Jones believes that he was born at a time before his grandfather. Since I, the reporter of Jones belief, have no real idea of the de dicto content of Jones belief, all I can mean in such a context is something like the following: Jones has a certain belief whose de dicto content can be expressed by the sentence (in his mouth) 'I was born at a time before my grandfather'.

Now I think that there are plausible cases of such second order belief; they are cases of believing on authority; I will explain what in my view these cases amount to, and then show that those beliefs without understanding which may be required of the Theist whose God is epistemologically transcendent cannot be of this kind. A mathematician may tell me a theorem proved by Godel. I may well fail to understand what he says. But I might have good reason to think that he is talking sense, and has expressed a coherent and important proposition with the sentence he has

communicated to me. My belief 'in what he said' may be strong enough to encourage me to repeat the sentence to someone else who might ask me, for reasons best known to themselves, whether I know anything proved by Godel. It seems fairly clear that I cannot believe the proposition which the mathematician believes, and communicates to me. I believe, rather, that instances of the sentence type in question may be used to express a certain true mathematical proposition. Of course, there is room for degrees of understanding here. Even in the case as described it is not just a pure second order belief that such and such a string of symbols may be used to express a truth. I would also believe that it is a mathematical truth - I may have some understanding of individual symbols in the sentence - perhaps enough understanding to enable me to use the symbols myself in other sentences, etc. The more understanding I have of this kind, the more the second order belief would be supplemented by a belief about the kind of proposition that might be involved. In the most extreme cases, where there is very little more than the second order belief alone, the authority is essential. Evidently, the Theist may have beliefs of this kind - he may believe, on the authority of the church and/or the authority of someone whom he believes to have had significant religious experiences, or on the basis of some other kind of authority, that certain sentences can express truths. If the sentences are very 'difficult' indeed, the status and character of the authority is crucial; the Theist in the most extreme case might be able to glean virtually nothing of the subject matter of the proposition concerned from the words of the sentence; the authority informs him that the proposition is about God, that it is 'important', and so on. The authority narrows the range of the subject matter of the Theist's second order belief - otherwise the Theist may have no idea of what kind of proposition is involved. It is vital to the Theist who has this kind of second order belief on authority, that the ultimate source of his authority has a good grip on what proposition it is that the sentence expresses.

Indeed, unless it seemed possible that from time to time individual Theists, at least, could go beyond the mere second-order belief to some understanding of what proposition is involved, the whole proceeding would seem entirely pointless. Those Theists who had to believe on authority would be unable to see the importance of so doing, unless they thought that the 'authority' ultimately had a direct access to the proposition itself. In the most extreme case that we can imagine, God himself might cause a CRB to believe that such and such a string of words formed a sentence which could express a crucial proposition about God, where the CRB in question did not understand what possible truth condition an utterance of the supposed sentence could have. But if all CRB's were barred from comprehending the supposed sentence, the putative revelation would seem pointless, and not one that an all-wise Deity would attempt.

I conclude that the incomprehensibility involved in God's epistemological transcendence cannot be wholly of the type to be found either in the first or second category discussed above, and that this conclusion cannot be evaded by resorting to ploys concerning second order belief. In Chapter 3, in fact, I pointed out that there were two kinds of understanding failure involved in the incomprehensibility of God's goodness. There was the apparent logical impossibility of God resembling both the first Jones and the second Jones at a supreme level when, as an unsurpassable being, it seemed that he ought to resemble both in this way. And, quite distinct from this, there was the difficulty in understanding at the second level all those extreme acts of supererogation of which an unsurpassable being should in principle be capable. Now the apparent logical impossibility of God resembling both the first Jones and the second Jones at a supreme level does, at first sight, resemble uncomfortably closely the apparent logical impossibility of my being born before my grandfather; the Theist will have to say, of course, that appearances must be deceptive in the former case, and God must ultimately be able somehow to have the

virtues of both Jones in a way that is logically coherent. This could not be the whole story, however, in the light of what has just been argued; if it is really true that I just do not know what to believe when I am told that God somehow has, at a supreme level, the virtues of both the first and the second Jones, in the same sort of way as I do not know what to believe when I am told that I was born before my grandfather, then I am wholly incapable of believing either. The assertion by the Theist that there is a divine state of affairs ultimately to be had, towards which we are gesturing with the apparently contradictory assertion that God resembles both the first Jones and the second Jones, but that there is no state of affairs which would make 'I was born before my grandfather' true just does not help. In the former case I do not know what to believe any more than I would do in the latter case if someone were trying to convince me that there really was a truth condition for 'I was born before my grandfather.

When we look at the matter more carefully, however, matters are not quite as bad as this. The seeming impossibility of God resembling both the first Jones and the second Jones at a supreme level, which we dignify by saying that 'God is transcendentally good' has a number of perfectly comprehensible entailments. For instance, it entails that God is very good indeed - that God is morally better than any other rational being ever has been, ever will be, and so on. The Theist could reasonably claim some grasp of a condition in which 'God is very good' say, would be true. Perhaps there would be more than one such truth condition. Hence, whilst it is true that the Theist does not know fully what to believe when he is told that God is transcendentally good - viz. that, among other things, God resembles to a supreme degree both the first Jones and the second Jones, he does know in part what to believe. The type of incomprehensibility involved here does not wholly preclude belief.

If, on the other hand, we consider 'I was born before my grandfather', whilst there are some 'degenerate' entailments, these are of no help. For

instance, it is true that 'I was born' is entailed, together with 'I exist', and so forth. But these are of no use to me when I am trying to see what it is I am supposed to believe when considering the proposition that I was born before my grandfather. Knowing that 'God is transcendentally good' entails 'God is very good indeed' does, in contrast, indicate to some extent, however limited that extent may be, what I am to believe when supplied with 'God is transcendentally good'.

Let us turn briefly now to the other aspect of understanding failure involved in God's transcendent goodness. There was, it will be recalled, the difficulty, or impossibility, of understanding at the second level all those acts of supererogation of which an unsurpassable being must in principle be capable. Now a failure to understand God's acts of this kind is perfectly compatible with believing that God has acted in such and such a way; I can believe that an agent has done all sorts of things, and yet at the same time possess no second level understanding of these actions. In the case of Meursault in Camus' 'The Outsider', had I been at the trial, I would have understood Meursault's action at the first level - I would understand, that is to say, that he believed that his gun had such and such properties, and that he had formed the intention to shoot the Arab, and had indeed shot him. But I would not have understood what, if any reasons he had for forming that intention; or, failing reasons, I would not perhaps have understood what kind of emotion welled up in Meursault on the beach which included or caused a B-want to shoot the Arab. Nevertheless, I could perfectly well have had a fully-fledged belief that Meursault performed the act in question.

We have focussed in this section on the incomprehensibility of God's goodness; but our results may be applied more generally. We can now see how in a profound sense God might be beyond the understanding of CRB's - namely his actions in general might be beyond the second level understanding of CRB's. But this kind of understanding failure does not preclude belief.

The Theist can feel reasonably optimistic, then, about the possibilities of shared discourse and worship of a transcendent God; we have seen that his ineffability and incomprehensibility need not impose wholly incapacitating restrictions on the beliefs of CRB's.

NOTES

- 1 'Belief, Truth and Knowledge' p10, Cambridge University Press 1973
- 2 As in 'What is a Theory of Meaning II' 'Truth and Meaning' ed Evans and McDowell. Dummett seems now to have changed his mind. See, e.g. 'Realism' p437 ff in 'The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy' Duckworth 1981
- 3 For these, see C. Wright 'Language Mastery and the Sorites Paradox' in Evans and McDowell, op cit, to which I am also indebted for the example of the colour shades.
- 4 'Perception' p20 especially. Cambridge University Press 1977
- 5 see 'Naming and Necessity', e.g. p100 ff 2nd Edition Blackwell 1980
- 6 See J. Kim 'Causality, Identity and Supervenience', esp p40 ff in 'Midwest Studies in Philosophy, vol 1V 1979
- 7 'Belief, Truth and Knowledge' p26
- 8 'Do Animals have beliefs?', Australasian Journal of Philosophy 1979
- 9 See Quine, e.g. 'Ontological Relativity' Columbia University Press 1969
- 10 See, e.g. R. G. Swinburne, 'Faith and Reason' p13 ff Oxford 1981
- 11 From Rosenberg's 'On understanding the difficulty in understanding understanding' in 'Meaning and Understanding', ed de Gruyter.

CHAPTER SEVEN
TRANSCENDENCE LANGUAGE

1. THE PROBLEM

It was argued in the second and third chapters that an unsurpassable being would be, to a degree, epistemologically and ontologically transcendent. We say in Chapter 1 that such transcendence could not be confined to one aspect of the divine nature, and that virtually all aspects of the divine nature would be to some extent afflicted by transcendence. We have seen in particular that a central and crucial property of God, namely his goodness, a divine property having strong links with many other aspects of the divinity such as personhood, agency, intention, etc. carries both types of transcendence.

If we now consider any one simple assertion about God, of the form 'God is p' in which some non-relational property is attributed to God, we must immediately note the following point. ' - is p' will consist of some predicate drawn from a CRB language learned in connection with created items, and developed in the first place to apply to them; we can form sentences in which we ascribe the predicate to a created item, or ascribe it to a lesser degree to a created item. For instance, we say 'God is a person'. We can also say 'Jones is a person'. We say God is omniscient'. We can also say (though we are scarcely going to be right) 'Jones is omniscient'. We can say 'God is omnipotent', and we can certainly say 'Jones is very powerful' even if we cannot say, appreciating the logical impossibility of two omnipotent beings co-existing - 'Jones is omnipotent'.

Now it may well be argued that if the predicate ' - is p' has the same meaning in the divine context as it has in a context of created items, then, either God is having attributed to him the very same property as could be in principle attributed to a created item, or, God is having attributed to him a property which could be in principle attributed to a lesser degree to a created item. The thought behind this would be that if a predicate has

the same meaning in one context as in another, then the same property is concerned on each occasion. (This leaves open the question of whether predicates with different meanings can attribute the same property - a matter we need not investigate here).

Yet if we accept the claim that God must be ontologically transcendent, then, in a large number of cases, a predicate such as '- is p' cannot have the function of attributing to God a property which could in principle be possessed at the same level, or to a lesser degree, by a created item. In particular, claims about God's goodness, and associated aspects of his personhood, intentions, desires, actions, freedom, and so on cannot involve the attribution to God of properties which can be possessed in principle by created items either at that level or to a lesser degree. Even if in principle there could be assertions of the form 'God is p' which concern divine properties which somehow entirely escape the taint of ontological transcendence, it seems doubtful whether CRB's could know which these are.

Hence there will be much language about God in which predicates are ascribed to him which, in mundane contexts would attribute properties to created items which God cannot as such possess. For instance, '- is a person' will be ascribed to God, but whatever property is attributed to Jones in 'Jones is a person' cannot be the very same property as the one attributed to God in 'God is a person'. Furthermore, in many cases the CRB will be unable to attain to full knowledge and understanding of what property it is that is being attributed to God in an assertion of the form 'God is p'.

In the light of these remarks, we may now outline two problems. (1) How is it possible for there to be CRB language about God's nature when that differs essentially in some respects from the nature of created items, and the predicates of CRB language, if retaining their meaning in divine contexts apparently serve to attribute to God properties he cannot fully possess? (2) How is it possible for CRB's to understand language about

God when it is first and foremost language for use in the context of created items? These problems are closely related. They might be given alternative expression thus: (1) How does language about God succeed in meaning what it in fact does mean? (2) How can CRB's understand that meaning which it has? Much of the present chapter will be devoted to a suggestion for the solution of the first problem. First of all, however, I look briefly at a classic attempt to deal with transcendence language - which, though it may appear to be an attempt to solve the first problem, in fact turns out to be a possible 'solution' to the second problem.

Aquinas' Theory of Analogy

Whilst Aquinas does not see the problem of transcendence in the same terms that have been developed in the present work, the task he envisaged for his theory of analogy is sufficiently similar to make it worthy of consideration in the present context. Aquinas is clear that it is the knowledge CRB's have of the creation that provides them (a) with knowledge of God - viz. as cause of the creation, and (b) enables them to develop language which can be used to talk of God, even though that language cannot express fully the nature of God. He thinks that the language of CRB's cannot have the same meaning when applied to God as it has when applied to created items, and suggests, for instance of predicates, that when they are ascribed to God, they are applied 'analogically'.

The analogical for Aquinas is sharply distinguishable from the equivocal and from the metaphorical. For him, an equivocal expression is an expression with at least two meanings - e.g. 'bank'. Clearly the Theist does not want to use language equivocally about God - he does not wish his predicates, say, to have a wholly distinct meaning from the meaning they have in ordinary contexts. Aquinas rules out the metaphorical as well as the literal as an apt characterisation of the central Theistic assertions such as 'God is a person', 'God is good', and so on. This is because,

according to him, at least, the metaphorical carries an implication that the item is not really as it is metaphorically said to be. Thus it may be apt to characterise God as a rock, in the course of a rather peripheral Theistic assertion, but of course he is not really a rock. When the Theist says that God is good, or that God is a person, etc. then, according to Aquinas, his agnosticism about the ultimate character of divine personhood or goodness does not lead him to say that in the final analysis God is not really good, or that God is not really a person. Theists who placed greater emphasis on the *via negativa* might have taken this view, but Aquinas does not. So the analogical for him is not a species of the figurative or metaphorical, but of the literal.

One form of analogy Aquinas regards as being, on its own, unhelpful to the Theist. In his famous example of 'healthy' he points out that a diet and a complexion can be described as being healthy, but only in so far as they may be, respectively, the cause and the symptom of health in a man. Neither a diet nor a complexion can literally have that property which is attributed to a man when we say that he is healthy. Now, if we used this kind of analogy alone in the case of '- is good', we might say that God is good in as much as he causes the goodness of CRB's. Yet, as Aquinas points out, God also causes bodies, but we would not say that 'God is a body' on those grounds. He has a doctrine that 'any perfection must be found also in the cause of that effect'¹. In Aquinas' view, all perfections pre-exist in God in a higher or more adequate manner. So as far as Aquinas is concerned, this takes care of the problem of predicating perfections of God using a CRB language; the relation between God and creation does guarantee that those 'perfection' predicates say substantially more about God than that he is merely the cause of a created perfection. Unfortunately we cannot avail ourselves of this doctrine.

We require the other form of analogy which is suggested by some of the things Aquinas says. I refer to what commentators call the analogy

of proportionality, but I am not interested in questions of interpreting Aquinas, and will develop the discussion in an informal way.

If we understand a sentence such as 'The tree is alive' or 'The lion is alive', then we may well understand, 'by analogy' with these, the report of a returning astronaut from Mars - viz. 'Martian coral is alive'. We may imagine that 'Martian Coral' picks out some strange rock-like formation observed at such and such a spot on Mars. Items possess the property of being alive in virtue of their possession of other properties, such as their having such and such a chemical composition. But the properties in virtue of which a virus, for instance, is alive are hardly the very same properties in virtue of which a lion is alive, or in virtue of which earth coral is alive. Scientists might discover that, as a matter of contingent fact, all items that are alive on earth have such and such D.N.A. and R.N.A. features. But these features would not be a necessary condition for anything anywhere in the world to be alive; science fiction writers have speculated about the possibility of silicon based life forms on other planets. We may be reminded of discussion in Chapter 2 concerning the property goodness; this property, if a realist view is taken, may be possessed in virtue of all sorts of sets of other properties; there need be nothing in common to the properties in virtue of which A is good, and the properties in virtue of which B is good.

So far, of course, we have said nothing about what it is to understand 'Martian coral is alive' by analogy with 'The tree is alive' etc. And as our discussion in Chapter 4 of the Sklar-type attempt to evade anti-realist arguments, and our subsequent invocation of the Kripkean interpretation of Wittgensteinian rule following considerations showed, if we want to say anything about 'understanding by analogy' we must exercise great care.

Now I think it fair to say that on Aquinas' view, when a term is used analogically its meaning has shifted, or been 'extended' to some degree, from its 'standard meaning'. I now want to argue that when we understand

'Martian coral is alive' by analogy with 'The tree is alive', the 'by analogy' refers to the process of extending our understanding so that we can grasp what it is for the truth condition for 'Martian coral is alive' to obtain. The 'by analogy' does not, in any obvious way, refer to the kind of meaning which the predicate '- is alive' has in a context in which it is ascribed to Martian coral in comparison with the meaning it has in contexts in which it is ascribed to earthly coral, a tree, a man, or whatever. Generalising the point for which I wish to argue to another example; when we understand 'God is a person' by analogy with our understanding of 'Jones is a person', the 'by analogy' refers to the process of going from our understanding of the truth condition for 'Jones is a person' to achieve some understanding at least of the truth condition for 'God is a person'. We are not concerned with the kind of meaning the predicate '- is a person' has in the divine context. A good deal more needs to be said about the latter, but I do not think that Aquinas can be our starting point for that. We should rather turn to certain kinds of theories of metaphor, and later in the chapter I do this.

Aquinas does speak apparently of meanings, and gives what might be thought to be an argument for a difference in meaning, though not a total difference being involved in 'analogical predication'. He says 'God is more distant from any creature than any two creatures are from each other. But there are some creatures so different that nothing can be said univocally of them - for example, when they differ in genus. Much less, therefore, could there be anything said univocally of creatures and God². But this is not a very good argument as it stands. Items belonging to widely differing categories can clearly share predicates with the same meaning. One well discussed example is '- is interesting'. It would be very implausible indeed to claim that '- is interesting' in 'The book is interesting' has even a partially different meaning from that which it has in 'The geology of the area is interesting', or 'Her idea is interesting'.

This is not to deny, of course, that '- is interesting' is capable of various meanings which may or may not overlap with the former cases - e.g. 'Her figure is interesting', or 'The sum of money you mention is interesting'. But these shades of meaning do not correlate in any obvious way with the category or type of item to which the predicate is being applied. Let me mention other predicates which appear effortlessly to span categories. '- is harmonious' might be predicated of societies, sounds, relationships, colours, diplomatic talks, etc. There is no obvious difference in the meaning of '- is harmonious' here depending on the context. Other examples: '- is efficient', '- is long lasting' might be predicated of fashions, items of furniture, persons, etc. without evident ambiguity.

There may be thought to be strong intuitive plausibility to Aquinas' contention, however, in a number of important cases, even if not in all cases. 'Exists' has been argued in the past to be 'systematically ambiguous', depending on the category of thing that is said to exist. We can say 'Mountains exist', 'God exists', 'Numbers exist', 'Evil exists', and so on. The thought that the existence of numbers is only 'analogous' to the existence of, say, mountains, and that 'exists' does not have exactly the same meaning when 'predicated' of numbers as it has when predicated of mountains, even though it does not have an entirely distinct meaning either, may seem to be an appealing one. Yet the conclusion here is controversial. And how could the issue be settled? Not simply by pointing out that if, for instance, numbers exist they exist in very different ways from the ways in which mountains exist. For this is true, but similar remarks can be made in cases where it is quite clear that no ambiguity of predicate is involved - indeed, not even quite a small shift of meaning. If the bear is dangerous, it is dangerous in a very different way from the way in which the Moonies are dangerous. But there need be no ambiguity in '- is dangerous' here. There is a fatal weakness in expressions like 'has the property in a different way' which seems to rule out any definitive conclusions about meaning change.

Clearly God has many of his properties 'in a different way' from created items; there may also be some sense of 'category' in which God is categorially distinct from everything else. But God's categorial distinctness, if he did indeed possess such a thing, would not as such entail a general meaning shift in predicates when applied to him as opposed to being applied to created items. I thus disagree with Ross's development of a theory of analogy which he sees as historically continuous with Aquinas, since he views it as a meaning change theory, as shown, for example, by his remark '... it (the analogy hypothesis) helps us to notice that when same term occurrences occur as predicates with categorially distinct subjects the sense of the predicate term occurrences are appropriately modified; it is no anomaly, then, that the predicate applied to creatures contract categorial contracts when applied to God'³.

I see the analogy of proportionality as leaving open the question of whether language applied to God 'changes its meaning' in any way from the meaning it possesses in mundane contexts. In my view it makes a contribution to our understanding of how CRB's can grasp something of the sense of sentences of the form 'God is p' when '- is p' is a predicate standardly occurring in sentences used to attribute a property to mundane items, when the truth condition for 'God is p' is one not fully available to the knowledge and understanding of CRB's, and when the property attributed to God is unlikely to be the same property as that which would be attributed to some created item in a 'standard' application of the predicate. The contribution is in the form of a reminder that this type of understanding extension goes on all the time even within CRB language merely concerned with created items.

In our discussion of anti-realist arguments, we saw that a number of interpretations could be put upon 'not fully available to the knowledge and understanding of CRB's' and other expressions of the same ilk. The sense in which certain truth conditions concerning an unsurpassable being are not 'fully available' in an epistemological sense to a CRB is a fairly strong one.

But the CRB has to achieve whatever limited grasp is available to him of the divine state of affairs, on the basis of his grasp of mundane states of affairs which are truth conditions for sentences involving the ascription to an item of the very same predicate as that occurring in the sentence for which the divine state of affairs in question is a truth condition. We saw in Chapter 4 that the orthodox descriptions of how we achieve a grasp of a new sentence S whose truth condition we perhaps are not in a position to 'recognize directly' on the basis of our grasp of other truth conditions were in danger of violating the rule-following considerations. The violation would occur if such descriptions invited us to think that the meaning of the predicate in S was determined by the rule: apply the predicate when such and such a property is present. But we also saw that if we avoided a clash with the rule-following considerations, it did not then follow that we could attach no sense whatever to the thought that our grasp of new and possibly unrecognizable truth conditions was based upon our grasp of other truth conditions with respect to which we were epistemologically and semantically more favoured. And indeed, we surely achieve such a grasp of such states of affairs constantly. I grasp the truth condition for 'Caesar had an itchy toe' "on the basis" of my grasp of what it is for me, and for what it is for Jones across the road (etc.) to have an itchy toe. I grasp the truth condition for 'Martian coral is alive' on the basis of my grasp of truth conditions for 'Jones is alive', 'The oak is alive, and so on. I grasp (though this example is admittedly different from the others) the truth condition for 'Jane's mood was tempestuous' on the basis of my grasp of the truth condition for, for instance, 'The weather was tempestuous'.

Of course, it must be conceded that nothing here has been said in 'explanation' of how I grasp a fresh, and possibly unrecognizable truth condition "on the basis" of or "by analogy with" my grasp of other truth conditions. It is not entirely clear, actually, what kind of explanation there could possibly be. But the 'mystery', if any, is taken out of the

process of understanding extension as it occurs from mundane to divine contexts, when we reflect that similar processes constantly take place from one mundane context to another - whether the fresh context involves something categorially distinct from the prior context, or something categorially similar.

Ross is surely right in so far as he can be understood as claiming that we often expect a fresh truth condition, when its sentence involves the ascription of a predicate to an item which differs appreciably from those items to which the predicate is ascribed in sentences with whose truth conditions we are familiar, to involve the manifestation of a 'different' property also. But these expectations are not essentially and universally linked to expectations of change in meaning of the predicate in question, as I have already argued. We can understand a sentence the truth condition for which we have not yet encountered, or perhaps which we are unable to encounter, on the basis of, or by analogy with, other truth conditions for sentences involving the same predicate, even when we have no clear notion of the item to which the predicate is being applied in the fresh sentence whose truth condition we are attempting to grasp. Thus our returning spaceman might say: 'The thing that the captain met near the Martian South Pole was wise'. We could understand the meaning of this sentence perfectly well, whilst having no notion of what it was that the captain met, and not possessing in particular any idea of the category of the thing the captain met. (Evidently, the fact that it could be 'met' does rule out certain categories). If we come to learn in detail what it was that the captain met, our grasp of the truth condition for the sentence will deepen; but it is not at all obvious that we will then conclude that either the meaning of the predicate ' - is wise' is different in the new context, or that we will conclude that we were previously unsure of the meaning of ' - is wise' in the new context⁴.

To sum up this section: a 'theory of analogy' giving a prime role to the so-called analogy of proportionality may be seen as a kind of answer to

the second question we posed in section 1 - viz. how is it possible for CRB's to understand language about God when it is first and foremost language for use in the context of created items; the CRB has to rely upon his grasp of the truth conditions of sentences concerning created items. It provides as much of an answer to this second question as can be given without at the same time there being an answer to the first question - how is it possible for there to be CRB language about God when properties ascribed to him will in many cases differ from those which may in principle be manifested by created items; how does divine language succeed in meaning what it does in fact mean? It is to this question that I now turn.

2. TRANSCENDENCE LANGUAGE AND METAPHOR THEORY

There are some divine properties that CRB's cannot know about or understand, and some divine properties which, in principle, no created item could possess, even to a lesser degree. But all the Theist has at his disposal is a range of predicates in the standard use of which properties are attributed to created items. Even those divine properties which the Theist would claim to know something about, understand something of - properties which apparently in principle created items can share, such as aspects of the divine nature in virtue of which God is a person, differ to an extent (and to what extent it seems that the Theist cannot know) from those properties any created item would possess in virtue of being a person. This is because of the link between divine personhood properties, and other divine properties in virtue of which God is epistemologically and ontologically transcendent. Despite this fact, the Theist uses predicates ascribable to objects within creation, to attribute properties to God. Of at least some of these, the following is true. Either the properties which would be attributed to created items in uses of these predicates cannot be possessed by God, and/or such properties cannot be known or understood in the fullest way by CRB's when manifested in divine states of affairs.

Whilst in 'God is a person', the property attributed to God is not the

same property as that property which would be attributed to any created item with ' - is a person', any suggestion that this is a case of simple ambiguity would of course be unacceptable to the Theist. We can find simple ambiguity in the standard example of ' - is a bank'. That predicate has (at least) two meanings, and we can put this down to the fact that at least two distinct properties may be attributed to things in uses of this predicate - the property of being a financial institution, and the property of being the side of a river. Needless to say, there is no relation between the two meanings or the two properties involved. On the other hand, there must be a very close relation in the view of the Theist between the property attributed to a created item with ' - is a person', and the property attributed to God with ' - is a person'.

The proposal I defend and explain in this chapter is that 'God is a person' is related to, say, 'Jones is a person' in the same kind of way as 'The question is hard' is related to 'The chair is hard'. In the latter pair of sentences we do not have a case of simple ambiguity; as in ' - is a bank'. It is not entirely clear that there is any difference in meaning between the predicate ascribed to the chair, and the predicate ascribed to the question. What is evident here is that the property attributed to the chair is not the same property as the property attributed to the question. What is involved in the chair's hardness includes being resistant to the touch, uncomfortable for sitting on, improved by cushions, etc. A question cannot have this property. A question cannot be harder, or less hard, than a chair. Yet there clearly is a close relationship of some kind between the property possessed by the question, and the property possessed by the chair. Now it seems reasonable to me to describe ' - is hard' when ascribed to a question, as a metaphorical extension of ' - is hard' when ascribed to physical objects; admittedly the metaphor is old, tired, and scarcely discernible; if this bothers us we will have to pretend that we are living at a time when the metaphor was fresh - perhaps having been recently introduced by some

prehistoric orator. For we are going to investigate what, for instance, would be the satisfactory account of ' - is hard' as applied to questions - to explain what goes on in such metaphorical extension, and attempt to extend our theory for this and other similar cases to the central instances of Theistic language such as 'God is a person'.

Aquinas, we may remember, rejected the view that the central cases of religious language such as 'God is a person' were metaphorical, on the ground that if X is metaphorically P, then it is not really P at all. It was for this reason that he insisted that the analogical - his characterisation of much religious language - was a branch of the literal. I will be arguing ultimately that this rejection of metaphor involves a confusion. Let me first sketch at slightly greater length those lines of thought which I claim involve the confusion.

The Theist might be half inclined to accept that 'God is a person' is literally false, but that this sentence is the best that CRB's can do in trying to capture a central feature of their God, given their limited knowledge and understanding of him. On the other hand, the Theist may also feel an opposite inclination - to deny that there is any sense in which 'God is a person' is false. He would feel like asserting that it is after all, one of the most important statements that he wishes to make about God; his view could be that though God may elude CRB knowledge and understanding to a degree - God is at least what CRB's think he is, rather than merely different from what CRB's think he is. Hence, on this view, 'God is a person' is not so much false as insufficient.

A similar little debate can be held over many non-religious examples of metaphor - e.g. those used to describe features of personality. Consider 'Alice has a sharp tongue'. On the one hand it may be felt that this is literally false, since there is nothing sharp about Alice's tongue - it would not cut paper, etc. On the other hand it may equally be claimed that there is something that is really true, which we express by saying that

Alice has a sharp tongue.

I would argue that the confusion present in Aquinas and in these 'debates' may be dispelled once we reach an understanding of what type of item is appropriately characterised by the predicate ' - is metaphorical'. I am going to argue that there is one category of item to which ' is metaphorical' is primarily ascribable. In using the expression 'primarily' I have in mind Aquinas' example ' - is healthy', where we can say that ' - is healthy' is primarily ascribable to living things, and then, secondarily, to their diet, their complexion, etc. Without the primary application of ' - is healthy' to living things, there could not be secondary applications for complexions, diets, ways of life, etc; but there could certainly be primary applications of ' - is healthy' without any secondary applications. In common speech we ascribe the predicate ' - is metaphorical' to a great variety of items; - to meanings, words, expressions, sentences, uses of sentences, etc. It will be my contention that ' - is metaphorical' is primarily ascribable to one of these categories, and hence ascribable to others in a secondary fashion.

Let us assume, as in the chapter on Anti-realism, the Dummett-Frege bipartite notion of the 'meaning' of a sentence (as uttered by a speaker on a particular occasion) as being made up of 'sense' and 'force'. To grasp the meaning of a sentence is to know the condition in which it is true. I want also to assume that kinds of 'force' are kinds of illocutionary force - as discussed, for instance in Searle's 'Speech Acts'⁵. Following Austin Searle observes: 'Some of the English verbs denoting illocutionary acts are "state", "describe", "assert", "warn", "remark", "comment", "command", "order", "request", "criticize", "apologize", "censure", "approve", "welcome", "promise", "object", "demand" and "argue"'.⁶ With these assumptions we may proceed.

Whatever is finally settled upon as the primary vehicle for the ascription of the predicate ' - is metaphorical' must meet the following necessary condition; that if something is metaphorical, this entails that it is not

literal. The reverse entailment need not obtain - if something is not literal, it might be ironical, hyperbolic, etc. I think we can see the necessity for the entailment if we sample instances of applications of " - is metaphorical". We can do this even before we have made up our minds about the question of to which category of item " - is metaphorical" is primarily ascribed. 'He spoke metaphorically' certainly entails 'He did not speak literally'. 'That is a metaphorical expression' entails 'That is not a literal expression', and so on.

Without additional qualification, expression types and sentence types fail to meet the necessary condition as just set out. In Ancient Greece, Socrates might have said, albeit in stilted fashion: 'I have enabled you to conceive of a new theory'. There would have been metaphor here, drawn from a biological context. But if a teacher of philosophy said this to his student in 1982 there need be no metaphor present at all. It is a common place that language is full of dead metaphor - e.g. 'full' in the latter observation. Dead metaphor is no longer metaphor at all. Suppose we are moved by this point to say, not that sentence types are the primary vehicle for the ascription of the predicate ' - is metaphorical', or, for that matter, expression types, but that tokens of them are at particular times. We suggest, that is that a particular utterance - an auditory or inscriptional token of a sentence or expression may be characterised, as such, in primary fashion, as metaphorical, literal, etc. I would argue that this move also fails to meet the necessary condition set out above. Imagine that a token of 'Mrs. Thatcher is a strong woman' is produced. The (Fregean) sense of this might be that Mrs. Thatcher is possessed of considerable physical strength. Or, on the other hand, its sense might be that Mrs. Thatcher is a very determined and effective woman. Which sense is expressed depends on a number of factors which we lump together and call the 'context'. Now, a context is conceivable in which an utterance of this sentence could express both senses at the same time; admittedly this is rather unlikely. Poets,

however, often succeed in expressing a number of senses in one single line of verse. The point I want to make is that utterances per se could be both metaphorical and literal; they fail to meet the necessary condition, and so should not be regarded as the primary candidates for the ascription of ' - is metaphorical'.

Can we take the sense itself as something to which ' - is metaphorical' is primarily ascribed? I think not. If this were right, the following intolerable implications would arise. Imagine that an utterance U 'The Prime Minister is a strong woman' were used to express a sense *s* to the effect that she is a woman of great determination. This sense would, presumably be aptly characterisable as metaphorical. On the view being considered, *s* could not be expressed in an utterance distinct from U in which no metaphor was involved. For if senses per se could be the primary vehicle of ascriptions of ' - is metaphorical', they would presumably be incapable of losing or gaining the property of being metaphorical, just as they are incapable of losing or gaining a particular truth value. If they have such and such a truth value, they just have it, timelessly. Similarly, if it were true that a sense was metaphorical, that is what it would be, timelessly. Hence a view which took senses as the primary vehicles for the ascription of ' - is metaphorical' would demonstrate at an implausible stroke the dogma that no metaphorical 'truth' can be 'translated' into a literal 'truth'.

Perhaps, then, being metaphorical, being literal, and the like, are kinds of illocutionary force, on a par with being a warning, being a question, being a statement, etc. But this cannot be right either. For a question may or may not involve metaphor; a command may be phrased literally or metaphorically, etc. Conclusive on this point is the observation made by Cohen that illocutionary force 'disappears' in reported speech, whereas metaphor is retained. If I say 'There is a bull in the next field', the force of my utterance may well be that of a warning. Later, someone may report me as follows: 'He warned Jones that there was a bull in the field'.

The force of my utterance is reported, but it is no longer actually functioning; there is no force of warning in the report of my speech. Cohen invites us to consider the example: 'The boy next door is a ball of fire'. If the metaphor here were somehow the illocutionary force of the utterance then it ought to disappear when this sentence appears in reported speech - i.e. as in 'Tom said that the boy next door is a ball of fire'. But whatever metaphorical life there is in 'ball of fire' when applied to the boy next door, it is equally present in direct and indirect speech. Therefore, being metaphorical is not a form of illocutionary force⁷.

Finally, should '- is metaphorical' be regarded as a modifier of the main description of the illocutionary force of an utterance. There clearly are such modifiers - e.g. 'He commended the speech warmly', 'She questioned him searchingly', 'He warned her kindly' etc. I do think that 'metaphorically' may grammatically modify an illocutionary force description - 'He warned me metaphorically', 'She stated it metaphorically', but it rarely if ever logically modifies that description. Let me explain. Consider the following. 'Rudy is an attractive ballet dancer'. This can be read either as 'Rudy dances attractively' or as 'Rudy dances ballet and is attractive in some other way'. In the first reading we take 'attractively' as logically modifying Rudy's dancing; in the second reading we do not: 'attractively' is only a grammatical modifier⁸.

So, *prima facie* there are two ways of construing (W) 'I warn you metaphorically'. (1) We take 'metaphorically' as logically modifying 'warn', so it means 'I am only warning you metaphorically - this is not a full blooded literal warning at all'. Or (2) we take 'metaphorically' as a grammatical modifier only, so we read (W) as 'I am warning you, and I am using metaphorical language to do so'. The logical modifier reading does not seem to me to make much sense, whereas the grammatical modifier reading is perfectly in order. And it brings me to the point where I can put

forward my own answer to the question 'To what is the predicate ' - is metaphorical' primarily ascribed'? - having now explained why I cannot accept a number of apparently possible answers.

' - is metaphorical' in my view primarily characterises the way a particular utterance expresses the sense which it in fact expresses on the occasion on which it occurs. So an utterance may be described as having such and such an illocutionary force, and also its mode of expression can be characterised as metaphorical, literal, etc. If the utterance expresses its sense metaphorically, this does exclude the possibility that it expresses that sense on that occasion literally; thus the necessary condition set out earlier is fulfilled. My view permits the bare possibility, mentioned earlier, that an utterance might on a particular occasion express two or more senses. It might even express one sense literally, and another sense metaphorically, on that occasion.

This view does allow for the fact that we characterise in ordinary speech all sorts of things as 'metaphorical'. I would claim that such ascriptions are 'secondary'. Hence we say that 'planning blight' is a metaphorical expression based on disease afflicting certain plants - e.g. potatoes. What this means is that a sentence such as 'The value of Jones' house was adversely affected by planning blight' is 'typically' used to express a sense metaphorically. But the metaphor is already a fairly lifeless affair - and in time could become entirely moribund; we could imagine a future, in particular, where plants no longer acquired 'blight' yet where the expression 'planning blight' retained currency in the language. We would then have that same sentence 'The value of Jones house was adversely affected by planning blight' as 'typically' expressing a sense literally. What I am maintaining is that at present 'planning blight' is said to be metaphorical, but that this is only in a secondary fashion, on the basis of the fact that sentences containing it are currently used to express senses metaphorically.

We are now ready to return to Aquinas' objection to characterising

central theistic statements as metaphorical, and to explain the allegation of confusion. The sense metaphorically expressed by 'Alice has a sharp tongue' is, at least in part, the thought that she is good at saying nasty things. And if it is true that she is good at saying nasty things, there is nothing half-baked about this truth; it is not, because metaphorically expressed, a watered down kind of truth. What is metaphorical is not the truth but the way it is expressed. We have not yet discussed how this happens; we will be investigating this shortly when we move on to consider theories of metaphor.

Aquinas need not object to saying of the most important and central religious assertions that they are metaphorical, on the ground that this means that they are not really true. If it is true that God is a rock, then whatever sense an utterance of 'God is a rock' might express metaphorically, just is true, not in any sense 'half true'. Part of the sense that is expressed metaphorically is that God is such as to be worthy of complete and unqualified trust, or something of that kind. And if God is being said to be like this, there is nothing half-hearted about the assertion, as perhaps is suggested by the idiom 'metaphorically true'. A consequence of saying that 'God is a rock' expresses its sense metaphorically is that we can go on to say - 'But God is not really a rock'. However, when we say the latter, we are not retracting the sense that might be expressed by the first utterance. We are ruling out a possible sense that the first utterance might have expressed, had it been doing its expressing literally and not metaphorically - viz. a sense to the effect that God is physically a rock - of granite constitution, perhaps.

At first sight, the same kind of analysis of 'God is a person' is less convincing, but I hope to show that, in the end, the same kind of thing can be said about all such examples. If 'God is a person' can metaphorically express a sense, that sense or proposition can have a truth value in as full a fashion as any other sense or proposition that is literally expressed.

Now, a consequence of saying that 'God is a person' expresses its sense metaphorically ought to be, following the 'rock' case, that we can go on to say 'But God is not really a person'. Unlike the 'rock' case, this would seriously worry the Theist. He does want to say that God really is a person. On the view that I am putting forward, when we say that God is not really a person, we are not retracting the genuine and important sense which an utterance of 'God is a person' may metaphorically express. We are, rather, denying that possible sense which it might have expressed, had it expressed a sense literally.

Suppose for a moment what I am denying - that 'God is a person' expresses its sense literally when uttered by a Theist in an appropriate religious context. If this were so, there would seem to be no reason why we should not treat the ascription of the predicate ' - is a person' in the divine context as being similar to the ascription of that same predicate in, say 'Jones is a person'. Hence the kind of personhood being attributed to God would at least involve the same property - that of being a person, as that attributed to Jones. Yet, of course, I have argued that whatever it is about God in virtue of which 'God is a person' is true differs significantly from whatever it is about Jones in virtue of which 'Jones is a person' is true. This strongly suggests, then, that 'God is a person' cannot express its sense literally in the characteristic religious context of utterance. We do not, however, have an argument here for the claim that it expresses its sense metaphorically instead. At the moment I am trying to show the plausibility of suggesting that it is expressing its sense metaphorically, by showing how it compares with other examples which clearly do involve metaphorical expression.

We certainly feel uneasy about the apparent implication of characterising the mode of sense expression as metaphorical - viz. that God is not really a person. Our unease should be dispelled once it is pointed out that the same resistance to the implication - of the form 'But S is not really P' may be

experienced in many other cases which are less controversially described as metaphorical. These are the cases of 'irreducible metaphor' noted by Alston⁹ and added to by Searle¹⁰. Alston cites cases of language about mental states - 'the stabbing pain', 'she feels depressed', etc. These are, as he puts it 'in the position of metaphors that cannot die'¹¹. In addition Searle mentions spatial language that is used about time. For example, 'Time flies', 'The hours crawled by' - 'I don't want to cut my stay short'. An interesting feature of these examples, as well as of 'God is a person' and the like, is that it is counter-intuitive to follow them up with a remark of the form: 'But X is not really P'. For example, we should apparently follow a claim that 'I have a stabbing pain' expresses its sense metaphorically, with 'But the pain is not really stabbing'. The denial is supposed to rule out a possible sense that the sentence might have expressed literally, to the effect that a pain could really stab you, say in the leg, as could a knife or a dagger. Yet such a denial is admittedly difficult to take seriously, since we do wish to maintain, actually, that the pain really is a stabbing pain. Again, consider the assertion that 'The hours crawled by' expresses its sense metaphorically. We are supposed to follow this up with something like: 'But they did not really crawl by'. Our denial is supposed to rule out a possible sense that the first sentence might express literally, to the effect that hours might really crawl, as do crocodiles or babies. And again, we feel a reluctance to go ahead with the denial, in view of our concern to maintain that the hours really did crawl by.

It seems characteristic of irreducible metaphor of the form 'S is P' that the implied denial 'But S is not really P' 'feels' wrong. I would claim that this feeling is not symptomatic of the presence of any cogent philosophical reasons for failing to make the denial in these sorts of cases.

We now need to explain in a little more detail what irreducible metaphor is supposed to be, and to show that if central Theistic statements such as 'God is a person' express a sense metaphorically at all, then irreducible

metaphor is the kind of metaphor that is concerned. Suppose 'Jones is cold' metaphorically expresses a sense *s* (to the effect that Jones is not given to displays of emotion, and, indeed, does not seem to feel anything very strongly). We can also express a sense *s'* which has a close affinity to *s*. An utterance of: 'Jones is unemotional' would literally express such a sense *s'*. But *s'* cannot be identified with *s*, for what we are compelled to call the 'coldness' of Jones character has somehow been omitted; what has been left out is a resemblance of some kind between Jones' character and the physical quality of coldness. (This way of treating the matter needs defence; I provide this shortly). When I go on to discuss theories of metaphor I will have some more to say; and the notion of irreducible metaphor itself requires some defence. Black¹² and others who deny in general that metaphors can be provided with literal paraphrases would not want to make the distinction between irreducible and reducible metaphors at all.

Why, if 'God is a person' expresses its sense metaphorically, can there be no possible utterance which would express that very same sense literally? Imagine that 'God is a person', when uttered on a particular occasion, metaphorically expresses a sense *s*. And suppose also, now, for the sake of reductio, that it is also possible to express *s* literally in an utterance of a distinct sentence (S) 'God is Q'. Since the predicate ' - is Q' occurs in such a literal context, there would be no reason to think that a different property would be attributed to God in an utterance of (S) from the property attributed to Jones in 'Jones is Q'. But it has already been argued that there must be aspects of that about God in virtue of which he is a person which differ essentially from that about any created item in virtue of which it would be a person. Hence it could not be the case that the same property would be attributed to God in an utterance of (S) as would be attributed to Jones in an utterance of 'Jones is Q'. From this it seems to follow that the possibility that *s* might be literally expressed by an utterance of (S)

is rule|out. It looks as though any alternative mode of expressing s will involve just as much metaphorical expression as the original 'God is a person', if, indeed, the latter involves metaphor at all. It is characteristic of irreducible metaphor that any attempt at alternative modes of expressing whatever sense is concerned also involves metaphorical expression.

3. COMPARISON METAPHOR

I now want to defend the thesis that the central assertions of religious discourse about a transcendent God involve comparison metaphors. In order to do this, I need to explain what comparison metaphors are supposed to be, and to examine alternative theories of metaphor, together with some of their objections to comparison theories. I do not claim that all metaphor involves comparison; I suggest that discussions of metaphor often suffer from the implicit assumption that there is just one kind of phenomenon called metaphor; in my view there are quite a variety of semantic phenomena at issue here.

Aristotle is the classical source of comparison theory. He examines the question of metaphor both in his 'Rhetorica' and in his 'De Poetica'. Whilst approving strongly of metaphor, he clearly thought of it as something extra - added to the language to make it more vivid. He remarks: 'Clearness is secured by using the words (nouns and verbs) alike that are normal and ordinary',¹³. Aristotle thought that 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else',¹⁴, and that this essentially involves comparison. He observes: 'The simile is a metaphor: the difference is but slight. When the poet says of Achilles that he "leapt on the foe as a lion" this is simile: when he says of him "The lion leapt", it is a metaphor - here, since both are courageous, he has transferred to Achilles the name of 'lion',¹⁵. And he adds a little later: '...those which succeed as metaphors will obviously do well as similes, and similes, with the explanation omitted, will appear as metaphors',¹⁶.

Aristotle has been alleged by some to hold a form of 'object comparison' theory of metaphor. According to such a theory, metaphor puts the name 'A'

of one object in the place of 'B', the name of another object, to suggest a comparison between A and B. Thus Achilles is referred to as a lion, implying that Achilles and the lion resemble each other in one or more respects. The comparison theory in this form is open to the obvious objection that the object selected and suggested for comparison may not exist. For instance, one might say of a mean professional colleague at Christmas: 'Scrooge has gone into his room'. The objection depends on the thought that it would be nonsense to say that a real existent resembled something which did not exist, in such and such respects, since objects which do not exist cannot have properties. I shall assume that this thought is right¹⁷. (To anyone who wanted to argue that non-existent objects can have properties, I would simply say that I would rather avoid the issue, especially as a more plausible version of a comparison theory which I support does not involve the comparison of 'objects' at all).

Aristotle's account of simple metaphors involving comparisons - those which can, on his view, just as easily be expressed in similes, suggest that such metaphors can be 'paraphrased' by literal alternatives. That is to say, in terms of the conceptual framework employed in the last section, the sense expressed metaphorically by a certain utterance, can also be expressed literally by a distinct utterance.

A more plausible version of the comparison theory, but still in the Aristotelian tradition, is that properties rather than objects are compared. A property of Achilles, for example, is implied by the metaphor to be like a property of a lion. By 'property' is meant 'universal', as opposed to actual instances of properties - the universal redness, rather than the redness of the pillar box near the police station in the centre of Sheffield - the universal courage, rather than the courage exhibited by Achilles on a particular occasion. Such a theory enables us, say, to speak of the property of being a dragon as being more like the property of being a lizard than it is like the property of being a horse, and other things of this kind. There

do not have to be such things as real dragons for a property comparison account of a metaphor such as 'Mrs. Jones is a dragon' to be intelligible. On such an account, certain universals exemplified by Mrs. Jones are said, by means of an utterance of this sentence, to resemble certain universals associated with dragons.

The 'property comparison' version of a comparison theory of metaphor escapes another objection levelled by Searle¹⁸ against such theories. He objects that even if the object with which the comparison is made does exist, it may not possess the appropriate property. Consider 'Richard is a gorilla'. This, on the comparison view, compares properties of Richard with properties of a gorilla; if sufficient resemblances obtain between the properties, then an utterance of the sentence in question may express a sense or proposition that is true. In most contexts, it is clear that the properties of gorillas being put forward for comparison would be such as fierceness, nastiness and proneness to violence. 'But suppose ethological investigation shows... that gorillas are not at all fierce and nasty'¹⁹.

My response to this is that since it is universals that are being compared, and not instances of properties, it would not matter in the least if gorillas turned out not to have those properties that most people at present believe them to have. The presence of the term 'gorilla' may be regarded simply as an aid to the identification of which universal(s) are being referred to; it can perform this role even if gorillas turn out not to have those characteristics that most people at present believe them to have. Of course, once the gentle nature of gorillas became common knowledge, then, over the long term at least, it would become impossible to use a token of 'Richard is a gorilla' to express metaphorically the sense it could easily express at present.

It is argued by Searle and others that it must be incorrect to construe all metaphors as comparisons, for in some cases there is no such similarity as a comparison should reveal. Now I do not want to say, as, indeed I remarked

earlier, that every case of what might reasonably be called metaphor involves comparison. Nonetheless, since the examples Searle uses to refute, as he thinks, comparison theories are those very examples of metaphor that I am claiming to be closest to sentences of religious language such as 'God is a person' I will dwell for a while on his comments.

Searle would deny, for example, that there is any similarity between coldness and being unemotional which would support 'Alice is cold' in a metaphorical expression of a sense to the effect that Alice is unemotional. In 'Time flies' or 'The hours crawled by' there is nothing, according to him, that time does and the hours do which is literally like flying or crawling. Instead, he thinks that metaphors of this kind are based on mere psychological association - contingent facts about our sensibilities, whether culturally or naturally determined. The plausibility of his contentions here rests upon the fact that some examples rather like the ones he gives quite clearly do rest upon 'facts about our sensibilities'. There is no similarity, for example, between sad music and a sad person. We can sometimes say, (perhaps) metaphorically, that the music is sad because, as a result of our contingent sensibilities, the music makes us feel sad. As this example looks rather like Aquinas' 'healthy' example, some might prefer not to call it metaphor at all, but to speak of 'analogy' instead.

Nevertheless, I am inclined to dispute that Searle is correct on examples of metaphors about mental states, abstract objects, time, etc. If he is right about any, he is certainly not right about all. I want to assert, for example, that there is a similarity between hardness - the property of a chair (for instance), and hardness - the property of a question; a similarity between the property of being hot or fiery, and the property of being prone to sudden fits of temper ('hot tempered' etc.). Searle's dismissal of a comparison account strikes me as specially implausible for those cases where terms are transferred from one sensory modality to another - 'A sharp sound (touch to sound), 'A rough sound' (the same) 'harmonious colours'

(sound to sight) etc.

But again, the issue is confused, and Searle's line made to seem more convincing than it should be by the presence even in this area of some instances which do seem to fit what he says. A 'loud colour', for instance, is not a colour which possesses a non-relational property which resembles some non-relational property that a sound might possess. The situation is rather that as a result of our contingent sensibilities, certain colours and certain sounds cause us to notice them particularly; we notice loud sounds particularly, hence we call certain colours that we notice more than others, 'loud', etc. (Though this may not be the full story - there is a suggestion of vulgarity in 'loud colour').

Searle's argument that in none of these cases can the metaphor be based on any kind of similarities is simply that the similarities cannot be stated. '...the bald assertion of similarity, with no specification of the respect of similarity, is without content'²⁰. His remarks seem to me to ignore the possibility that there may be genuine similarities which are such that they cannot be said to obtain by means of any utterance which expresses its sense literally. Searle assumes that a 'literal similarity' must be capable of literal expression. This could be a substantial thesis. If so, we are entitled to ask him how he knows it to be true - he has not shown it. He might make it a matter of definition that a literal similarity was capable of literal expression. We could then ask him why there should not also be similarities not literal in his sense. What, if any grounds could there be for the claim that such similarities would not be 'genuine' similarities? There might be different reasons why different brands of similarities could not be specified literally.

Why we should be unable, for example, to explain in literal terms what the similarity is between the hardness of a question and the hardness of a chair is difficult to say. But is the onus on us to explain, failing which any claimed similarity can be denied? After all, we can provide an

explanation of the similarity of a kind - that the question makes us feel uncomfortable - it resists solution - hard objects also can make us feel uncomfortable - they are resistant to the touch. Yet our 'explanation' still seems to be couched in metaphorical form. Indeed, I think that the 'hard question' is an example of irreducible metaphor, and any attempt to describe the similarity between the hardness of the question and the hardness of objects will involve metaphorical expression. But does any of this suggest that there cannot be a similarity? I cannot see that it does.

In the case of religious language, of course, the Theist will explain that God's ontological transcendence prevents many of his aspects from being specified literally, for the possibility of literal specification seems to entail the possibility that God has the same property that a created item could in principle possess. And there are divine properties of which this is not true.

Let me summarise now the version of the property comparison theory which I think is appropriate for, say 'Man is a wolf', and for many other similar examples, and state how the theory might work for religious statements. The comparison theory, as I see it, does not pretend to provide a comprehensive explanation of how given sentence types with such and such meanings, are capable of such and such metaphorical expression of such and such senses. It claims rather to give a basic sketch of the content of the sense of an utterance which is expressed metaphorically. 'Man is a wolf' can metaphorically express a sense with the following content: certain universals exemplified in man resemble certain universals thought to be exemplified by wolves. Like Olscamp²¹ I want to say that, in cases where the sense takes a truth value, the matter is settled by whether enough of the claimed resemblances obtain. The sense expressed by many of these utterances involving comparison metaphor could equally well be expressed literally by an utterance of a distinct sentence; in such an explicit literal formulation, the respective universals would be identified, and the respects in which the resemblances were supposed

to hold would be spelled out.

Also, there are irreducible comparison metaphors. The sense expressed by these is still to the effect that similarities obtain between certain universals. 'The question is hard' can say that certain universals exemplified by this question resemble in some respects universals believed to be exemplified by physically hard things. 'Time flies' can say that our perception of the passing of time exemplifies certain universals, which resemble in certain respects universals believed to be exemplified by flying objects, etc. Alternative means of expression of the nature of the similarities are available, but these will still be metaphorical. No utterances can literally express a sense, the content of which is the nature of the similarities in question.

Black,²² and later Searle himself, objects to comparison theories because they are too vague. Resemblance or similarity must be in some respect (s) but anything can be said to resemble anything in some respect. 'Inasmuch as similarity is a vacuous predicate we need to be told in what respect two things are similar for the statement that they are similar to have informative content'.²³

Now I defend a comparison theory to defend the point that the obtaining of resemblances is part of the truth condition of the sense of proposition that gets metaphorically expressed. This is, in some sense, a rather general and 'vague' thesis. If Searle is suggesting that, say, the sentence type 'Man is a wolf' - the standard meanings of the words it contains - is not alone sufficient for fixing the sense which it may metaphorically express, he is right, but would not be right to complain about it. The sentence taken by itself fails to indicate in what respects the similarity is supposed to hold. Nevertheless, anyone able to use and understand the sentence, having an adequate grasp of the semantic rules for the use of 'man', 'wolf', together with a background of knowledge and culture essential to the language user, will be pointed by the meaning of the sentence type in the right direction.

In addition - the full detail of the context of utterance - the speaker and hearer's shared beliefs about mankind, their previous conversation, etc. will finally clinch the respects in which the comparison is being made. I said that the context 'finally clinches' the respects in which the resemblances are being asserted. Yet it is true that in many cases, at least, no very exact range of resemblances has to obtain to a precise degree for the metaphorical expression to succeed. I agree with Black that metaphors, like much other language, are not intended to be absolutely precise. But this does not mean that they do not have truth conditions. If insufficient resemblances obtain then the sense which is metaphorically expressed is not true.

'God is a person' can say, metaphorically, that certain universals exemplified by God resemble in certain respects universals believed to be exemplified by, e.g. humans who are persons. No literal expression of the resemblances is possible. That the resemblances obtain is, on the view I am defending, part of the content of the sense or proposition which such a sentence could metaphorically express.

Again, someone like Searle might be inclined to complain that this proposal is vague. The only response to this is that we have to rely upon the context of the utterance of a sentence such as 'God is a person' to ensure that a reasonably precise sense is expressed. This context is likely to consist of a community of religious believers, who worship together. Each of them takes it that their fellow members are directing worship to the same unsurpassable being as the being who is the object of their own worship. Each will be aware of at least some of their fellows' beliefs about God. Some of these beliefs may not be expressible in language, and some of them will not be entirely comprehensible (see the previous chapter for discussion of this). It may be that the community in question has some kind of shared religious experience. All these features of context serve to constrain the possible senses that 'God is a person' might express. Were we able to be

entirely explicit and precise about how this happens we would almost have given a specification of the sense itself in so doing. However, it has been argued that no literal specification is possible. Hence we will have to rest content with our general reflections here on the influence of context.

I now turn to a brief consideration of alternative theories of metaphor, explaining why, at the very least, they cannot cover all metaphor, and also why they would not help the Theist. First, I will look briefly at Max Black's well known 'interaction' view of metaphor. He considers 'Man is a wolf'. It has, he claims, two subjects; man or men, the principle subject, and Wolf or wolves - which is the subsidiary subject. To understand the metaphor we need to understand the system of 'associated commonplaces' concerning wolves that they are fierce, carnivorous, treacherous, etc. This is a system of popular beliefs about wolves, not all of which may be true'. The effect, then, of (metaphorically) calling a man a "wolf" is to evoke the wolf-system of related commonplaces. If the man is a wolf, he preys upon other animals, is fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle ... each of these implied assertions has now to be made to fit the principle subject (the man) either in normal or abnormal senses... Any human trait that can without undue strain be talked about in "Wolf language" will be rendered prominent, and any that cannot will be pushed into the background'.²⁴ For Black, the meaning of the metaphor is somehow a result of the interaction of a system of beliefs about man, with a system of beliefs - which need not be true, about wolves. Black denies that a literal expression of the metaphor is possible - 'the loss in such cases is a loss in cognitive content...it (the literal paraphrase) fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did'.²⁵ Black does allow that there may be such things as comparison metaphors, but claims that they are trivial and unimportant.

The problem I have with Black's view, is that he is not so much wrong,

as not talking about the sense which may get itself metaphorically expressed. When he says that the meaning of a metaphor is the result of an 'interaction' he is surely talking about the psychological effect of the metaphor on the hearer. Now, the effect of the metaphor on the hearer - indeed, the effect of any utterance on the hearer cannot be identified with the sense of the utterance, although clearly the effect on the hearer will to some extent depend on the sense expressed by the utterance. Since the version of comparison theory that I am advancing aims to explain what the sense of certain metaphorical utterances is, Black's comments about 'interaction' are compatible, for the most part, with a comparison account of sense. Black's observations about the unavailability of literal paraphrases are seriously misleading, however. It may be that an utterance which literally expresses the same sense as that expressed metaphorically by a distinct utterance, will not have the same effect on a hearer - it will not be so effective, so vivid, etc. But this does not show that the sense expressed by a metaphorical utterance involving Black's process of 'interaction' cannot also be expressed by a literal utterance.

Searle criticises both comparison theories and interaction theories to such an extent that he feels obliged to put forward a theory of his own. He argues that the idea of comparison may be involved in the process of comprehension of metaphor but is not, as he puts it, part of the meaning of metaphor since the existence of similarity is not part of the truth condition of the sense expressed metaphorically by whatever utterance is in question. Since I have already rejected in the foregoing discussion much of Searle's criticism of comparison theory I do not feel obliged, as he does, to abandon comparison theory. Furthermore, the Theist has particular reason to reject Searle's view. Searle inquires: 'How is it possible for the speaker to say metaphorically 'S is P' and mean 'S is R' where P plainly does not mean R: furthermore, how is it possible for the hearer who hears the utterance 'S is P' to know that the speaker means 'S is R'? Searle's

broad answer, which he details in a complex and sophisticated way at the end of his paper is that the utterance of P calls to mind the meaning, and hence, truth condition, associated with R in the special ways that metaphorical utterances have of calling other things to mind, and he specifies some of these ways. Reverting now to our example of 'God is a person', a Searlian view of it would be roughly as follows. The Theist says 'God is a person', meaning 'God is X', where 'person' plainly does not mean the same as 'X', but somehow 'God is a person' calls to mind the meaning, and hence truth conditions associated with X. Now the meaning and truth conditions associated with ' - is X' are available to the Theist if at all via the same sort of metaphorical language of which 'God is a person' is (or so I have suggested) in the first place. We saw earlier that language about God, if metaphorical because of his ontological transcendence, must be irreducibly metaphorical. Otherwise his ontological transcendence is ultimately infringed. And now, on the Searle view, the Theist will have the same problem in understanding 'God is X' as he had in understanding 'God is a person', and a vicious infinite regress threatens to ensue; vicious since before the Theist can understand one piece of irreducibly metaphorical language about God he must understand an infinite number of other pieces of irreducibly metaphorical language.

In his paper 'What metaphors mean'²⁷ Davidson argues that there is no special metaphorical dimension of meaning, but that metaphors are sentences with an ordinary literal meaning which have certain effects: 'Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight'.²⁸ '...what we attempt in 'paraphrasing' a metaphor cannot be to give its meaning, for that lies on the surface: rather, we attempt to evoke what the metaphor brings to our attention'.²⁹ I agree with Davidson that expression types and sentence types do not have anything other than their ordinary meaning when figuring in an utterance which expresses a sense metaphorically. But in my view it is the combination of the words in

their standard meaning with the context of the utterance that enables the sense to get expressed metaphorically. As against Davidson, I would want to deny that any literal expression of a sense goes on in the course of an utterance which expresses a sense metaphorically. Davidson's idea would be, presumably, that in say 'Man is a wolf' we have a sense literally expressed to the effect that Man is a wolf, and that though this is false, it evokes certain effects in the hearer. But surely, no such sense is expressed. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what such a sense would be if it were expressed - it would be nearer incoherence than falsity. And other more interesting metaphors would provide intractable problems for Davidson's claim that a sense is literally expressed:

'But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For doves to peck at'

(Othello)

It is arguable that a perfectly clear and coherent sense gets expressed metaphorically here. But if we asked Davidson to provide us with a literally expressed sense which has such and such effects, I suspect that he would be utterly at a loss.

To conclude this discussion of transcendence language, let us take stock of what a theory of comparison metaphor can do for the Theist. It will be recalled that the first question we posed was: how is it possible for the Theist to say something different about God from what he would have said about a created object with the same language? The suggestion made in this chapter is that the Theist uses comparison metaphor. We defended the answer by showing that comparison metaphor appears to achieve similar feats in other contexts. We attribute a different property to a sound, when we say 'It was a sharp sound' from the property we attribute to a knife when we say 'It was a sharp knife'. In doing this, it was argued, we express a sense to the effect that certain similarities obtain between the universal sharpness, exemplified by, say knives, and certain universals exemplified by the sound in question. Context of utterance plays an

important role in determining what these similarities are supposed to be.

If the Theist does indeed use comparison metaphor to speak of a transcendent God, then, we saw, this metaphor may well have to be irreducible.

NOTES

- 1 Summa la 4 2
- 2 Summa la 13 6
- 3 'Analogy and the resolution of some cognitivity problems.'
Journal of Philosophy 1970 p739-40
- 4 I owe this point, I think, to Mavrodes. 'On Ross's Theory of
Analogy', Journal of Philosophy 1970 p752
- 5 As discussed, for instance, in Chapter 2
- 6 Searle op cit p23
- 7 c.f. 'Semantics of Metaphor', L. J. Cohen in 'Metaphor and Thought'
ed. A. Ortony, C.U.P 1979
- 8 I owe this example to M. Platts 'Ways of Meaning' p164
Routledge and Kegan Paul 1979
- 9 'Philosophy of Language' Last Chapter, Prentice Hall 1964
- 10 'Metaphor' p109 especially - in 'Metaphor and Thought' ed. Ortony
- 11 Alston op cit p105
- 12 Max Black 'Metaphor' in 'Models and Metaphors' Ithaca N.Y.
Cornell University Press
- 13 Rhetorica 1404 b5
- 14 De Poetica 1457b
- 15 Rhetorica 1406 b20
- 16 Rhetorica 1407 a10
- 17 It is argued for by A. Plantinga in Ch 8 of 'The Nature of Necessity'
Clarendon Press, Oxford 1974
- 18 See his contribution to the Ortony volume
- 19 Searle (Ortony) p102
- 20 op cit p109
- 21 P. J. Olscamp 'How some Metaphors may be True or False', Journal
of Aesthetics and Art Criticism Fall 1970
- 22 Max Black op cit
- 23 Searle, Ortony volume p111
- 24 Black op cit p41
- 25 Black op cit p46
- 26 Searle, Ortony volume p113
- 27 In 'Reference, Truth and Reality, ed M. Platts p238-253
Routledge and Kegan Paul 1980
- 28 op cit p253
- 29 op cit p252