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# **DIVINE COMMAND THEORY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICS**

**Mark Ian Thomas Robson**

**M.A. Thesis**

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**The University of Durham  
Department of Philosophy  
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2 JUL 1996

# Divine Command Theory And The Foundations Of Ethics

Mark Ian Thomas Robson

The author defends a version of the Divine command theory of ethics. He distinguishes two main areas of criticism that are brought against such a conception:

1. The Divine command ethics compromises the autonomy of the moral agent and/or the autonomy of morality.
2. That Divine command ethics is arbitrary since God can have no elucidating reasons for what he commands to be moral. Again, should God change his mind about what is to be moral, such a change would be arbitrary since no elucidating reasons could be given.

The author tries to show how these criticisms can be met. He argues that all moral systems are in some sense and at some level arbitrary or reasonless. He employs the scholastic notion that God is Goodness-itself, along with a limited notion of God's immutability, to show that the basis of morality is fixed and eternal and not subject to arbitrary change. He tries to show how this kind of metaphysical identification can be made and rendered plausible.

The argument is broadened out to include the idea that God's Goodness is Love.

Towards the end of the thesis, the author tries to show how his version of Divine command ethics meets the demands of religious experience more successfully than theories which attempt to separate the moral from the Divine.

In conclusion, the author looks at various historical and contemporary precedents for the idea that God is to be identified with Goodness.

Dedicated  
to my brother,  
Ian Robson 1972 - 1995

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## Introduction

In this thesis I attempt to defend a version of the Divine command theory of ethics. In the first two chapters, I try to state in the strongest possible terms the arguments brought against this conception of ethics. The rest of the thesis is mostly an attempt to reply to these criticisms. This means my thesis is mostly defensive in tone. Only in chapter seven do I try to show the advantages inherent in my theory, but then only to a 'religious' audience. Those who would prefer a more attacking, positive style will, I fear, be disappointed.

Divine command ethics is usually understood as claiming that God's commands are the ultimate bedrock of morality, that if God commands X, then to do X becomes an obligation. This obligation to do X is produced purely by it being God's command. This conception of Divine command ethics is NOT the one that I attempt to defend - I argue for a modified Divine command theory. In my version, it is God's nature that provides the reason for believing that His commands oblige. It is not God's commands per se that provide reason for their own obligation, rather it is the fact that they are God's commands and that He possesses a certain type of nature.

I argue in chapter three that it is God's nature to be not merely good, but to be Goodness-itself. This Goodness is identified in chapter five as being Love. But nothing external to God makes Him good. Because God is Goodness-itself if He commands a type of action X, then X becomes obligatory. If God is pleased or gratified with type of action Y, then Y becomes supererogatory.

In the course of defending my thesis I adopt a type of Process Theology understanding of Deity. Thus in chapter four I defend the idea that God is only immutable to a limited degree - in His being Goodness-itself. I try to show how this commitment to the unchangeable moral perfection of God does not have to lead the theist into the scholastic notion that God is completely unchangeable in every aspect. Such an understanding is hard to reconcile with the Biblical understanding of Deity.



## Introduction

In chapter six I look at the criticisms of Divine command ethics that accuse it of compromising the autonomy of the individual and the autonomy of morality.

In chapter seven I try to show what religious motivations there are in adopting this modified version of Divine command theory. As I say, this chapter attempts to be more aggressive and illustrate the merits of my theory.

In the final chapter I look at the history of the metaphysical identification between God and Goodness. Here I try to show that this identification is orthodox and has been held by many theologians and philosophers.

Because my area of study comes under the broad classification of philosophical theology I run the risk of failing to satisfy both philosophers and theologians. I have tried to be more philosophical than theological in this thesis, so I am sorry if my arguments fail to meet the demands of any potential theological audience.

One final caution before the reader goes on: I have written this thesis looking mainly at the Christian tradition. Probably there are elements of my argument that apply to just about all monotheistic faiths, but I make assumptions about the nature of God that are Christian. This makes me hesitant in saying that all of my argument applies equally to all faiths. The Christian tradition is the tradition I best understand and so that is the one I concentrate on. In any case, there is not the space to examine what implication my argument has on, say, Islam.

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One of the main thrusts of any attack on a Divine command morality uses the notion of autonomy - usually it is claimed that any Divine command theory compromises the autonomy of the individual or the autonomy of morality. This particular attack has its main philosophical ancestry in the writings of Kant. To understand this particular kind of objection to any Divine command theory we must go back to Kant and discover why he, in the name of autonomy, found no significant place for God as a creative factor in the idea of morality. (Kant did, of course, have a role for God in the sense that he thought the belief in God's existence was a necessary practical postulate of morality; happiness in the summum bonum must be proportional to virtue; only God can guarantee this, so the belief in His existence is necessary for a fully practicable morality).

At the beginning of The Groundwork Kant says that he is seeking to "establish the supreme principle of morality" [Kant 1948 p.57]. Now it is just as well to mention here that there is some confusion over whether Kant meant his supreme principle to be a normative principle whereby one could determine the rightness or wrongness of a particular maxim, or whether he meant it as a criterion such that it could be determined whether a particular point of view was a moral as opposed to a non-moral point of view; that is to say, whether the point of view was moral as opposed to a scientific point of view or a musical point of view. Differing formulations of Kant's categorical imperative and some of his examples tend to support different interpretations in different places. However, for our purposes, it is the latter understanding of the supreme principle that is more important. Certainly it is the contrast between moral and non-moral points of view that is the tool usually used to underpin the idea that morality is autonomous, although, as we shall see, some modern Kantians go further and prefer to claim that any Divine command ethic inevitably introduces immoral and not just non-moral considerations into the workings of morality. Strictly speaking, this antithesis between immoral and moral instead of moral and non-moral is more in keeping with the first interpretation of Kant's supreme principle where it is

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seen as a normative test of a particular maxim.

Anyhow let us, for the time being, stick to the moral/non-moral interpretation of Kant's supreme principle. What is Kant's supreme principle that is meant to sort out morality from that which is morally neutral? Again there are many ways of formulating Kant's principle. For our purposes, I think it is best that we see it as sorting categorical from hypothetical imperatives. For Kant it is a distinguishing mark of the moral that it is categorical and not hypothetical.

What is meant by this? Kant maintained that the truly moral was dependent on nothing but rationality; morality depended not on desires or wants or temperament, rather it depended on rationality in action. Morality flows clearly and purely from rational thinking, from logical consistency. This idea can be better understood by contrasting it with hypothetical imperatives which were, for Kant, definitely non-moral in character.

Some actions are hypothetical because they depend on assumptions which are contingent in character. For example, it is a hypothetical maxim that I must dig my garden for it is contingent on my desire to keep it free of weeds. Hence the force of the imperative "dig my garden" is derivative or hypothetical, it is not categorical. It depends on my desires. For Kant, any recourse to desires to determine what I ought to do is definitely non-moral. The essence of morality is its absolute, categorical character: a truly moral action is one untainted by desire. Morality depends not on what particular temperament one happens to possess - this is just luck - it depends (as far as we can say it depends on anything) only on rationality or consistency, on whether one can "will one's action as an law of universal legislation." If one is offended by the use of the word "depends" in the last sentence it could be replaced so that morality is, in effect, dependent on nothing: we could say morality IS pure consistency or rationality in action.

But why does this kind of picture of morality cause Kant to reject any Divine command ethic? To fully appreciate his reasoning we must delve a

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little deeper into his theory and look closely at why he wanted rationality to have such a decisive role in his theory.

J. G. Murphy argues that Kant's insistence on the central role of rationality was, in part, a pre-emptive action against the empirical spirit of utilitarianism [Murphy 1970 p.38]. The central pillar of utilitarianism is the empirical observation that men desire happiness. From this observation it was deduced (falsely) that happiness was desirable, that happiness was what we ought to aim at. So the theory was founded on this fact of man's desires. Kant was unhappy about this because, like Frege with mathematics, he wanted more assurance than mere psychological conviction. Murphy comments there were a number of reasons for Kant's wish to do this, the most important, for our purposes being that he saw it as an affront to human dignity. "Kant wants to argue that such a conception of morality [like utilitarianism] is incompatible with the basic dignity of human beings, beings set apart from all other natural creatures by their freedom...To ground morality in some empirical value, in some merely contingent fact about human beings (eg their desire for happiness) is to obscure the essential character of humanity. For man is essentially a free and rational creature." [Murphy 1970 p.39].

We have now laid the ground for an understanding of why Kant rejected any Divine command ethic:

1: He believed it, like utilitarianism, founded morality on empiricism, on an essentially contingent foundation.

2: He believed it was an affront to man's dignity as a rational, autonomous being.

The first of these ideas can be read as an objection to any Divine command theory saying in effect that the autonomy of morality is being compromised, while the second obviously is concerned with the autonomy of the moral agent. I will look at the second of these objections first before I

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look more closely at the first because implicit in number one is two further objections to any Divine command morality. It will be more elegant to consider all these together.

Man's dignity is compromised by any Divine command theory because it gives primacy to God rather than man's autonomous reason. Morally and logically we cannot rely on God to tell us what we ought to do because that would mean a surrender of our moral identity. Logically our moral identity is inescapable because any such surrender is in itself a moral act. MacIntyre sums up this kind of idea well: "Suppose that a divine being, real or alleged, commands me to do something. I only ought to do what he commands if what he commands is right. But if I am in a position to judge for myself whether what he commands is right or not, then I have no need of the divine being to instruct me in what I ought to do. Inescapably, each of us is his own moral authority." [MacIntyre 1967 p.195]. It is Kant's contention that we are in a position to judge because we are free, rational creatures. Morally our moral identity is inescapable because if we did, so to speak, surrender our moral identities into the hands of divinity, that act in itself would be an immoral impugning of our basic dignity.

Some modern Kantians even use this kind of idea as a moral disproof of the existence of God. For example, Rachels starts his essay God and Human Attributes with these words from Kant, "Kneeling down or grovelling on the ground, even to express your reverence for heavenly things, is contrary to human dignity." Rachels develops this theme, arguing that God's existence is morally impossible since were he to exist then he must be worthy of worship, but worship is morally unacceptable since it "requires the abandonment of one's role as an autonomous moral agent." [Rachels 1971]. The central Kantian notion employed here is the autonomy of the moral agent.

Let us now consider the first of Kant's objections to any Divine command

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ethic - the one which says that it places morality on an essentially contingent basis.

Kant in his tellingly titled Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone again and again emphasises his belief that religion is manifestly contingent, that is to say, it is a social and historical phenomenon based on empirical statements of factual import. The main message of Kant's book is his proposal that the historical religion of Christianity should be superseded by a timeless, rational religion untied to any factual events such as, say, the death of Christ. Kant's consideration of the relative merits of a belief in Christ's atonement or a faithful adherence to duty finds more merit in the latter: "Since knowledge of the atonement belongs to ecclesiastical faith, while the improved way of life [based on duty] belongs to pure moral faith, the latter must take precedence over the former." [p.108]. Only self love can prompt a man to believe in the moral primacy of the atonement [p.107].

This idea of contingency being on improper foundation for true morality is an aspect of Kant's categorical/hypothetical distinction. The Christian religion bases its moral teaching on the sayings of an historical figure called Jesus Christ (or the Bible or the Church) - that is to say, it bases morality on an authority. Now any appeal to external authority to justify a course of action lacks true morality's essentially categorical nature. It is a mark of the categorical that it is absolutely binding on the rational man because he cannot consistently will its opposite as a universal law of legislation. The sayings of the Church may well be identical to that which duty categorically prescribes so, in one sense, they are the same. Foundationally, however, they are poles apart. Religion bases its teaching on authority whereas the categorical true morality bases itself on morality's one sure foundation - rationality.

This idea of the importance of foundations is what underlies most modern neo-Kantian attacks on the Divine command theory of ethics; founding morality on the commands of God is seen as compromising, not so

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much the autonomy of the individual, but rather the autonomy of morality itself. Although Kant never talks explicitly about the autonomy of morality - his main thrust is the autonomy of the human will - all his emphasis on foundations has led modern philosophers in this particular direction. Kant claimed that morality is in no need of empirical support - modern philosophers claim that morality "can stand upon its own two feet" to use MacLagan's vivid phrase.

Let us examine this notion of autonomy further. As we have already discovered Kant's contention is that morality can only have a foundation of a particular sort. If a set of principles is framed identical in linguistic structure to the principles of morality, but are set in improper foundations this is enough to change the fundamental character of these principles. The surface waters of morality are not enough, the truly moral man must dive beneath.

This kind of idea is easy to illustrate. Two people, Bob and Bill, both utter the same sentence: "We ought to be honest." It appears that both believe in the virtue of truthfulness. But this looking at the surface is not enough, we have got to dive deeper and ask why they put forward this recommendation. Imagine Bill says, "We ought to be honest because it pays. In the end, honesty benefits the honest person." Imagine Bob says, "We ought to be honest because we have a duty to tell the truth." It is clear that Bill and Bob have, in fact, very different beliefs about truthfulness. Bill appears to be basing his belief on the prudentiality of truthfulness, Bob on a concern for duty. Now, for Kant, Bill is basing his beliefs on a non-moral foundation and, therefore, his truth-tellings, while outwardly virtuous, are, in fact, morally indifferent. Only Bob's actions are really morally praiseworthy because they flow from his concern for duty. As Mary Midgely rightly says, "Kant said that act and motive must be seen as continuous and judged as a whole." [Midgely 1981 p.90].

Kant himself, of course, has a similar account to mine where he

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discusses the motivation of the grocer giving the correct change. [Kant 1948 p.63]

We are now in a position to analyse more closely the various charges being made against Divine command theory from this "foundationalist" approach. Two different claims can, I think, be distinguished:

- 1: The Divine command theory threatens to make morality prudential.
- 2: It threatens to reduce morality to the merely factual "X commands."

These charges are identical in the sense that they both claim any Divine command ethic gives morality non-moral foundations.

The prudential attack can be given many different forms with different emphases being employed in each account. Basically, however, it goes something like this: Either people recognize their duty or they do not. Why introduce God into the picture? If we say it is to add an extra motivating factor into morality, the moralist is bound to ask what sort of motivation it is. If it is moral motivation - that is, a concern for duty - the need for God can hardly arise, for the moral man already recognizes his duty and does what is required of him without God's interference. If God is needed because a person will not perform his duty, what can God do but to introduce further non-moral inducements into the frame? This non-moral inducement can only be prudential in character: crudely, a fear of punishment if we do wrong, the lure of reward if we do right. This prudential motivation seems enough to make morality merely an expression of egocentricity.

This view, for many modern philosophers, is such a low minded picture of morality that it actually qualifies as being immoral, not just non-moral. This, for example, is the view of D. Z. Phillips; in his From Fantasy to Faith it is a pervading doctrine that any concern for reward is immoral. Hence in one of his essays he takes it upon himself to attack any such notion, "Some philosophers and theologians, in their eagerness to commend the Gospel of the few to the many, have actually suggested that the many have

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miscalculated the world's rewards. If only they calculated properly, it is said, they would see, after all, that it is the way of the view which leads to these rewards. To come to God, you do not have to stop putting number one first, because worshipping God is really the best way of furthering the interests of number one." [Phillips 1991 p.182].

Other modern philosophers (Kovesi will be our example [Kovesi 1967]) have this concern for foundations, but differ from Kant in that what is seen as a proper foundation for ethics is different. While they keep the Kantian distinction between true morality and mere prudence, the idea of morality being essentially based on rationality or consistency is more or less discarded. Instead they insist that true morality is based upon moral notions.

For these philosophers the concern is not how a moral utterance is forwarded (as it would be for Hare) but with the content of the utterance. What distinguishes a moral from a non-moral act is not that the doer wants it to be universalized, but that the doer explains his act by referring to some justifying moral notion such as kindness, generosity, courage, not to, say, temperature or the number of atoms in a brick.

A proper moral foundation is some relevant moral notion. Now this can be turned into an attack on the Divine command theory, for Kovesi could claim that the Divine command theorist does not base his actions on any relevant moral notion. To appreciate the damaging nature of this attack an example is needed: imagine I am asked to justify some virtuous action, say, giving money to charity. Kovesi would reply by referring to some moral notion such as benevolence and say, "Because it's kind." This is impressive and people would applaud. The Divine command theorist would seem to have to say that God commanded him to. This somehow seems to miss the point - to place a question mark next to his action. His interrogator might well ask, "So is kindness irrelevant for you? Either you do it out of kindness and so God is irrelevant or you do it for God and so kindness is irrelevant." The Divine command theorist appears to have no choice but to admit that

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kindness, is at the end of the day, irrelevant to him and be summarily lambasted. At the back of this attack is the spectre of prudence: "You're only doing it to get into God's good books!"

So that, in essence, is the prudential attack. It is so damaging because of its high minded insistence on the purity of morality. Any attempt to show morality is not so pure is likely to suffer from moral contempt, like that shown by Phillips.

The second kind of "foundationalist" attack is formulated quite clearly by W. G. MacLagan in his influential, The Theological Frontiers of Ethics. If, MacLagan says, God's commands are given as a definition of what our duties are, then, "we must point out that it is a definition that does not elucidate, but on the contrary simply denies, the characteristic quality of the experience [of duty] with which our problem began. The "normative" has been elided and what can be stated in the language of positive fact alone remains." [MacLagan 1961 p.68]. MacLagan is saying that if we experience something as our duty, then we experience it as binding upon us whether or not God is brought into the equation. To translate this experience of duty into the language of "God commands" is to transform the normative into the merely factual. The essential experience of duty, that it is binding upon us, seems to be lost. The definition has not captured all it was meant to define; in fact, the core of the idea has been completely lost. Moreover, according to this vein of thought, this semantic ellipsis is a necessary phenomenon associated with any type of translation that attempts to find equivalencies between propositions stating "God commands X" and "X is our duty". If this is so, the argument continues, it must be some kind of category mistake to analyse the one in terms of the other.

Let us at this juncture turn our attention to a different way in which the autonomy attack can be expressed, that is, in terms of the isought gap. A. C. Ewing in his book Ethics expresses this line of thought very well. After discussing and rejecting attempts to define good in terms of the natural features of situations to which the word can be meaningfully applied, he

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turns to attempts in which good is defined in terms of metaphysics. He puts forward various classical objections, but finds in the end all attempts to define good, whether it be naturalistically or metaphysically, fall foul of the is\ought gap. "Metaphysical definitions, like naturalistic, err in trying to reduce the ought to the is." This he expresses, like our previous attacks, in the language of autonomy: "...they destroy what Kant calls the autonomy of ethics by refusing to recognize the uniqueness of its fundamental concepts and trying to reduce it to a mere branch of another study." [Ewing 1953 p.113 - 114. Ewing makes much the same point in Value & Reality 1973 Chapt 8.]

This idea of an is\ought gap is sometimes expressed slightly more "poetically": that is, proponents of autonomy speak of what we ought to do not being dependent on the state of the universe, e.g., what we ought to do is independent of whether the universe is friendly towards morality (MacLagan). This idea is further developed by saying that ethics is non-contingent - ought is so independent of is that what we ought to do is unchangeable.

This kind of approach is extensively worked out in Paul Johnston's Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy. Johnston claims that there is a sense in which the status of ethics is similar to that of logic, "...for both seem concerned with the world as a whole and thereby gain a strange profundity which sets them apart from those truths which are merely contingent." [Johnston 1989 p.77]. This is reminiscent of Kant's distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives. Ethics is non-contingent because its prescriptive force is independent of any contingency, of any "is", whereas hypothetical imperatives are dependent on my desires, the "is" of which is most definitely contingent.

The relevance of this notion of non-contingency to advocates of the Divine command theory is two-fold, depending on your interpretation of what is meant by non-contingent. If you mean non-contingent in the full-blown

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sense of logically necessary, then God is irrelevant to ethics in the same way as he is irrelevant to all logically necessary truths<sup>1</sup>. Following Aquinas, it is orthodoxy that God's will has no authority over the logically necessary. The second way in which the notion is relevant does not read non-contingency in this full-blown sense, but rather sees it as saying that the truths of ethics are dependent on nothing that is itself contingent. Now arguably God's commands are contingent in the sense that if he commands X, then he could have commanded Y. If one argues that if God commanded X, then only X could have been commanded by God, it appears that God has no freedom. If God is free, surely he could have commanded Y instead of X. But if either X or Y could have been commanded by God, then X and Y are dependent on that which is contingent eg. God's will to do X or Y. Hence ethics is independent of God's will because God's will is contingent.

Now this notion of God's will being contingent because he is free is controversial. Some writers, such as Swinburne, prefer to see it as the case that if God commanded X, then only X could have been commanded [Swinburne 1993 p.145]. God is free, but not in the sense that different choices could have been made but in the sense that no external agency influences his choice. However, this is something that we would investigate further on in this essay. It is enough for the moment to see the various reasons why many thinkers reject Divine command theories.

Let us now survey the manifold armaments of war which make up the autonomy attack. First the Divine command theory is rejected because it is seen as placing morality on a foundation that either causes it to become non-moral, or worse immoral. For Kant, there are two ways the theory can do this:

1: It can place morality on a non-categorical, essentially contingent basis eg. the teachings of an external authority such as the

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1. I shall argue later that there is an important relationship between God and the truths of logic: God did not create logical laws, but they nevertheless depend on His nature. This view, I believe, puts me in line with orthodoxy.

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Church or a factual event such as the death of Christ.

2: It can infect the workings of reason such that instead of a logical adherence to the rational demands of the categorical imperative, the doer is prompted by prudence. This can be low-minded prudence eg. I don't want to go to Hell, or high-minded prudence, e.g., I'm doing it for God. In both cases the motivation, which is seen as a continuous whole with the action, is inappropriate. Only moral motivation makes moral action. This notion we saw can be used with pretty destructive results by modern neo-Kantians such as Kovesi.

The second main thrust of the autonomy attack sees man's will as sufficient unto itself. Man is inevitably his own moral authority. To surrender your decisions to any external authority, albeit divine, is to surrender a part of your personhood, it is to be less than moral yourself. We cannot escape morality. Even to think it morally right to surrender your morality to God is to be yourself the moral authority which decides that such an action is good. Man's dignity demands we face our responsibility.

## The Accusation Of Arbitrariness

We have looked at the mainly Kantian inspired criticisms of the Divine command theory of ethics. These criticisms claim that such a conception of morality causes morality to be prudential in character and/or damaging to man's proper dignity as a moral being. There is, however, another strand of criticism which is important enough to describe in detail. Basically this criticism alleges that Divine command theories necessarily put morality on an essentially arbitrary foundation. In this chapter, I will try to make clear what this criticism is all about.

I think we are best placed to understand this line of attack if we see it as part of what is so puzzling about the Euthyphro Dilemma. In Plato's Euthyphro, Socrates asks Euthyphro the following question: Is what is holy holy because the gods wish it to be or do the gods regard it as holy because it is holy?. Is holiness made so by the wishes of the gods or is it holy anyway independently of their wishes? [Plato 1969 10B-11B]. If we "modernize" this dilemma we get something like this: Is what is moral moral because God wishes it to be, or does God regard it as moral because it is, in fact, moral quite independently of him?

Part of the force of this dilemma is that if we assert that what is moral is moral because God wishes it to be we get the charge that this is tantamount to saying morality is essentially arbitrary. The argument proceeds something like this: What reasons can God have for saying "X is moral"? It is not elucidating to say that he has moral reasons for saying "X is moral" because morality is identical with whatever God desires. Thus whatever reasons God has must, by definition, be moral. K. Nielsen in his book Ethics without God makes exactly this point as does B. Brody in his article Morality and Religion Reconsidered. Both claim that in order that God's moral dictates be properly intelligible there must be an independent criterion to establish the moral validity of His commands [Nielsen 1973. Brody 1974].

Now one might argue that God CAN have reasons for wishing X to be moral for He might have non-moral reasons for wishing X. Thus He might see that the establishment of X as a moral norm is more logically coherent or more conducive to the smooth running of the created order. This perhaps would be the claim that God was a consequentialist of some type, perhaps like Hobbes who sees the felicity of individuals in society as the main concern or aim of morality [Hobbes 1991]. Some might be happy with this. Others would claim that such an

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explanation of the establishment of some moral order that was itself non-moral would leave the morality of that order unexplained.<sup>1</sup> X would still be morally arbitrary. To show what this means consider the following thought-experiment.

Imagine God decides to institute diary-keeping as a moral good. Now God could explain this institution to a certain extent by giving non-moral justification for it. He could perhaps say that diary-keeping is more efficient than relying on memory, or that, if done accurately, it makes us more objective about our own personalities. As long as the justification remains non-moral the rationale is non-tautological. Now, I think, such a non-moral rationale gives diary-keeping some intelligibility considered merely as an institution. However, as soon as we demand for its justification as a MORAL institution the explanation seems to fall short. It seems only a background of moral reasons can serve as an adequate explanation of a moral decision. If God could, without tautology, give a moral justification of diary-keeping - saying perhaps objectivity about oneself enables one to have more sympathy with others - the goodness of diary-keeping would become intelligible. As it is, the non-moral rationale does not explain the morality of diary-keeping. Thus diary-keeping is morally arbitrary. God may have avoided complete arbitrariness by non-moral explanations, but, without moral justification His institution seems unintelligible as a MORAL institution.

The critics of Divine command theory would presumably say that the only way out of this arbitrariness is to say morality is moral independently of God. Some things, they would perhaps maintain, are morally valuable or virtuous just by nature. The claim is that arbitrariness is removed by the fact that God can now have non-tautological moral reasons for asserting, "X is moral." God sees that X is, just by its very nature, good and so his assertion that this is the case is not arbitrary. I cannot just create value; God is in the same position. God may be responsible for the existence of this universe, but not moral values.

Behind this attack is a particularly influential view of rationality. This view of

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1. I am not arguing here that consequentialism is a non-moral basis for morality. Rather, I am examining the notion that one can explain the morality of a particular moral system by looking at the non-moral consequences of this system being institutionalized. Thus one might say X is more moral than Y because the consequences of X are more logically coherent. I take it that pace Kant logical coherence per se is ad hoc.

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rationality claims that there must be understandable reasons for acting or asserting if that action is to be considered rational. (For an interesting account of various views of rationality Antony Kenny's What is Faith? is a valuable read [Kenny 1992]. He rejects the Hume-inspired W. K. Gifford view which sees rationality as proportioning belief to evidence and instead adopts a more complex account. Instead of claiming there is a single criterion for rationality, he claims that rationality is based upon a complex of criteria.) Arbitrariness, that is, acting without reason is irrational. There must be rationale for an action to be rational - this, at least, is the picture the critic must have in mind. I do not want to reject this notion of rationality, although, as Kenny points out, it has its weaknesses.

The idea is, then, of an arbitrary God. This is bad enough, but worse follows: if God arbitrarily decides that X is moral today, what is to stop Him preferring Y tomorrow? One only has to put something nasty in the place of the variable to get some idea of just how unpleasant this picture of the foundations of morality is. Perhaps God's whim is love, perhaps tomorrow he institutes hate and envy as the cornerstone of morality. By next week we might have graduated onto sadism as the very pinnacle of moral grandeur. This kind of idea has as its mainstay a different, though related, notion of arbitrariness. The one I have concentrated on so far is the idea that X is arbitrary if it stands without relevant justification. However, X can be said to be arbitrary if it changes for no good reason. If we wish to accept that God's will is that which makes X moral we seem to be making it the case that God can, without good reason, change morality any time He wants to and have the unwelcome consequence that whatever He decides is, by virtue of His so willing, absolutely good. So He could say, "Let cruelty be!" and cruelty would indeed be and it would be good!

Now I am not going to argue against this picture by investigating whether all this is coherent. Perhaps a morality must, so to speak, have more to it than just one central action or type of action; arguably morality must have a complex of interconnected features and a complex background of justifying notions if it is to be a coherent possible moral world. Much too often critics of Divine command ethics use this notion of counterfactual moralities without spelling it out in too much detail. Perhaps hate logically cannot be a central moral norm without incoherence - Kant would certainly hold it to be contradictory. Anyhow, I am not going to use this particular avenue of response. Suffice to say that there is such an avenue.

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It is important to note here that this kind of avenue of response need not lead to the idea that morality is, in some sense, necessary because it is based on some kind of Kantian principle of non-contradiction. All I am claiming is that maybe logical coherence can proscribe what kind of things can be moral norms; whether a concern for logical consistency can prescribe to any significant degree is an entirely different matter. My view is that it cannot.

It is also important to note that not all philosophers would regard the picture my critic is painting of God as somehow too deeply weird to be contemplated as a possibility. Some philosophers seem to maintain that man himself is in an identical position to this arbitrary God. Some varieties of existentialism seem to emphasize arbitrary choice-making. Man is thrown into the world, is being-towards-death, feels angst and must choose to act. His choice is unimportant, it is the action of choice that is the fundamental thing. Of course, some existentialists try to introduce some element of choice limitation by talking about bad faith and the like, but whether their philosophy can honestly use such a notion is a different matter.

Other philosophers, in contrast, would not mind the charge of moral arbitrariness, but would shy away from this existentialist unconcern with any kind of rationale. The type of philosopher I have in mind does not mind the arbitrariness involved in the lack of moral foundation but instead gives a non-moral underpinning to morality. Phillipa Foot would perhaps fall into this category [Foot 1967]). However, I will concentrate my attention on Peter Winch [Winch 1972 Chapt 7]. Winch seems to argue that morality is based upon the logical necessity of certain norms of behaviour given that society exists. A norm of truth-telling, he argues, is logically necessary for the survival of any community of individuals. It is impossible that a society would survive if successful communication were not possible and a prerequisite of successful communication is that people more often than not tell the truth. Therefore, any conceivable human society must, in some way, regard truth-telling as desirable. Winch appears to argue that the social indispensability of a norm makes that norm a moral one. So one can give relevant reasons for saying X is good if one can show that a norm of X-ing is logically necessary for social integrity. This is to be distinguished from the view which claims that morality is generated by logical consistency or coherence alone. Winch's claim seems to be that that which is logically necessary for the continuing of society is moral.

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Now, in this view, "X is good" is morally arbitrary, but not completely arbitrary because one can give relevant non-moral reasons for its validity. I think most people would agree that it is hard to see how social indispensability per se equals a MORAL rather than non-moral rationale. One might "moralize" it by giving it relevant moral dress, thus one might say that the destruction of society is bad and therefore any social structures necessary for the survival of society are good. But, in Winch's view, it appears to be merely the conditional necessity attached to certain norms that of itself provides adequate non-moral rationale for these norms. Again, it is hard to see how mere logical necessity can be a condition, whether necessary or sufficient, for something to be moral.

I mentioned these alternative views by way of completeness and to clarify who exactly the divine command theory is dealing with. Moral arbitrariness is the accusation that if God's will is that which creates value, necessarily there can be no non-tautological moral explanation of His decision. Therefore, His decision is necessarily morally arbitrary. This, as I have said, conflicts with that broad picture of rationality which sees rational actions flowing from a consideration of relevant reasons. Now some arbitrariness may be removed by giving non-moral explanations of God's decision as regards value. However, the moral arbitrariness or indeed irrationality is still present. Morality is reduced to the whims of a morally arbitrary, morally irrational God. Another sense of the arbitrary-accusation concerns itself with the possibility of reasonless change. Thus if we are talking about whims, what guarantee can we have that God will not change His mind? Indeed, what stopped God, right at the Beginning, from plucking a world out of the infinite possibles which had facism or sadism as its central moral be all and end all? Thus if the Divine Command Theory of Ethics is true we have a morality that has no relevant moral justification. Furthermore, we live precariously at the edge of moral chaos in the sense that God might change His mind tomorrow and again next week and so it might go on forever:

"And so God gave the new commandment to the second Moses. On the tablet it simply said, 'Let there be no stability.' God looked on the ensuing chaos below and Behold! it was good." (From the gospel according to a Divine command theorist).

## Replying To The Charge Of Arbitrariness

In the chapter entitled The Charge of Arbitrariness we saw that there were two distinguishable accusations that critics were liable to make against Divine command ethics. I will recap on these briefly:

1: Morality is made arbitrary in that there appears to be no external validating standard whereby God's moral assertions may be judged. All God's reasons for claiming "X is good" are tautological, since what He wills is, by virtue of this will, perfectly good. Thus whatever reasons God may have must be non-elucidating. God's morality stands arbitrary in the sense that it has no external rationalizing factor. Nothing can be adduced that would explain or elucidate the morality of what God commands; all we have it seems is God continually saying, "It is good because I say so."

2: Morality is made arbitrary in the sense that God, it seems, could change His mind and institute Y instead of X as a moral duty. He could do this at any time and whatever He so instituted would be equally good and right. Morality could, therefore, arbitrarily change at any time. No external reason could be given for the change since God's will itself is that which MAKES X, Y or Z moral. The awfulness of the implications of this is obvious when we imagine God commanding, as a moral duty, something that is, at present, morally dreadful.

In this chapter I will try to defend Divine command ethics from these two damaging attacks. Against accusation number one I will argue that all theories whether they be moral theories or not have a kind of arbitrariness at their core. In other words, arbitrariness is absolutely unavoidable. My argument against accusation number two, i.e., that God might arbitrarily change His mind, will involve a more complex, more lengthy argument. I will claim that God is immutable in His essential nature and that God's essential nature is Goodness itself.

Let us for the time being look at my reply to accusation number one. One of Wittgenstein's greatest achievements was to realize how much our systems of belief - our "forms of life" - are groundless. His basic point is very simple: all justification must end somewhere. We cannot have a system of belief whose foundations are infinitely extended. There must be a point where a terminus is reached and an advocate of a particular viewpoint can say no more.

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Norman Malcolm discusses this idea in his article The Groundlessness of Belief [Malcolm 1977]. He argues, following Wittgenstein, that large scale systems of belief - he gives such examples as chemistry and theism - are groundless. That is to say, in any belief system something must be taken for granted before the system can, so to speak, get off the ground. Colin Lycas, in an article that replies directly to Malcolm's paper, takes issue with some of his examples - for example, Malcolm's contention that belief in God is groundless - but does not disagree with the concept of groundlessness itself. He agrees that some beliefs are groundless in the sense that it is not sensible to ask for a justification for these beliefs. Lycas distinguishes between what he calls regulative and constitutive principles of rational inquiry. Regulative principles are grounded - these are very general hypotheses like "things don't just vanish" or "nature is continuous". These are grounded because, in principle, reasons can be given for believing them to be true. Most of the time we take such regulative principles for granted, but that does not mean that they are without ground. Constitutive reasons, on the other hand, are principles that form the very criteria of rational inquiry. These principles may include such maxims as, "It is wrong to ignore the result of a properly conducted scientific experiment" or "If there is a contradiction in a scientific theory it is worthless." [Lycas 1977 p.167]. Lycas says, "...what I have called the constitutive rules of rational empirical inquiry seem to me to be arguably groundless and attempts to justify them are arguably pointless or circular...Abiding by these laws is a CONDITION of rational thought. It makes no sense to suppose we might set them aside until they are rationally proved." [p.168 italics in original]. Lycas argues that the idea that God exists is a regulative and not constitutive principle of religious inquiry.

I suggest that this is a correct analysis of large scale systems of belief. If I am correct, then it applies to large scale moral systems as well. Reasons for a particular moral stance can be asked for and given, but such questioning must reach a terminus. Paul Johnston puts it like this, "Asked why we act as we do, we can give our reasons for acting, but when these are rejected nothing remains to be said...Here we reach bedrock, and all we can do is describe: this is how we act, and these are the reasons we offer for doing so; someone to whom these reasons mean nothing is simply left with the fact that we act in this way." [Johnston 1989 p.81] At what point the terminus is reached in ethics is a hotly debated issue. Some would say it stops with an individual's wants and desires, some would say it stops

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at some law of consistency, others would say it stops at a principle of utility...the list is very long. The point is that there is such a stop.

It is instructive to try and push at these different boundaries or constitutive rules to see what happens. What would Kant, for example, say if we were to ask him why following the categorical Imperative was a good or dutiful thing to do? He might say that the principle was so luminously reasonable that one would be utterly mad to ignore it. And yet many have ignored it. He could say that to follow the Categorical Imperative is, in itself, a good thing to do. This answer appears to be an acceptable one, until one asks in what sense it is good to follow the principle. What is good is defined by Kant as that which is in accordance with this principle. If, therefore, Kant means good in this way the answer he gives does not elucidate. If he uses the word in any other way he is going beyond his own system. I think these considerations show that the Categorical Imperative is a constitutive rule of his ethical system. As such it is groundless; it fundamentally characterizes his ethics - it is not itself characterized by anything deeper. The same would be true of the principle of utility in utilitarian thought. The utilitarian who believes that the principle picks out the moral from the immoral cannot call the principle itself 'moral' except in a tautological, non-elucidating sense.

Consider how this relates to the question of the Divine command ethic. What reasons can God have for saying "X is moral"? This was the question the critic claimed could not be answered in an elucidating way. It is a "pushing at the boundaries" question because it ought to be obvious by now that, for the Divine command theorist, God's commands could be understood as the constitutive principle from which his ethical system is built. They are, therefore, groundless as far as the ethical system is concerned. Just like Kant, the Divine command theorist cannot elucidate the goodness of his morality without begging the question. So the force of the accusation of arbitrariness implicit in accusation one is rendered harmless by the fact that all moral systems must have a reasonless bedrock from which their morality is generated.

Now I am, in my version of Divine command ethics, going to argue that it is not God's commands per se that are the constitutive principle of the theory. I will argue that God's commands are grounded in something logically prior, but this 'deeper bedrock' is not something external to God to which he must adhere in order to be

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properly called moral, rather the bedrock is God's own nature. Later on I will argue for the old scholastic thesis that God and Goodness are identical. Thus God's commands could be called, in Lycas' phrase, a regulative principle. That is, God's commands play a very fundamental, profound part in the life of a believer, but they are 'only' regulative because there is something deeper that underlies them, namely, God's numerical identity with Goodness. Thus God's commands can be given an non-tautological elucidation as regards their goodness, but not God's nature. In fact, in my theory, to question the goodness of God and how He comes to be called good is to seriously misunderstand the metaphysical relationship between God and His Goodness; He is not good because he fulfils perfectly the demands made by some autonomous, external world of value, rather God IS that world of value. To ask for a deeper, more elucidating reason why we ascribe Goodness to God is to ask for the impossible. As I say, God's nature, and not His commands per se, are the constitutive principle in my version of the Divine command theory.

Let me at this point try to summarize the basic points I am trying to make. I am saying that both my theory and any other theory stand equal before the charge of arbitrariness in the sense given in accusation number one. The argument could be put like this: at any point in the investigation of a moral theory one can ask how a particular principle is grounded, i.e., one can ask what reasons can be given to justify the principle. Two options or kinds of reply can be given. The advocate of a particular moral theory can either give a deeper, more profound principle that underlies and elucidates the former principle OR he can say that the principle in question is itself the reasonless ground from which all his other principles grow. A utilitarian is satisfied with his constitutive principle and thinks it provides a plausible ground for morality; he probably believes the principle to be coherent in the sense that all the principles that grow out of it follow logically from the principle itself. For the Kantian, there is another satisfying fundamental principle. Again, for the Divine command theorist, God's nature stands as the ground from which value grows. The point is that for all theories of morality there is such a ground and that this ground is itself groundless. All theories stand equal when we consider groundlessness alone.

It seems to me then that we can turn our attention to accusation number two, i.e., the claim that Divine command ethics commits the theorist to the possibility of

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arbitrary change in what is moral or immoral. This problem appears to me to be nearer the centre of traditional concerns about Divine command ethics. I am sure that Plato's main reason for his rejection of Divine command ethics in Euthyphro was because of popular ancient Greek conceptions of the Divine. The world of the Greek gods was a world where gods assented arbitrarily to any whim they had. This capricious world was a conception that was at odds with what Plato saw as the permanent Ideal world of the Platonic Forms. Divine command ETHICS would have been a strange coupling of the arbitrarily changing and the absolutely permanent. For this reason Plato wished to establish whether the gods' desires or the moral had logical priority. In the Euthyphro dilemma he uncovers a latent contradiction in Euthyphro's thought. Euthyphro believes what is good is good because the gods love it, but also believes what is good is good independently of the divine desires [Plato 1969 10B-11B].

Of course, the God of Christian theism is not seen in this exaggeratedly anthropomorphized light, but a lingering doubt remains: if God is a person, then surely there is the possibility of a change of mind. If it is God that underlies and provides a foundation for morality, then surely His personhood carries with it the potentiality for change and, therefore, a change of morality. If we have non-personal Platonic Forms as the foundation of morality there is no possibility of change, for such Forms are not the kind of things that have minds to change. The personhood of God seems, then, to be the sticking point. If God were a mindless tablet of stone upon which were written the rules of morality such a problem concerning change could not occur.

I suggest that this problem of potential arbitrary change can be avoided by adopting the traditional scholastic doctrine that God is Goodness itself. If we add this doctrine to the traditional doctrine that God is immutable, we have the makings of a simple argument:

- 1) God and Goodness are identical
- 2) God is immutable
- therefore 3) Goodness is immutable.

It is to a discussion of this argument that I now turn. I will look at the two premises in turn, starting, appropriately enough with premiss number one.

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### God And Goodness Are Identical

I do not mean, of course, that the meanings of the two terms "God" and "Goodness" are identical - that would be absurd. What I mean is that, though the sense of the two terms is different, the referent is the same item, namely, God. Although the phrase "a shape whose internal angles always add up to 180 degrees" and the word "triangle" do not mean the same thing, they both have the same referent, namely, a three sided shape [see Quinn 1978 p. 39-41 for a discussion of the relation between truths of meaning and logical equivalences in the area of Divine command ethics].

Later in my thesis, I hope to show that this idea of God's literal identity with Goodness has a long, distinguished philosophical ancestry. What I intend to do now is to present this idea to the strongest criticism and see how it fares.

One important objection to my thesis is made by Alvin Plantinga in Does God Have a Nature?. Plantinga argues that goodness is a property, but "No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or indeed, know anything at all." [Plantinga 1980 p.47]. The argument is that since God in my thesis is identified with a property, He fits into the logical category of properties and so cannot have created the world or be omniscient; in other words, such an entity could not be the God who believers worship.

My reply to such an argument is that it begs the question in favour of its own conclusion. Why should we accept that the identification of God and Goodness is one where God is made into a property? Why shouldn't we say, instead, that such an identification reveals that Goodness is not a property, that this entity is the Being that created the universe and is omniscient? Plantinga is concentrating his attention on one side of the identification formula only and ignoring the other. The critic needs to show, it seems to me, why one way of looking at the formula is the best way. He needs to show that there is an asymmetry here that legitimizes his bias in favour of the proposition that states that God is identified as a property, rather than the proposition that states that Goodness is identified as a person.

One way a critic might legitimize such a bias is to claim that there is an epistemological asymmetry in the identification. Thus he would say that we know

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what type of thing Goodness is better than we know what type of thing God is and, therefore, it is better to discover what kind of thing God is via the more knowable concept of Goodness than by trying to analyse Goodness through the less knowable concept of Deity. Indeed T. Mayberry uses this line of reasoning against the whole notion of any Divine Command Ethic - he says we are using a model "which we do not understand...to aid our understanding" [Mayberry 1970. See also Neilsen 1973].

My reply to this notion of epistemological asymmetry is twofold. Firstly, it is questionable whether, in fact, it is always the case that we know what goodness is better than we know what Deity is. Philip Quinn in Divine Commands and Moral Requirements says, "It is not altogether obvious what should be inferred from these [supposed epistemological] asymmetries. After all, there seem to be matching asymmetries which favour the theological side of the equation." [Quinn 1978 p.44]. In other words, some believers seem to discover what is good through religious observance, prayer, reading of Scripture. This seems to indicate that such people would say the supposed epistemological asymmetry is firmly placed on the other side of the identification; to them God is the more immediately knowable. Goodness should, for them, be explicated in terms of Deity not Deity explicated by an analysis of goodness. Indeed, such theists might claim that at least in their methodology we are trying to communicate with a particular, concrete Being who can speak and reveal Himself to rather than attempting to explore a universal, an abstract object. It seems hard then to know what to make of such arguments about epistemological asymmetries.

My second reply to the idea of epistemological asymmetry is to say that arguments based on them miss the mark anyway. There is a confusion between epistemology (how we KNOW things) and ontology (what really exists). I may learn what is good independently of the concept of God, but this does not necessarily mean that God and Goodness are, in reality, distinct. I learn that water is wet and wavy independently of the concept of H<sub>2</sub>O. Nevertheless water is H<sub>2</sub>O. It's the same with God and Goodness. We might learn about them separately, nevertheless they are the same.

Robert Adams, in his defence of what he calls his Modified Divine Command Theory, makes basically the same distinction that I have employed - namely that

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there is a distinction between the nature or essence of something and the way in which the the word that refers to that something is used, that is, broadly speaking, the meaning of the term [See Adams 1973 and Adams 1979]. Adams argues (citing Kripke and Putnam in support) that some truths about identity are empirical, but nevertheless necessary truths. For example, it may be the case that the disciple Matthew and the tax collector, Levi [Mark 2:13] are the same person. If they are the same person then they are necessarily identical (the arguments why this should be the case need not concern us here). But it is not an analytic truth that Levi and Matthew are identical; we cannot deduce it from the meaning of the words. we can only discover the truth about the matter by empirical enquiry. So, the argument goes, there are truths about the nature of things which are necessary, but are not analytic - that is, they may not be discoverable a priori. Now Adams argues that it is this kind of necessary truth that obtains in the following identity statement: wrongness is (identical with) the commands of a loving God. The meaning (the way the word is learnt, used...etc.) of wrongness is not usually employed in such a way as to imply contrariety to God's commands. However, the nature of wrongness is such that it is identical with the commands of a loving God. Thus how we come to use or understand certain words does not give us a guaranteed understanding of what these terms refer to in reality.

The failure to appreciate this distinction is what gives the epistemological attack its strength. We have two terms which ordinarily have different senses, i.e., the words 'God' and 'goodness' are usually used in different ways, the meaning of the words are not the same. My claim is that what these two terms refer to is the same item, i.e., the Christian God. In other words, the essential, real nature that both terms refer to is the person who created the universe. Robert Adams claims that the word wrongness does not ordinarily imply contrariety to God's commands. However, this fact about how we use the word does not prove that there is no identity between wrongness and contrariety to God's commands. We might discover through philosophical reflection that we ought to use the words in the same way because they both refer to the same thing. It seems to me, then, that the epistemological claim fails.

I think the critic's reply to this might be: "If this kind of approach is legitimate what limits are there to what might be claimed? If how we use a particular word is irrelevant, what limits are there to what crazy claims of identity might be made? Is

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there a no-holds-barred philosophical free for all as regards claims of identity? Surely the meaning of a term is relevant in deciding between different identity claims? If it is irrelevant how are we to sort out the crazy claims from the sane?" A full answer to these questions is beyond the scope of this thesis. My inadequate reply is that I am not claiming that the meaning of a term is irrelevant to identity claims, only that it is not crucial. To say that the wet and wavy thing called water is really molecules of invisible H<sub>2</sub>O is, on the face of it, pretty crazy. We agree with the claim because there are good reasons for it; in this case, good empirical reasons. I believe there are good reasons for believing God and Goodness are the same thing. Later on, I will argue that this conception is the only religiously adequate way of looking at the metaphysical relationship between morality and Deity. My claim is not crazily arbitrary.

What other criticisms can be directed against the identity I am proposing? The critic might turn his attention to the issue of intelligibility. He might grant that we can discover identities between items whose referring terms are semantically close but say that the two terms I am claiming identity for are really too far apart. He might say that the word 'God' in ordinary language is used to refer to a particular while the word 'goodness' is used to refer to a universal. How can the claim that a universal and a particular are identical be understood in any clear way?

This objection again begs the question. I am not claiming that a particular and a bona fide universal are the same thing; that would be absurd. I am claiming that a word which is ordinarily THOUGHT OF as referring to a universal, i.e., goodness, REALLY refers to a particular.

Here the critic can claim that he understands my point that goodness is to be regarded as a particular, but say that this does not affect the fact that goodness is ordinarily THOUGHT OF as a universal. How is he to perform the mental trick required? How is he to think that what he has always regarded as a universal is really now a particular? What intelligibility can there be in my claim? The critic might allow as the barest possibility that the two might be one, but how is to make it intelligible to himself?

This is a tremendously difficult question that brings in many issues that cannot be dealt with here. What I will try to do is first to briefly look at the concept of

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intelligibility itself, then, secondly, I will examine, again briefly, how philosophical thought has traditionally regarded the relationship between particulars and universals. This examination is long enough to merit its own section.

### Universal And Particulars And The Question Of Intelligibility

First let us examine the concept of unintelligibility. It seems to me that at least part of what it means to say  $X$  is unintelligible is that  $X$  is inconceivable. Perhaps that is the charge the critic wishes to make. Universals and particulars are so far apart in our thought that it is inconceivable that they should come together, that we should find that something ordinarily thought of as a universal is really a particular. How, though, are we to understand the idea of inconceivability? What is it if something is inconceivable? Perhaps it means that it is impossible to imagine the state of affairs that is being proposed. Is this what the critic means, that it is impossible to imagine what it is when goodness is identified with Deity? If the critic does mean this, then, I think his argument is weak. There are plenty of states of affairs that are inconceivable in this sense, but which we allow as possible states of affairs. For example, presumably there is something it is like to be a bat [Nagel 1979]. A bat has consciousness, an awareness of a particular type, but it seems impossible for us to conceive, except in a very hazy sense, what this must be like. We do not conclude that it is impossible that there is something it is like to be a bat because it is unimaginable. Similarly, Flatlands is a story of a world of two dimensional beings who have their own two dimensional physics [Abbott 1950]. There may be such beings, but it is unimaginable to conceive of what it would be like to be such a two dimensional being. The believer in the identity of God and goodness can say it is unimaginable or inconceivable to know what it is like to be a Being who is Goodness itself, but argue that at least one being in the universe knows what it is like, namely God Himself who is Goodness itself. It seems to me, therefore, that this type of unintelligibility attack fails.

Another sense of unintelligibility is much stronger than the sense we have just discussed. If a state of affairs is logically impossible, it is unintelligible. For example, it is logically impossible that there is a round square, thus the state of affairs purportedly described by the phrase 'round square' is unintelligible. As I say, this sense of unintelligibility is much stronger than the first sense. Does the critic

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want to say that what I propose - that God and goodness are identical - is logically impossible and thus strongly unintelligible?

If this is what the critic wants to say I think the onus is on him to provide the arguments why we should say that such an identification is logically impossible. As I will show, the identification thesis has a long philosophical ancestry. Such distinguished thinkers as St. Aquinas and St. Anselm both had no difficulty with the idea. How, then, would a critic show that the proposed identification is logically impossible? He could say that it is logically impossible that a universal should be a particular. I agree, but this is not the identification I propose; what I say is that something ordinarily thought of as a universal is actually a particular and that this particular is the Divine being.

So the critic may have to content himself with the lesser charge of weak unintelligibility, i.e., the idea that the identification is unimaginable. For some, this type of charge would be a strong objection. For example, old style verificationists or logical positivists would presumably see this as strongly counting against my thesis. All meaningful propositions had, for them, to have some kind of experiential pay off. Thus, there is something it is like to be a bat, because one can SEE on, say, an E.E.G. scan movements corresponding to changes in the bat's stimuli. The ascription of consciousness to bats is meaningful because, at the end of the day, there is for the perceiver some kind of sensory input. Arguably propositions about God's consciousness have no corresponding sensory backing. Thus, for the logical positivist, the albeit weak unintelligibility of my thesis is equivalent to meaninglessness.

Fortunately, logical positivism shoots itself in its own foot. It fails to meet its own criterion of meaningfulness. Consequently there are few logical positivists about, although I would guess it still casts its shadow over metaphysical speculation. Metaphysics is still regarded with a tinge of embarrassment. Thus one might still feel that weak unintelligibility is a significant objection because there is an ineliminable mystery about the identification I am proposing. My argument here will show that there is a similar ineliminable mystery even when we talk of so-called straightforward cases where particulars merely exemplify universals. But before we look at this we need to clarify what it means to say that God exemplifies goodness instead of literally being Goodness. To show what is meant consider what it would

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mean to say, for example, that I worship Mars, the god of war. What is it to do this? What, in Mars, do I value so much? Surely the answer is I worship Mars because I esteem martial values. I value the particular individual, Mars, because he exemplifies the universal or property of possessing martial values. In the same way, says the critic, when I worship God I am simply admiring the supreme way in which He instantiates the property of Goodness. If this is so, then God and Goodness are separable entities. God is an individual, a particular - Goodness is the property or universal that He exemplifies.

Maclagan makes this kind of point. He says if God is seen as being one with the moral law to the extent that we believe "values in their being constitute the CHARACTER of God" then "we shall be representing Him not as BEING the order of values but as fully and perfectly exemplifying it. He will be the Great Exemplar". [Maclagan 1961 p.88 my italics]. Again, the order of values will have its own "characteristic mode of being, as something other than apart from Him, and it, rather than He, will be the new Deity." [p.89].

This is the 'straightforward' sense that the critic presumably has no difficulty with. I hope to show that this sense is not as straightforward as the critic thinks. In Skepticism and Naturalism Strawson considers the case where we recognize X as falling under the concept of Y, where we see that X exemplifies Y-ness. He says this "is undoubtedly a type of natural happening, a subjective experience, something that occurs in nature, the instantaneous recognition or seeing of something as such-and-such or as so-and-so." [Strawson 1985 p.82]. He uses various metaphors to try to convey the nature of this happening: "the visual experience is 'infused with' or 'irradiated by' or 'soaked with the concept'." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Strawson appears, by the way, to be a conceptualist as regards universals. Roughly this means he holds that, to use a definition from Armstrong, "properties are, as it were, created by the classifying mind: shadows cast on things by our predicates or concepts" [Armstrong 1989]. This is supported when Strawson says, "If [universals] are objects at all, they are objects of thought alone, not objects encounterable in nature or occurring in the natural world." [Strawson 1985 p.70] With this background theory in mind, Strawson is, with these various metaphors, trying to convey the nature of the connection between the particular object and the concept or universal they fall under. Strawson appears to be using the words 'concept' and 'object' as synonyms with 'universal' and 'particular' rather than in the Fregean sense that Dummett argues is distinguishable [Dummett 1978 p.99-100].

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Now, even if we are as generous with Strawson as possible, one cannot help but feel that the nature of the connection has not been explained. There is that certain air of mystery. Strawson has vaguely alluded to but not shown us how the connection between concept and object obtains. This is what I mean when I say that as regards accusations of mystery my critic appears to be on equally shaky ground. Even where he is most comfortable - where the talk is of particulars exemplifying universals rather than actually being them - his case is just as "mysterious" as mine. This is even more obvious when one turns one's attention to more classical explications of the elusive connections. Here a popular theory is that when two objects, perhaps distant in space and time, exemplify the same universal, this sameness is the sameness of strict identity. Thus we get a kind of weird pseudo-omnipresence where the same item instantiates itself in many different places at the same time. So my white tablecloth's whiteness is numerically identical to the whiteness of a white flag or indeed the paper used to sign the Treaty of Versailles. I am not saying this does not make sense, just that if my theory is thrown overboard in the name of mystery elimination I want to take a few other theories down with me.

Let us at this juncture look a little more closely at the concept that my critics claim to find unintelligible, e.g., the idea of universals being identical with particulars. I will show that this idea, far from being at the edge of credibility, is, in fact, in other areas, a mainstream philosophic theory. It is not unintelligible; it is conceptual commonplace. There is, in other words, at least one traditional theory of universals which claims that there is a literal identification of universal and particular.

The distinction between substance and attribute has been very influential: things (substances) have properties or attributes. (I am here using substance/attribute language in the sense used by the British Empiricist tradition, not in the more traditional Aristotelian sense, where so-called prime substances are individuals such as Socrates or a horse [Woolhouse 1993 p.7-9 Lowe 1995 p. 67-72]). The thing that has these properties can continue to exist even when some of the attributes are removed unless the attributes are not accidental but essential. Thus the pen I am using at the moment continues to be even though it is slowly losing the property of possessing ink. It will still exist, even when the ink runs out. The property of having ink is an accidental or non-essential property. Because

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things can lose certain properties but still continue to exist, a distinction between thing and property seems forced upon us. However, this distinction is not always recognized as legitimate. If substance is seen as the mere supporter of property, it seems to be unknowable because arguably only properties have causal powers. In Locke's famous phrase, substance becomes substratum and is "something I know not what" [Locke 1961 Bk2 Chapt 23]. With this kind of difficulty in mind, many philosophers refuse to accept that there is any real distinction between substance and attribute(s). Roughly, they maintain that there are only attributes. A particular thing is, to use Armstrong's helpful description, a "bundle of universals". There is no mysterious substratum that has properties, there are only properties and the causal powers they possess. This, they argue, is all we really need to make sense of the world [Armstrong 1989 p.59-74].

The analogy with my thesis is obvious. With God as regards Goodness there is no distinction between substance and attribute. God IS Goodness, rather than God HAS Goodness. If the Bundles of Universals Theory is intelligible (and I think it is), then surely my theory also is intelligible.

Of course, the elimination of the substance\attribute distinction brings with it many problems (but then again so does the acceptance of the distinction). These difficulties are discussed admirably by Armstrong [1989]. I will look briefly at two criticisms of the Bundles of Universals Theory and show how, in the case of the Divine Being, these problems do not apply.

The first problem with the elimination of the substance-attribute distinction is that Leibniz's Law of the Identity of the Indiscernibles becomes, it seems, necessarily true. If particulars are just bundles of universals, then, different particulars must contain at least one different universal. However, it seems a matter of logical possibility that there may be two particulars which are qualitatively completely identical. This should, however, be logically impossible. Hence the problem arises.

This problem does not apply to my theory for two reasons. First, my theory is not a general one: it maintains that, in the case of the Divine Being, God and Goodness are identical. In fact, I rather doubt whether a theist would want to apply the elimination of substance and attribute generally. One of the motivations behind

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the eliminations in the case of God is to show how unlike the rest of creation He is. Secondly, the problem does not arise for my theory because it is a matter of logical necessity that there be only one God. If, per impossible, there were two Gods, then each would have to depend on the other for the traditional attributes of the divinity to be preserved. But this is absurd; God cannot depend on another to be the Being He is. If He does, He is not God. [See Ward 1982 p.13-14].

A second problem which is so difficult for the bundles of universals view is the problem of property loss. As we will see, this problem is actually a benefit for my theory. If a thing just IS its properties, then it appears that none of the properties can be lost without the demise of that particular individual. If W just IS properties X Y Z, then W cannot lose X, Y or Z without ceasing to be W. This goes against intuition. This pen I am at present using is not changing its identity as I write, but it must be according to the Bundles of Universals Theory, because it is losing, at each moment, the property of possessing a certain mass of ink. Arguably, therefore, substance-attribute language enables us to pick out and identify certain individuals while they are in the course of change.

What otherwise seems anti-intuitive, in my theory becomes a positive boon because the consequence of this consideration for my thesis is that God's Goodness becomes something He cannot lose. Furthermore, if God's existence is logically necessary (a doctrine I agree with, but cannot argue for here), His Goodness is logically necessary. If God IS Goodness and God IS necessary, then, Goodness must be necessary too.

What about God's other attributes, e.g., His omnipotence, His omnipresence...etc.? It was a doctrine of scholastic philosophy that God was not only identical with His Goodness, but was also identical with all His other characteristics [See Mann 1983]. I will not be defending this doctrine. I want to say that God's Goodness is necessary and immutable, but not that God is immutable in every aspect. If God is literally identical with everyone one of His aspects, it seems to follow that God cannot change in any respect whatever. If God IS omnipotence, then He cannot cease to be omnipotent without ceasing to be. Again if God IS joy He cannot cease to be joy without ceasing to be. How, then, can He be unhappy? How can He respond to creation? This unchanging God seems to be unlike the God of Scripture who does become unhappy with creation and loses His

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omnipotence to be become incarnate. In the next chapter, I will defend only the immutability of God's Goodness. I will try to show how we need not go as far as the scholastics did.

## The Question Of The Immutability Of God

As I intimated in the last chapter, I am going to argue for a limited notion of immutability. To that end, let me spell out two senses of immutability. First the scholastic notion, which I reject.

God cannot change in any real respect whatsoever. By "real respect" I mean to distinguish between real change and apparent change, which is now more popularly known as a Cambridge change. A Cambridge change occurs when a certain type of predicate is true of a subject at one time, but not at another. For example, the predicate "being believed in by Smith" and then, after a religious crisis, "not being believed in by Smith" can be true of God at different times without any change occurring in God. Generally a real change occurs in a subject when a non-relational predicate is true of then not true of that subject. For example, a real, non-Cambridge change occurs when the non-relational predicate, "is not wallpapered" is predicable of my front bedroom and then, subsequent to much wifely coaxing, the predicate, "is wallpapered" becomes (alas!) true.

Now, as I have said, I reject this strong understanding of what it means to say God is immutable. In fact, it is such a strong notion that it is not immediately obvious exactly why one would want to believe it to be true. The scholastics thought, for reasons I will give later, that they were doing justice to the idea that God is perfect. However, let us, for the moment, concentrate our attention on the understanding of immutability that I do accept.

Basically my position is that God is immutable in his moral characteristics, in His being Goodness itself. Let us consider what this means. Consider the statement that God is merciful. This is an aspect of what it is to be Goodness itself. Now God is merciful and immutable in this characteristic, so He will always be merciful, that is, He will always show mercy to those that ask for it. God will never become ruthless, because he is immutably merciful.

Before we look at the nature of God's moral immutability in more detail, let us look at a different way in which various types of change can be understood. This will bring out, from a slightly different angle, the difference between my thesis and traditional scholastic doctrine.

Aquinas makes a distinction between two different types of change that can

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occur. First, an individual can undergo an accidental change. A useful example of this type of change is given by Brian Davies [Davies 1992 p.45]. A cow can be frisky and energetic one day and lazy and lethargic the next - the cow changes, but nevertheless it continues to be the same individual. The cow may have lost a property and gained another, but its survival as the same individual was never in doubt. There has, to use scholastic language, only been a change of accidents or accidental properties.

There is, however, a much more drastic type of change that can occur. This Aquinas calls a substantial change. For example, the cow might die - in this case the cow ceases to exist as a cow and becomes a corpse. Now there are, of course, borderline cases where it is difficult to decide whether a substantial or accidental change has occurred. Locke would have claimed that if an individual were to lose his memory, then a substantial change would have taken place [Locke 1961 2,27,9]. Others claim that such a loss would be no threat to the identity of a person; in other words, memory loss would constitute an accidental change. The borderline is a little hazy; nevertheless, I think it is clear enough to be useful.

How does this distinction apply to God? Aquinas denies that it does. He maintained, in full scholastic dress, that neither substantial, nor accidental change applied to God [Davies 1992 p.51]. Deity, for Aquinas, possessed no accidental properties at all. Substantial change was also impossible because God is eternal; nothing can make Him cease to be.

Now I want to discuss how much of this I agree with and how much I disagree with. First, I want to make clear in what sense I want to say God is immutable and then look at a sense in which I think He is mutable. As I have already said, I want to say that God is immutable in His being Goodness itself.

### A Digression Concerning God's Moral Immutability

God's moral immutability can be looked upon as a logical consequence of the Divine essence's identity with Goodness. If God's essence is quantitatively identical with Goodness and if God's existence is necessary, then it follows that God cannot cease being Goodness itself without ceasing to be. But God's existence is necessary, so this is not a possibility. More formally we might put it like this: Let D

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be Divine essence and let G be Goodness. Now my thesis says D is the very same thing as G. So if G ceases, then so does D. However, D is necessary, so G is also.

Now one might seek some clarification here. Is it possible for Goodness to change, rather than cease to be? This, I think, is a question about the nature of Goodness, and, therefore, a question about the nature of God's essence. The question ultimately comes down to whether, in the case of Goodness, accidental change, rather than substantial change can occur. Is there, in other words, a further distinction in the substantial core of God between substance and accident? Now substantial change in Goodness is not possible because this is equivalent to ceasing to be. (That is what substantial change amounts to in the case of God. For Aquinas, when a cow underwent substantial change there was not literal annihilation, since there was matter that survived the cow's death, but this was not enough to ensure the survival of the same individual. It was enough for you to be able to say, "This is the corpse of the cow that died." However God is not composed of matter. Therefore, if substantial change were to occur there would be annihilation.). Is accidental change possible in the case of Goodness? As I say, this is a question about the nature of Goodness and consequently a question about God's essence.

This question can be viewed as asking whether Goodness is simple or complex; whether, that is, Goodness is a unity, or whether it can be divided into parts. If Goodness is simple a prima facie case can be made out for supposing that it is incapable of change, since any change would be a substantial change, a ceasing to be, which, in the case of God, is impossible; we are assuming He is necessary being. If Goodness is complex, again a prima facie case can be made out; this time claiming that change is possible. Now I want to say that Goodness is complex, that it can be viewed as having different parts, or, as I prefer to say, aspects. But I also want to say that God's essence, which is Goodness itself, is immutable, so I am, at least on the face of it, involved in a contradiction. How are we to understand God's Goodness such that it is complex, but also perfectly immutable?

My model of God's essential nature that enables both complexity and immutability is vaguely analogous to Leibniz's monads. Leibniz wanted his monads to be simple and yet reflect multiplicity; he wanted diversity in simplicity. Thus what

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Leibniz wanted is similar to what I want.

Let me outline a preliminary definition. X is an aspect and not a part when X has no independent existence from the whole. Thus a spark plug is a part of an engine, but the running of the engine is only an aspect. Might it be the case that Goodness can be 'divided' into aspects of one thing?

Let me try and make this a little more concrete. Goodness is complex, but still one thing because it has aspects such as Mercy and Justice. Perhaps Goodness is Love and Mercy and Justice are two aspects of this unity. This can be made plausible by reference to the claim made by many writers that Goodness or Morality is unified or identical with a single principle [See Sumner 1992 for a discussion of what this single principle must be like]. In the case of my theory, this single principle is Love. Jonathan Fletcher, for example, claims that all morality is derivable from love [Fletcher 1966]. I would claim, tentatively, that Mercy flows from Love, as does Justice, as does Forgiveness. Love is the fulfilment of the law. No aspect of Love can be intelligible as a separate entity. Justice becomes something else if it is without Love; Justice cannot survive without Love; Love cannot survive without Justice.

One might ask here, "If there is a mutual dependence between the whole (Love) and the aspect (Justice), what real distinction is there between whole and aspect? Why is one the whole and the other the aspect and not the other way round?" The answer to this constitutes the vaguely Leibnizian ancestry of my position.

For Leibniz, individual subjects contained all their predicates. He tries to explain this, "...the subject term must always include the predicate term in such a way that anyone who understands perfectly the concept of the subject will also know that the predicate pertains to it. This being premised, we can say it is the nature of an individual substance or complete being to have a concept so complete that it is sufficient to make us understand and deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which the concept is attributed." [Woolhouse 1993 p.56-57]. It seems to me that here is Leibniz is claiming that individuation relies on deduction. So all predicates not deducible from the complete concept of an individual substance are, for that very reason, not part of that individual. Thus individuals can be picked out and 'parcelled up' by deduction or understanding.

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It is similar with my model of God's Goodness. If one had a complete understanding of Love, one would be able to deduce what were aspects of God's essence. It may not follow that if one were in possession of a complete understanding of an aspect that one would be able to come into a complete understanding of the whole. Thus the primacy of Love is established. It is the whole of which others are aspects. God's essence, we can say, is individuated and its aspects picked out by the logic of Love.

These I realize do not constitute a complete argument; I am suggesting a line of understanding that I think deserves some consideration. Later I will return to this discussion when I discuss the nature of the God's Goodness and the idea that Goodness is Love.

### Thomas Morris and the Mutability of God

Before I go on and more fully explore the reasons the scholastics had for trying to maintain God's absolute immutability, I will look at one way in which a modern writer has sought to preserve the scholastic sense of strong immutability in the face of criticisms such as I give in the next paragraph.

Consider the story of Noah. God, according to Scripture, looks down on the earth, sees the wickedness of men, regrets making them and so decides to destroy them and start afresh. This appears to amount to something like this: God created man, intending them to live a natural span of years (originally with Adam and Eve, He intended immortality), but then, in response to human wickedness He changes His mind and destroys them instead. This, I believe, is a clear example of God changing His mind in response to human behaviour. This mutability, this ability to change in response to new circumstances is, an essential part of a concept of a Christian God (although, as we shall see, the scholastics thought that God did respond and did act, but, paradoxically, remained unchanging). Scripture, of course, is full of examples of God responding to His mutable, constantly changing creation.

But Thomas Morris asks this question, "Why can't it always and immemorally have been the case that God intends to do A if B arises, or C if D comes about?"

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This would be fully compatible with an informed reading of those passages which seem to portray God as changing his mind in response to human activity as situations develop." [p.89 Morris 1987]. By 'immemorial' Morris means a property that an individual has always had and never begun to have.

Morris hopes that by this move he can allow God real responsiveness to His creatures, but avoid the idea of God changing His mind in any way (and thus preserve God's absolute immutability). I hope to show that he has been unsuccessful.

Now, first of all, Morris' use of the if-clause in the above quotation appears to put him in line with an increasing group of philosophers and theologians who believe that given real human freedom, in the sense of liberty of indifference as well as spontaneity, the inevitable consequence is that God cannot foreknow the future [see, for example, Ward 1982 p.130-131, Lucas 1989]. If God does have infallible and complete foreknowledge (henceforth ICF), then it is idle to present future contingencies in disjunctive/subjunctive form, i.e., If A arises or B comes about. From the Divine perspective, if God has ICF, only one event will occur and, consequently, the natural way of presenting God's intentions would be, "Because A will occur God intends B." Since Morris does use the if-clause he seems to believe in a certain openness of future contingents. Let us, therefore, assume, for the sake of this argument, that God does not possess ICF.

Assume that Jill knows Jack to be selfish. Now assume that Jill believes, on the basis of her knowledge of Jack's character, that in a certain situation, Jack would respond in manner A (e.g. do the wrong thing). Now Jill might intend B because of the expected A. Because the future is open it is at least possible that Jack will do the unexpected C (e.g. do the right thing), so Jill's expectations about the future only count as belief; at the most, it is defeasible knowledge [Lucas 1989 p.121-122]. Let us assume that Jill draws up a different plan of action D just in case Jack does the surprising or unexpected C. For example, Jill might think to herself, "If Jack does the right thing (unlikely because of his character) I will not punish him."

So we have a situation where Jill intends to do B (e.g. to punish Jack). It is an intention because the probability that Jack will do the wrong thing is very high.

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Imagine that Jack is a compulsive liar. Jill's mind is, so to speak, set on B, despite the more shadowy, back-of-mind-plan to do D if Jack does C. Because Jill assigns very little probability to this contingency it hardly achieves the status of an intention.

Let us assume that Jack confounds expectations and actually does the right thing, what happens? Well, Jill could blindly press on with her original intention and punish Jack, or she could change her mind and not punish him. Now this is a change of mind and not just a "shift" between two equal plans of action, precisely because Jill never assumed they were equal. She believed that A would occur and so intended B; the likelihood of the right set of circumstances fit for its use were extremely high, but the surprising occurs and Jill changes her mind.

Of course this goes on all the time. I intend to drive my car to work, even though I realize I must have a different plan of action if it does not work. If it were, say, a Skoda my intentions might be completely different!

Now one might object that a shadowy back-of-mind-plan still counts as an intention; one might say that at least Jill intends to do D IF the unlikely C occurs. Is this acceptable? It may be the case that the paper on which I am typing will burst into flames. If it were to do so I would probably douse it with water. I have a possible plan of action if the overwhelmingly unlikely were to occur, but it seems hardly credible that as I write I have the intention to douse my typing paper with water. My intention, at the moment, is to carry on typing; I would change my mind if spontaneous combustion were to occur. Intentions are intimately connected with the expectations of the subject.

How does all this relate to God? My contention is this: if God does not have ICF, then He too can only assign probabilities to future contingents. God must have a set of expectations about the future upon which His intentions are founded, but, like Jill, His expectations can be confounded. God can have the immemorial property of drawing up different plans of action, i.e., He can "intend" A if B arises, or C if D comes about. However, D might be very unlikely, so C might not achieve the status of an intention. God would, therefore, more properly intend A. If the unlikely D were to come about, God would change his mind in response to the surprising circumstances.

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Morris' account seems to be based on a belief that all future contingents are equally likely and that, therefore, the immutability of God is preserved because He always intended (equally) whatever He does in response to the circumstances that arise. This seems a mistake. Given that God does not have ICF, and given that not all future contingencies have equal likelihood, then Divine changes of mind seem possible. Morris has not preserved God's immutability.

Now I realize my reply to Morris depends upon the assumption that God does not have ICF. This is a contentious point. The idea that God does have ICF is very much more secure in Christian thinking than the doctrine of absolute immutability. All I can do here is refer the reader to the account Charles Hartshorne gives of Pierce's understanding of the metaphysic of possibility [see Creel 1986].

### Why the scholastics believed in immutability and why they were wrong.

So now I (at last!) look at the scholastic rationale behind the idea that God is absolutely immutable. Basically there are three factors behind assent to the doctrine. I will look at each in turn and then turn my attention to my reasons for their rejection.

The main reason behind the belief in absolute Divine immutability is that the scholastics used a broadly Aristotelian understanding of Deity. For Aquinas, God is completely actual; He is Being and not becoming; there is no potentiality in Him whatsoever. All these are different ways of saying the same thing. The best way to understand this idea of complete actuality is to consider an object which is not completely actual (which is everything non-Divine). A man, for example is actual because he exists, but he is not completely actual because he is not all that he could be. He could, for example, acquire more knowledge or acquire a new skill. The man has, in other words, potential. This potentiality is his incomplete actuality.

This does not mean, by the way, that if the man were to become all that it were possible for him to become he would then hold some kind of equivalence or parity with God; it only means he would be a perfect man. Man is not the kind of thing that has the potentiality to become as God is. Consider, say, an alarm clock that lacked nothing; that was completely actual. Would this mean that the alarm clock could play chess perfectly? Of course not! Chess playing perfection is not a kind of

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potentiality that the alarm clock lacks since playing chess is not a skill that is part of even the potential of an alarm clock. It is not, so to speak, in its job description. An alarm clock 'only' has to tell the time perfectly and always wake you up and never break down...etc. to be an alarm clock that was completely actual. But always its complete actuality would be qualified or limited by its being an alarm clock; the maximum perfection it can possess is complete actuality as an alarm clock.

Now God is completely actual, since He lacks nothing that He could have, or rather is everything He could be. But God's complete actuality is different from any creature's because, as we have just seen, any creature's possible complete actuality is always limited by the type of being it is. We cannot accuse an alarm clock of the imperfection or lack of chess playing skill, since this skill is not part of its actual or potential nature. But if God were to lack the ability to play chess, we would have legitimate cause for complaint. God does not have the type of nature that limits Him or confines Him. His being all that He could be is of a totally different order than a mere man being all that he could be.

Let us look at the way Aquinas expresses these thoughts. First, in talking about God's perfection he says this, "...God is supremely actual, and thus supremely perfect, since perfection means achieved, realized, lacking nothing one's particular mode of perfection requires." Next he writes this, "Moreover, his perfection is all-embracing: the diverse (and sometimes opposed) perfections of creatures all pre-exist united in God, without detriment to his simplicity...[Aquinas 1989 1,1,4,2 p. 16-17]. So God lacks nothing His "particular mode of perfection requires," but this is not limiting since His particular mode of perfection is all-embracing.

Now God does not possess these perfections in the way that His creatures possess them: "In God, then, the first active cause of everything, all perfections pre-exist in the most realized way."

Now the only thing left that I cannot find fully explained by Aquinas (nor by any of his commentators) is whether God's all-embracing perfection is meant to include, not only all creaturely perfection, but, also, all conceivable perfection. Is Aquinas, in other words, following, Anselm for whom God is that than which no greater can be conceived? As we shall see later, this is an important point. Since I can find no absolutely clear guidance I will assume Aquinas does mean to say that

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God's perfect all-embracingness is absolutely all-inclusive in the sense of embracing literally all conceivable perfection. Certainly such an assumption seems to be in the spirit of what Aquinas claims: if I can conceive of a perfection that God does not have, at least *prima facie*, it appears to limit God and yet Aquinas says, "God...is unlimited and perfect." [1.1.7,1 p. 20]. Here Aquinas makes it clear he is not talking of spatial unlimitedness. He must, therefore, be thinking of a logical unlimitedness: in logical space, God is unlimited. Thus it seems to me to be a safe conjecture that Aquinas wanted God's perfection to be all-embracing in the sense I have defined.

Of course, this doctrine can lead to some pretty odd conclusions. Since God contains all creaturely perfection there must be a sense in which He is the perfect wife, tadpole, tree...etc. Davies comments, "God contains in himself all the perfections of his creatures and is therefore properly called perfect." [Davies 1992 p. 82]. The oddness of this conclusion is mitigated by Aquinas' insistence that God does not possess such perfections in the mode they are exhibited in the created object. Thus God does not look like the most perfect tadpole or the most perfect house [p. 82].

However, this is by the way. The main thing is to see the basic Thomist point that God is completely actual in the sense that He contains within Himself all perfection. Now the relationship between this understanding of the pinnacle of perfection and the doctrine of absolute immutability is clear. If God is completely actual, in the sense defined, any change must be a change for the worse. At least that seems to be the implication. The argument might go something like this: let God possess literally all perfection. Now if He changes He either remains absolutely the same or He does not. If He remains the same He has not changed. If He does not He must have either changed to being more perfect or to being less perfect. More perfection than literally all perfection is impossible, so He must have become less than He was before; He has changed for the worse. (This appears to be the reasoning behind Socrates' challenges to Cebes in The Republic. We will be looking more closely at Plato's influence later on.)

Now it seems to me that this argument is, as it stands, invalid unless perfection is taken in an extremely broad sense. It cannot mean just moral perfection, for example. I will use an analogy to bear out my point. Consider that X

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is the most morally perfect man imaginable and also has the benefit of unlimited power (so that no one can force him to change from his moral perfection). Can such a person change? Of course he can. He could move his arm or leg. Such changes could be morally indifferent and therefore there would be no compromise to his moral perfection. How is the man able to change without threat to his moral perfection? He is able to change because there is more to the man than the sum of his moral perfection. He is, therefore, able to change in regard to some predicate that is adiaphoric. Now Aquinas does not want to say that God's perfection is just moral perfection. It seems therefore possible for God to do something adiaphoric. But if we, as Aquinas apparently wants us to, understand perfection in a much broader sense, then we can see why any change becomes a change for the worse.

Let us consider our morally perfect man again. Imagine that he is perfect in every conceivable way. Now can he change? Can he perform some action that is neutral as regards his perfection? The answer now seems that he cannot. He cannot, say, move his arm since it is in the perfect position. (Forgive the strangeness of this thought experiment!). Aquinas (and Plato) appear to be forced to say something like this about God. His perfection is so complete and inclusive and applies to every predicate predicable of Him that He cannot change without detriment to His perfection. God cannot change neutrally since He is no more than the sum of his perfections: every aspect, every part, every thought is perfect. Thus any change is necessarily a change for the worse.

I don't think this point is always appreciated. Richard Gale, for example, says, "it is implausible to assume that any change in God is for the worse; it might have a neutral outcome." [Gale 1991 p.95]. It is implausible, but only if we separate the idea of God's immutability from the idea that God is completely actual in the Divine all-inclusive sense.

So the first strand of reasoning behind the scholastic doctrine of absolute immutability is a picture of God's perfection which is bound up with the idea of His complete actuality.

The second strand is bound up with the essentially Aristotelian argument for the existence of God, Aquinas' Prima Via - the First Way. The argument goes (roughly) like this: all changing things are changed by something else. So if X is changing

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there must be some thing Y that caused it to change. Is Y changing or not? If it is changing then it must have been changed by Z. If it is not changing we have reached the end of the causal series and we have, by definition of the argument, an unchanging changer. Aquinas assumes that this unchanging changer is God. If we want to make final sense of the world we have to postulate the existence of something that is absolutely immutable. If God changed in any way we would have a change that needed to be explained and thus would not have reached a final, ultimately satisfying explanation. At least that is what the argument claims [See Ward 1982 p.1-23 for a good restatement of this argument].

The third strand of reasoning behind the doctrine of immutability is bound up with the idea that God is, in some sense, timeless. However, it seems to me that, more often than not, the grounds for believing in God's timelessness have little to do with the reasons for believing in His immutability. The belief in the timelessness of God seems to me to have been forwarded as a way of allowing free human action in the face of the doctrine that God has ICF (although in this case, strictly speaking, God does not have foreknowledge, rather He has timeless knowledge). So, although the two ideas are related, I am not going to talk a lot about the doctrine of timelessness. In any case, any proper discussion would take me too far from the central concerns of this thesis.

I will now try to show why I believe these foundations for the belief in God's immutability are weak. I will, in the first instance, concentrate my attention on the idea that God's perfection consists in His being completely actual.

My first objection to the idea that God's perfection consists in His complete actuality is that it too easily falls into incoherence. Are literally all perfections compossible?

David Blumenfeld in his paper, The Compossibility of the Divine Attributes claims to show there is a contradiction between only two of the Divine perfections - namely, omniscience and omnipotence [Blumenfeld 1978]. These two attributes are, Blumenfeld claims, mutually incompatible - a being could have one or the other, but not both. His argument turns on the idea that a full understanding of certain sensations and emotions is only logically possible if one has actually experienced them. Thus, for full understanding, it is not enough to imagine what it

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must be like to be afraid; to fully understand, one must experience actual fear.

The second part of Blumenfield's argument is that certain emotions and sensations cannot be experienced by a being who is omnipotent. One cannot, for example, be afraid if one is absolutely in control of everything that happens. Thus Blumenfield says, "...what has an omnipotent being to fear? There is no destruction, no harm nor the slightest diminution of power that can possibly befall him. In this case...he could not believe himself to be endangered, and thus could not have the experience of fear." [Blumenfield 1978 p.207]. The same is true of frustration or despair.

But, the argument continues, God is meant to be omniscient, yet by virtue of His omnipotence certain items of knowledge are denied him. So God is either omnipotent or omniscient, but not both.

Now I do not propose to undertake a full critique of Blumenfield's argument here (I think the answer to the riddle lies in a consideration of when one can have one's destiny under absolute control and yet still be afraid. The man who is to be executed for his beliefs has his fate in his hands. He decides whether or not he dies. Nevertheless, he is afraid, he can despair and is certainly frustrated. I think an argument roughly analogous to this idea could do the trick, i.e., where God's principles (so to speak) come up against His power. ) All I want to do here is draw a moral. We have an alleged contradiction between only two perfections. What happens when we multiply perfection upon perfection until we are supposed to have a being who is every conceivable perfection? The potential scope for contradiction is infinitely extended. Aquinas, himself, seems aware of the risks of his concept of God when he says, "[God's] perfection is all-embracing: the diverse (AND SOMETIMES OPPOSED) perfections of creatures all pre-exist in God..." [Aquinas 1989 2,4,2 p. 16 my emphasis).

My second objection alleges that the notion of complete actuality is difficult to make clear sense of. God must, according to this notion, be, in some sense, the most perfect horse-rider (if He were not I could see potential for improvement). Now the idea of a very good jockey is conceivable; indeed such people exist; they are able to make a horse go fast, but not to the point of exhaustion; they are able to control a horse through tight corners and so on. The idea of a very good jockey

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is coherent, but is the same the case when our attention turns to the idea of a perfect jockey, so perfect in fact that there is necessarily no better? Is there a property of being this most perfect horse-rider? It does not seem to me to be clear that there is or can be such a thing. If one argues that there is such a thing, then one must make the concept clear.

Charles Hartshorne, in discussing this particular picture of the perfection of God, makes basically the same point: "Is an absolute maximum conceivable? The truth is that our ancestors had not learned our hard modern lessons concerning the ease with which grammatically smooth expressions...can fall into implicit contradiction. 'Greatest possible number' is grammatical, but it is sheer nonsense if it means 'greatest finite number'...and it is at best problematic. Why then should 'greatest possible value' be regarded as safe? it is vaguer, but perhaps only because it has no definite meaning at all." [Hartshorne 1967 p. 19-20].

So my second point is that the notion of maximum perfection or complete, unsurpassable actuality commits one to hierarchies of different attributes that allow a last in the series - a maximum. But even if we examine just one maximum, e.g. the perfect jockey, it seems difficult to assign any clear sense to the notion. Even relatively simple maxima, e.g. omnipotence and omniscience, are notoriously difficult to construe in a coherent way. Again there is a moral: If God's perfection is understood in this maximal, all-inclusive sense, how are we to make clear sense of those properties which neither admit of a last in the series nor a clear ordinality?

Now my third objection is the most important and complex. Indeed, it will be a vein of thought that will run through the rest of my discussion of Divine immutability.

Aquinas thought that this idea of complete actuality was the only picture that was adequate to truly express Divine perfection. I will argue that it is not the only picture. Another understanding of perfection gives us all we want. But what is it exactly that we do want? To know this, we must first look at the intellectual ancestry of the scholastic understanding.

First of all there is that 'want' which desires some kind of immutability as an aspect or consequence of perfection. Plato expresses this 'want' in The Republic:

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“ ‘But the state of God and the Divine is perfect; and therefore God is least liable of all things to be changed into other forms’

‘That is so’

‘Then will god change or alter himself of his own will?’

‘If he changes at all,’ he replied, ‘that must be how he does.’

‘Will the change be for the better or for the worse?’

‘Any change must be for the worse. For God’s goodness is perfect.’

‘You are absolutely right,’ I said. ‘And, that being so, do you think that any man or god would deliberately make himself worse in any respect? If you agree that this is impossible, then it must also be impossible for a god to wish to change himself. Every god is as perfect and as good as possible, and remains in his own form without variation forever.’ ” [Plato 1955 p119 part 381-382).

So, for Plato, such is the nature of Divine perfection that any change is a change for the worse. There is, however, another line of thought in Plato,

“ ‘And, O heavens, can we ever be made to believe that motion and life and soul and mind are not present with perfect being? Can we imagine that being is devoid of life and mind, and exists in awful unmeaningness an everlasting fixture?’ ” Later, in the same dialogue we find,

“ ‘Then the philosopher, who has the truest reverence for these qualities [rest and motion] cannot possibly accept the notion of those who say that the whole is at rest, either at unity or in many forms: and he will be utterly deaf to those who assert universal motion. As children say entreatingly, ‘Give us both,’ so he will include both the movable and immovable in his definition of being and all.’ ” [Plato 1892 Soph 248-249, see Hartshome and Reese 1953 p.38-57].

Clearly there is a tension in Plato’s thought. His ‘want’ is that both rest and

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motion be attributable to the Divine. But he thinks that change seems to imply imperfection. (We have already paraphrased his apparent argument why this should be the case). Immutability, on the other hand, seems to imply a kind of deadness, an immutable stasis, devoid of life and mind.

Indeed the scholastics recognized this dilemma. Divine immutability seems to be equivalent to lifelessness; to avoid this unsavoury consequence they asserted that, though God was perfectly immutable, He was also perfectly and completely active. Aquinas claims, "God is supremely alive, for he most perfectly acts without himself being moved by others." [Aquinas 1989 1,2,18,1p.49] The more something is able to act without itself being subject to change, the more it is alive, the more it is "auto-mobile" [Davies 1992 p. 112]. This idea appears paradoxical. Is it not the case that when X acts he changes from passivity to activity?

To answer this question and also to flesh out the idea of God's perfect activity, Davies notes that Aquinas distinguishes between two types of activity. Some activities are 'transitive' as opposed to 'immanent'. Davies gives teaching as an example of transitive action. Where, he asks, does the essential change brought about by teaching lie? Is the essential change the physical act of putting words on a blackboard? No, "because I can fill a thousand blackboards with letters and diagrams. But none of these processes will count as teaching unless somebody actually learns something." [Davies 1992 p. 113] The essential change in the activity of teaching is in the minds of the learners, not in any physical gesticulations the teacher might perform. Davies concludes, "...the action of an agent may lie only in the changes brought about in that on which it is acting. It need not be defined in terms of the agent. [p.113].

It may be objected that even if the principle change in transitive change is in the object rather than the subject, nevertheless change in the subject occurs. One might be tempted to say that the subject changes in intending X at t<sub>1</sub> to bringing it about that X at t<sub>2</sub>. This, as stated, would not be a difficulty for Aquinas since, in scholastic thinking, for Divine activity, intending X and bringing it about that X are one and the same activity. This is a consequence of the doctrine of Divine simplicity.

However, I do think there is a way to show an inconsistency in Aquinas'

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account. The gap appears in Aquinas' treatment of the relationship between God and time. According to Davies, Aquinas' position is that God's actions can be dated. This he claims implies no change in God: "We can date God's actions. But only because there is history in which events occur successively. or, as we can say today, God became the giver of victory to William of Normandy in 1066, not because God changed in 1066, but because William conquered England in that year." [Davies 1992 p.79] I think such a position can be refuted by the following argument.

Let us assume,

[1] God brings about X at  $t_2$ .

Now since God's bringing it about that X and God's intending X are (according to the doctrine of Divine simplicity) identical, we can say,

[2] God intends X at  $t_2$ .

Now can we say that God intended X at some earlier time,  $t_1$  ? No, for then we would be committed (again via the doctrine of simplicity) to this proposition,

[3] God brings about X at  $t_1$ .

We cannot say that God intended X at some earlier time because we commit ourselves to both [1] and [3]. But if God does not intend X at  $t_1$ , but does at  $t_2$ , then God changes from not intending to intending.

This argument can be refuted by the following counter-argument:

[1] is wrongly construed. What we should say is,

[4] God wills X-at- $t_2$

Here we change the scope of the operator "at  $t_2$ ". As Mann notes, the verb "wills" becomes tenseless [Mann 1993]. Now God can have this intention at any time without the unwelcome consequence that God performs actions before He performs them.

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Now I have two things to say about this counter-argument. It commits the advocate to undatable Divine argument, something that, as we have noted, Aquinas seems not willing to do. My second comment is that if we have [4] we must also have this,

[5] God brings about X-at-t.

Naturally the verb "brings about" must be understood tenselessly. Now one might be quite ready to admit that mental verbs such as "wills" can be understood tenselessly. (This follows from the difficulty we have of making temporal sense of mental events [See Geach 1969]). However one might be less ready to admit that apparently causal verbs such as "brings about" can be understood timelessly. Certainly, it seems that a cause must precede or be simultaneous with its effect and so be, at least, vaguely datable. However a full exploration of this would take me far beyond the confines of this thesis [See Charlton 1988 p.57-63 for an account of God's timeless actions].

Let us return to Plato. As we saw there is a tension in his thought. He wants both motionlessness and motion, changelessness and change to be attributable to the Divine. (I think it axiomatic for Christian thinking that both are needed, that Plato has correctly identified what our 'wants' are). Aquinas thought this was possible by distinguishing between transitive and immanent action. Using this distinction, he thought he had found a way to ascribe activity to God while preserving his immutability. It appears, from the above considerations, that the only way this is possible is to maintain that God is timeless. Something perhaps that Aquinas would have found unacceptable, though, of course, plenty of other thinkers have been only too happy to accept this.

The crucial mistake in Aquinas' position is that he uses the wrong picture of what it is for God to be perfect. He uses the essentially Aristotelian idea that God is completely actual, but, in using this concept, he immediately lands himself in difficulty when we want to speak of Divine action. And, after all, arguably it is Divine action that is the most crucial item in the Christian agenda. (For Aristotle, Divine action was not so much of a problem, since in a way God did not actually do anything. He had no will [Davies 1992 p. 140] ).

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So what other picture of God is there that fulfils our 'wants' and makes sure justice is done to the theistic requirement that God is perfect? We want God to be perfect and dynamic. How can we achieve both?

Charles Hartshorne has proposed one model that he claims fulfils our Platonic 'wants.' He rejects the Aristotelian model we have discussed and proposed what may be called a dual-aspect theory of God. God, he maintains, is "in uniquely excellent ways, both necessary and contingent, both infinite and finite, independent and dependent, eternal and temporal." [Hartshorne 1976 p.22]. Hartshorne realizes the immediate accusation will be that he want the impossible: an incoherency, a God who is both P and not-P. But, he argues, a contradiction is only a contradiction if P and not-P are predicated of the same aspect of an individual. So God might be "immutable in his ultimate purpose, but adopt new specific objectives in response to new acts by his creatures." [p. 23].<sup>1</sup>

This, essentially, is the model I want to adopt. I have argued that God changes His mind in response to changes in His creation, but is immutable in His essential being which is Goodness itself.

What, though, of the charge that this implies change and so implies imperfection? The answer to this is that the very question is framed from the perspective that the only model of God is the Aristotelian model. Ordinarily it is no part of the concept of change that it implies imperfection; indeed, as Hartshorne notes, it is the other way round: "Ordinary or imperfect individuals, it is true, fail to actualize all their potentialities; but is this, in itself, a defect? A person selecting a career cuts off from realization opportunities such as could not be thought of in relation to an ap...Thus the power of selection among partly incompatible possibilities of self-realization seems a measure of excellence rather than of deficiency." [Hartshorne 1962 p.35]. Hartshorne concludes from this type of

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1. Geach's view of God's knowledge of the future being analogous to a Grandmaster's knowledge that he will win a game is similar to this. The Grandmaster knows he will win - that is his ultimate purpose - but he does not control which pawn his opponent will move. Depending on which move his opponent makes, the Grandmaster adopts 'specific new objectives' in response. The ultimate purpose is assured but the specifics of its attainment may be contingent upon human decisions [Geach 1977 p.57-59].

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consideration that God must include all potentiality within Himself (p.37). I find Hartshorne's reasoning to be valid (Keith Ward's view is similar. [Ward 1990 p.18-37]).

In the end the Thomist and the Anselmic view fails to distinguish between two concepts of that which nothing greater can be conceived. First, there is "no individual greater than God is conceivable". Secondly, there is "not even God Himself in any conceivable state could be greater than He actually is" (Hartshorne 1962 p. 35). The second locution leads to the scholastic picture of absolute immutable being, the first leaves open the possibility that God can surpass Himself; in other words, that "...there is potentiality as well as actuality in the divine reality" [p. 35].

Such a picture of God as being in different aspects both immutable and mutable avoids many of the problems associated with the scholastic conception. First, there is no question of a God "devoid of life and mind". Secondly, we have included the possibility of Divine activity without having to resort to ad hoc measures in order to accommodate it, as if God creating or loving or dying were some unimportant optional extras tagged onto an Aristotelian being. Divine activity, Divine response are now integrated into the very core of God. Thirdly, logical difficulties over Divine knowledge are avoided. How can an immutable God know a changing, mutable world? How can my actions make a difference to an unchanging (indifferent?) Deity? Now God can really know me and know the world without being transported off into timelessness as an ad hoc measure.

Plato said children say entreatingly, "Give us both." We can have both because God really is both.

## God, Goodness And Love

I have argued that God is Goodness and that this Goodness is to be understood as being love. It is the burden of this chapter to show how morality "reduces" to love, how love is, in Christ's phrase, the fulfilment of the law. However, before we start two points must be borne in mind. Firstly, I will, in this chapter not be dealing with metaphysics or how, metaphysically speaking, love is to be identified as Goodness. I have already given some indication of how the identification works (p.36-40). Secondly, my claim is a massive one; I will not be able to pursue all the lines of inquiry that may be relevant to this theme. Love is, I believe, the fulfilment of the law, but I will not be able to show how each particular moral notion is related to love. Rather I will try to sketch a broad outline of how certain central, "big" moral concepts are aspects of love. I will concern myself primarily with Justice.

We need to identify where we are on the conceptual map, so, first of all, I will examine some of the main landmarks that lie on the landscape of thought about love.

One characteristic thought about love is that it is conceived of as being unconditional. Broadly speaking, the two main philosophical advocates of this view are Kierkegaard and Anders Nygren. They argue that the highest love is agape and agape, in turn, is to be identified as an unconditional "giving" of oneself to one's neighbour. Agape contrasts with friendship or eros in that agape does not give itself because of some peculiarity or idiosyncrasy that one's neighbour might have, but simply because one's neighbour is another human being. Thus I may love X because X is witty, charming and generous. This "love", however, is not the highest expression of love, because true love which is agape, loves X simply because X is another human being, your neighbour.

Agape's unconditionality has many consequences which, it is claimed, make it superior to mere friendship. First, if I love you, not because you are charming and witty, but merely because you are a human being, then, my love for you is stable and permanent. Thus Kierkegaard says, "No change...can take your neighbour from you, for it is not your neighbour that holds you fast...it is your love which holds your neighbour fast." [Outka 1972 p14]. Agape is not dependent on any particular characteristics of any neighbour, thus it can survive the demise of any particular set of characteristics. This non-reliance on the particularity of any neighbour results in a love which transcends particularity and is perfectly general in scope. Its

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generality makes it impervious to change in particularity.

A second feature of agape is that it is supposedly egalitarian. Friendship is exclusive in that I commit myself to X, because X is wise, but I may reject Y because he is foolish. Y falls outside my circle of friendship and in that respect is no longer equal to X. Agape, however, loves merely on the basis of being a human being and thus all are equal because all are equally human. I cannot prefer X to Y if I love agapeistically; both X and Y fall into the circle of my love. All people are held to be irreducibly and equally valuable in the eyes of agape [Outka 1972 p12].

Eros is also inferior to agape in that there appears something ineradicably selfish about eros. Nygren claims that eros arises from need while agape is expressed in spontaneous giving. Thus Nygren says, "Eros is yearning desire; but with God there is no want or need and therefore no desire nor striving. God cannot ascend higher...Since agape is a love that descends, freely and generously giving of its superabundance, the main emphasis falls with inescapable necessity on the side of God." [Brummer 1993 p.129]. Here there are two claims: first that eros wants, desires, strives while agape gives. The second point fits in with the overall message of Nygren's Agape and Eros - that Christianity has moved towards eros and to that extent has become egocentric rather than theocentric [Brummer 1993 p127 -128).

This point about the selfishness of eros compared with the self-givingness has already found expression in the unconditionality of the latter as compared with the former. If eros loves because of certain characteristics, then it may appear to love those characteristics, rather than the person who exhibits them. Additionally, surely there is something a little too easy about loving someone because they are witty or charming. Agape, on the other hand, seems to have no hint of scandal about it. If you love agapeistically, then you do not love because of X's desirable characteristics, but simply because X is human. Also, agape seems anything but easy: it is universal and egalitarian in scope and so must love not only the desirable but also the undesirable.

This picture of the nature of the highest expression of love is very attractive. Both Kierkegaard and Nygren believed that the Gospels advocate this kind of love, that this unconditional giving agape is the love that God has for us and that we ought to

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emulate. But attractive as it is, there are certain difficulties in the Nygren and Kierkegaardian position.

One problem is expressed by Outka in the form of a question, "Does agape as equal regard in itself allow for any way to differentiate between attention to another's needs and submission to his exploitation, and any warrant for resisting the latter." [Outka 1972 p. 21]. Outka calls this the question of the blank cheque. Kierkegaard recognized that, for the sake of the neighbour, one may have to resist his exploitation. Thus one may decide that it is in the neighbour's interest to refuse his requests, rather as God, though loving, would ignore my requests that I be immune from prosecution should I break the law. God would recognize that the giving in to the request would not be in my best interests. Analogously, I may give myself in earnest to my neighbour, but ignore his requests that I help him rob a bank. Now this I believe is the correct answer to the blank cheque conundrum. However, it is important to note that the unconditionality of agape has been slightly compromised. Kierkegaard is admitting that there are other goods apart from agape that may direct and hone one's love of one's neighbour. If the only good in the world were the unconditional giving of oneself to one's neighbour, then one would not be able to find any moral reason why one ought to resist his exploitation. If the one and only good was unconditional giving without any compromise, then one would have to help one's neighbour do things that were not in one's neighbour's interests; the only relevant criterion would be giving-despite-everything-else. If, on the other hand, agape is to take into account other factors, then its unconditionality applies only in the sense that it ought to be perfectly steadfast. It does not ignore idiosyncrasies of a neighbour, but can take these into account in determining what one ought to do in one's giving to one's neighbour. The kind of giving that may be appropriate to X may not be appropriate to Y, because X and Y are different people with different needs.

This consideration leads me on to another difficulty in Kierkegaard's and Nygren's understanding of what agape is. Initially, it may sound attractive that one's love does not depend on any idiosyncrasy in one's neighbour, that it does not depend on X's charm or wit. However, it does sound peculiarly general and universal. This, as mentioned above, is often seen as a positive feature of this account of agape, but is it? If I do not love X because of X's characteristics, what exactly is left to love? Once we strip X of every characteristic that makes him who

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he is, all we seem to have left is the idea of a human being or neighbour in general. But I do not want to love the concept of a human being I want to love X. If agapè is just the giving of oneself to one's neighbour simply because X is a neighbour, then we are not loving X, but rather the idea of neighbourhood in general. Kierkegaard's account seems to allow a consideration of X's idiosyncrasies and to that extent enables my love of X to be a particular rather than a general thing.

This kind of objection to this idea of agape - that is general rather than specific - is similar to objections raised against a very different view of love. Socrates argues that love arises out of a desire for something I do not have or, if I already possess it, the desire to keep it. (C. S. Lewis calls this need-love as opposed to gift-love [Lewis 1960 Chapt. 1] ). However, according to Socrates, I should, if rational, not desire perishable earthly things for their own sake, but rather only in so far as they instantiate the Eternal Goodness or Beauty. Only in desiring the imperishable and attaining it through Immortality can I be eternally happy [Brummer 1993 p. 111]. Thus all earthly loves which are loved rationally are not loved for their own sakes, but for the sake of something else; if this "something else" is perishable I must love it for the sake of something else...and so on, until we reach the Eternal or the "proton philon" [Brummer 1993 p. 112]. The objection to this is raised by Gregory Vlastos, "What it is really about is love for place-holders of the predicate 'useful' or 'beautiful'...In this theory persons evoke eros if they have beautiful bodies, minds, or dispositions. But so do quite impersonal objects...best of all, the Idea of Beauty itself." [p. 114]. There is a hierarchy of desirability such that the lower is loved for the sake of the higher until we reach the Idea of Beauty itself, but this seems to mean that I don't love you as a particular, rather I am impressed with your instantiation of the universal - Beauty. Thus the objections raised against eros appear very similar to the kinds of objection put against agape: that the particular is ridden roughshod over for the sake of the general. In eros I love Beauty while in agape (at least in this understanding of it) I love neighbourhoodness rather than my neighbour.

These difficulties in the account of agape leads me into an exploration of the role of mutuality in love. Some thinkers hold that the highest expression of love is not unconditional self-giving, but rather mutual love. What role does mutuality play?

These thinkers claim that mutuality is, in fact, an essential feature of agapeistic

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love. They argue that in the case of one's love for X being utterly spurned the appropriate expression would be, "I tried to love X", rather than, "I love X". As Outka puts it, "...love is absent when one party does all the giving and the other all the taking." [Outka 1972 p. 36]. This strong claim about the function of agape ought to be distinguished from a weaker claim. The strong claim is that mutuality is required for agape to exist. The weaker claim is that, while response from X is desirable and may improve matters considerably, it is not necessary. That is, I can love X agapeistically regardless of X's response. Thus agape does not rely on mutuality - this is the weaker claim. John Burnaby seems to be making the weaker claim here, "It is indeed the test of a love which would be like God's, that it is all-embracing; but we may be certain that Christ did not mean either that it is better to have enemies than friends, or that any outward act of beneficence can be a substitute for the inward disposition of heart which would make a friend out of the enemy." [Outka 1972 p37].

Let us examine the stronger claim now. Robert Johann argues that agape relies on two conditions. First of all, "it is not sufficient that the value loved in myself be somehow present IN THE OTHER. If I am to love him as myself, it must also be present TO ME." [Outka 1972 p. 39 emphases in original]. Now Outka interprets this as saying that for agape to truly exist the other, "must come into range and somehow turn towards me" [p.39]. The second condition that Johann argues for is that the other's "profound centre" be present to me. Outka paraphrases this: "I have to be in touch with those basic motives and interests really constitutive of his self-awareness, the same elements that determine my own identity." Thus, according to Johann, it is not just what I do that determines whether agape is present, but also what the other person does. It is not enough for agape that there is a I-He relationship, i.e., where I recognize that he, like me, is a centre of consciousness; rather there must be an I-Thou relationship where he and I are in a mutual relationship.

Johann says this, "Nor...is the other present as a value to be loved directly [i.e. agapeistically] so long as I consider and treat him, however concretely as a HE...in treating him as a HE, I reduce the other to being simply a nature, an animated object which functions a certain specific way and not some other way." Johann qualifies his last assertion by stating, "...while exteriority and exclusiveness are characteristic notions of HE the HE is still personal, a subject of rights - not

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simply a thing, an IT." As a HE, we must still respect his rights, liberty and the obligations of justice [Johann 1954 p.43].

However, as a HE, he cannot be the object of direct love or agape. Direct love or agape "implies between two persons a state of reciprocal consciousness. the presence of the other as really a 'second self' is necessarily that of a subject open to me in some sense as I am to myself - it must be a presence which permits exchange and dialogue." [p.45].

I am tempted by this picture, but I think it needs further elaboration. It seems to me to boil down to a question of epistemological access. I cannot love X agapeistically if I know nothing about X. I cannot love him as a thou until I know him as a thou. But I can only know him as a thou if he lets himself be known as a thou. Now that which I know about X must be knowledge of a certain sort. Thus I may know a lot of facts about X, but not know him as a thou because the facts only touch upon external contingencies of X's life, e.g., his car, clothes, job, address. The knowledge of X that I need must be of an appropriately personal sort, but this knowledge can usually be revealed only by X himself. Thus X must "turn to me" in order that agape be present.

It is important to note that I am talking about human relationships with other humans rather than God's relationship with us. God always knows everyone as a thou because He always has access to the necessary personal knowledge. Everyone, in this sense, is open to God. No mutuality is therefore required for me to say that God's love for us is agapeistic. God always knows me and loves me despite my stubborn refusals to accept Him. With human to human relationships things are different because access to X may be denied by X. I may try to love agapeistically but fail, because X never opens himself up to me.

This picture of love can be seen as a reaction to the ideal of Romantic love. Here the supreme example of love was love that was unrequited. Here the lover gritted his teeth and loved despite rejection. Of course the logic of this is all wrong. If unrequited love is the supreme example of love, then if the beloved finally yields and returns the love and forms a mutual relationship, the value of the love involved is actually decreased, not increased. If X loves Y and Y does not love X, then X's love is supreme. If Y begins to love X, then the status of X's love is diminished.

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Unrequited love can be painful and passionate, but it cannot be supreme; it cannot be the finest love there can be. Basically, it seems to me, such a conception of love is immature. I find that Iris Murdoch in The Sovereignty Of Good makes this same point. She talks about the "excitement" that transforming love into suffering causes; such an idea should be avoided [Murdoch 1970 p. 82].

Another factor behind the concern for mutuality has already been mentioned. A philosophy of love that concentrates only on the attitudinal aspects of love can tend towards merely a generalized benevolence where one's love is not so much for one's neighbour as for the idea of neighbourhoodness in general. A concern for the importance of mutuality, where one's love is based on knowledge of a particular person seems to avoid this problem. In The Virtues Geach says, "For God's sake we must have charity towards our fellow-men: and that means actual love of people individually, not just generalized attitudes of goodwill." [Geach 1977 p.86].

However, all this does not answer the question of whether mutuality is a necessary condition for agape or whether it is an optional extra. It seems to me that genuine mutual love must come higher than unrequited love, but I do not want to say that unrequited love is thereby not really love. despite the locution mentioned before. i.e., "I tried to love him..." To say that unrequited love is not really love does too much violence to our ordinary thought about love. A conceptual compromise needs to be made. I will say that mutual love is agape and the most valuable thing there is; unrequited love, is obviously, by definition, not mutual, but at least one half of the conditions required for mutuality are there! It is not implausible to assume that man's end or ultimate fulfilment is found in mutual love. In so far as unrequited love is a seeking after mutuality it seeks agape and is, therefore, of value. This seems to make sense. I think we would be reluctant to call a particular attitude a loving attitude if there was no interest in engendering some kind of positive response. Imagine if X claimed to love Y, but said he was not in the least bit concerned about Y's response; this would be enough to call into question the genuineness of X's claim. However, if X's attitude was in some degree a seeking after a loving response from Y there would be no difficulty in believing X's claim.

Let me summarize the claims I have made here. The supreme example of love is the kind of love X has for Y where Y loves X too; in other words, agapeistic love is

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an individual's love for another in a mutual relationship with that other. This kind of love requires the particular kind of knowledge where X has "turned to" Y and Y has "turned to" X. Unrequited love is still love, but it is not agape since there is no mutuality. There may be knowledge, but not the special, personal, intimate knowledge mentioned before.

There is more than a merely verbal difference between mutual and unrequited love since there is this difference of knowledge. But the difference is one of subjective feeling as well. A mutual love is more satisfying, more fruitful whereas unrequited love, while intense and passionate, is not satisfying. I think if we met an individual who found the fruitless love of another satisfying we would think there was something abnormal or pathological about that person.

Now armed with these distinctions and conclusions we can turn to the main purpose of this chapter: to give some indication of how love is the fulfilment of the law.

### Love And The Fulfilment Of The Law

In this section I will attempt to show how the positive and negative moral norms can be generated from the idea that there is a human nature and that the highest fulfilment of that nature is in a community of mutual love. I will argue, along with John Finnis, that, "...human fulfilment is the fulfilment of persons, in community..." [Finnis 1991 p.10].

The first idea mentioned above is that moral norms are contingent upon the types of beings we are, i.e., what our human nature is like. What is meant here by moral norms? I mean those prohibitions or prescriptions which are not merely formally valid. For example, the moral rule 'Do no wrongful killing' is a purely formal rule, since the immorality of that which it prohibits is built into its formulation [p.32 Finnis 1991]. Formal rules seem to boil down to tautologies like, 'It is immoral to commit immoral acts'. Obviously tautologous, formal rules like this cannot be the kind of thing that is contingent upon the character of human nature. Since they are true by definition, the worse that can happen to them is that they become irrelevant, e.g., the formal rule, 'Do no wrongful killing' would not become false if humans were indestructible, rather it would cease to apply in any meaningful sense.

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So formal moral rules are not dependent upon human nature. What kind of rules are dependent then? Perhaps to answer this it is best to take a specific example. Let us look at the moral prohibition against having sex with another's spouse, in other words, the moral prohibition against adultery. Now if one defines adultery as 'wrongful sex' the rule becomes merely formal and, therefore, pretty well uninformative, apart from the useful role of reminding that there might be such thing as wrongful sex. If we define adultery more neutrally as 'sex with another's spouse' we are in a position to see that the wrongness of this is dependent on the kind of natures we have. Given a different nature it might be the case that adultery becomes morally acceptable. The wrongness of adultery lies not in the physical behaviour itself, but in its interfering with the fulfilment of basic human needs, here the need for stable, trusting relationships where loyalty and commitment is of paramount importance [Finnis 1991 p.37-40]. As I say, if our natures were radically different and we had no such needs, then the moral status of the act of adultery could well be changed.

This conclusion that some types of moral norm may be contingent on our nature may appear paradoxical to some. "Surely," they say, "Christian morality has assumed that morality is absolute, not contingent in the way you say it is. What other moral norms are changeable? Can we start to ignore the Ten Commandments if we feel they no longer suit our natures?" As a matter of fact the moral theory I am adopting here has perhaps the right to be called 'THE Christian theory'. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, starts with an understanding of what constitutes human fulfilment and then proceeds to show how the norms of morality are rational in the light of this understanding; of course, earlier than this the same kind of approach to morality is made by Aristotle in The Nicomachean Ethics [See Porter 1994 Chaps. 2-3, Copleston 1955 Chapt. 5, Aristotle 1925 1, 7].

And this essentially, with a few modifications, is what I am arguing for. If we have a central Good, Love, and we understand the nature of what it is to be human and what constitutes human fulfilment, then all the other 'goods' are derivative. They are good because they are loving. We have, if you like, a two-tier morality. The central absolute that is the only true Good is Love; the other goods are derived from it and are contingent upon our natures. So, for example, the goodness of refraining from adultery is derivative from an understanding of what constitutes human fulfilment combined with the absolute command to do the loving thing. Thus

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morality is rational given the premisses that there is something that comprises human fulfilment and the prescription that one should love. Indeed, the love that one should have is the kind of love that seeks mutuality since, as we have seen, mutual love is the most fulfilled form of love.

Now a number of objections to this overall, broadly Aristotelian-Thomist conception of Christian ethics can be made:

1) It is unchristian since it logically leads to a form of act-utilitarianism. The moral prescription 'Do the loving thing' is likely to lead to a lessening of the status of the Ten Commandments. Should we commit adultery if this seems the loving thing to do? This lessening of the importance of traditionally dearly held rules is seen quite clearly in Jonathan Fletcher's Situation Ethics and Bishop Robinson's Honest to God. For example, Robinson claims "...nothing can of itself always be labelled as wrong. One cannot, for instance, start from a position 'sex relations before marriage' or 'divorce' are wrong or sinful in themselves...the only intrinsic evil is lack of love." [Robinson 1963 p.118]. There is some truth in what Robinson says: love is the central guiding principle, but the conclusion is not that no act is wrong in itself. More of this later.

2) The neo-Aristotelian picture of morality seems to reduce morality to self-interest. Morality becomes a kind of policy which enables one to get from A to B. 'A' is an unfulfilled nature and 'B' is a fulfilled one. Of course, some thinkers it is precisely because the idea of 'B' has been lost that morality has lost its point. Alisdair MacIntyre argues this in After Virtue where he commends the Aristotelian conception [See MacIntyre 1985 Chapt. 5]. However, the point remains those with a "high Stoic" conception of morality see the theory I am proposing as a sully of morality's purity [See Hudson 1983 p.343-371 for a round-up of these arguments. The phrase "high Stoic line" is from Geach 1977 p.16].

3) The third line of criticism claims that there is no adequate conception of what constitutes human flourishing. Even Geach who commends the Aristotelian line avoids saying much about what 'B' is [See Hudson 1983 p.344-345]. The claim may take the form that there is no such thing as human nature - such a claim is argued for by Barry Barnes and David Bloor in their essay Relativism, Rationalism and the Sociology of Knowledge [Barnes and Bloor 1979]. A truly empirical

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approach is, they say, open minded about what man is; indeed, what he is is always a product of his environment.

### Replying To These Criticisms

The first objection can be countered I believe by a proper understanding of what is being proposed. The result is not a type of act-utilitarianism or an act-agapism [Outka 1972 p.94-104]. If we do have a nature and this nature is only fulfilled in certain ways, then certain types of act or intention become always wrong. If the killing of innocents really does violate what it truly is to be human, then it never becomes the loving thing to do. John Finnis says, "But one can judge an agent's action wrong as soon as one identifies a morally significant defect in one's motivations, or an inappropriateness in relation either to the circumstances or to the means involved in that option - *malum ex quocumque defectu*." [Finnis 1991 p.17]. In other words, it is not incumbent upon the agent that he has, when confronted with a range of options, to calculate or weigh up the potential consequent goods of those actions which are *prima facie* wrong. Thus it isn't my responsibility now to weigh up the potential good to be had from adultery just in case, in the long run, more goods accrue from just such an action.

Part of what is being said here is that one should never intend evil that good should come [Romans 3v8, Pope John Paul 1993 79]. Here the objector might well say that such a formulation begs the question in its own favour. The very question is: is it wrong to do 'evil' when that 'evil' results in great good? Is the 'evil' in question truly evil when the basic intent is to do good, to end up with a state of affairs where the good predominates?

It is, of course, better to do evil for the sake of good rather than for its own sake, but the question of whether *prima facie* evil acts become changed by the intentions of the agent is difficult'. To be more specific, would it be right for me to kill an innocent person if by doing so many lives could be saved? Would what is ordinarily

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1. It might be argued that we can distinguish evil from wrong. Thus it might be the case that X-ing is an intrinsically evil action, but that performing X on a particular occasion is justified. In that case X is evil, but on this occasion not wrong. However, it is the validity of this distinction that is in question here.

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an act that violates a basic human need, become acceptable in these circumstances? According to an act-utilitarian type theory, such a killing does become acceptable. But what about the broader picture? What effect would such an act have on me, my wife, the person I 'save'? How is one to weigh up these various goods and bads? There seems to be no appropriate calculus whereby one can judge, with any degree of skill, the various consequences.

Perhaps the way out of the dilemma caused by these various scenarios is to fall back on the doctrine of double effect. Finnis has no difficulty in commending certain types of physical behaviour as long as what is intended is not the evil that may inevitably flow from that behaviour. For example, it is always wrong to deliberately kill the innocent. This is a moral absolute, but one may nevertheless kill innocents as long as one does not intend to do it. Air-Vice Marshal Good may intend to bomb military installations in an enemy city. He knows that almost certainly civilians will be killed by the bombing. Nevertheless their deaths, although inevitable, is not what he intends; what he intends is the destruction of the military bases. Air-Vice Marshal Bad, on the other hand, wants the innocents to die, so that the morale of the enemy is weakened. He intends evil, so that good will come; it is the evil that he intends as the means to what he sees as the desirable end. Air-Vice Marshal Good's intentions are not that civilians die; their deaths are not a means to an end.

Can this doctrine be used with our type of killing of innocents case? Finnis argues that the wrongness of an action does not lie with a purely physical description of that which is under scrutiny [Finnis 1991 p.37-40]. If it were the physical we were worried about, it would be impossible to distinguish between Good and Bad's bombing. What makes an action wrong is its object [p.38]. Finnis' position is also supported by Veritatis Splendor [Pope John Paul II 1993 71-83].

If I were to kill some person for the sake of many lives does the doctrine of double effect come into play? It is not the physical act itself that is wrong; this we have already seen (p.64). Can I say the object that I intend is the saving of many lives; the killing itself is just, so to speak, the inevitable precursor to that action? I do not intend killing; I intend the saving of many lives.

I think that Finnis would argue that nevertheless I intend killing as the means to

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a desirable set of consequences. It IS the killing of an innocent that I intend and this, being an evil, should not be part of what puts before oneself as an available option. Pope John Paul says this, "The foreseeable consequences are part of those circumstances of the act, which, while capable of lessening the gravity of an evil act, nonetheless cannot alter its moral species." [77]. My killing would not be as bad, but it would still be an evil and should not be deliberately chosen.

What are we to say then? I have said that we should do the loving thing and certain species of action are not loving by virtue of their violation of basic human needs. However, there appear to be circumstances where these actions appear morally 'attractive' because of the good that flows from them. Are we then drawn into an overall consequentialist position which would fly in the face of centuries of Christian thought? Perhaps we have a rule-utilitarianism instead of the more severe 'act' variety - nevertheless utilitarianism is what we end up with.

It appears that even Finnis is consequentialist up to a point. Certain actions or intentions are wrong, not by virtue of their physical characteristics, but because they lead to fulfilment of our humanity. He says, "The proportionalists are right in thinking that moral directiveness is essentially a matter of truths about the relationship between the activity directed and human good, well-being, fulfilment. But their account of the relationship between human good and morally significant choice is grossly simplified and incoherent." [Finnis 1991 p.41].

One significant point is the impossibility of hypothesizing about the long-term consequences of a particular action. Rationally, therefore, if we can discover species of action that damage human goods and prevent human fulfilment, then it best to avoid such actions even in cases where it appears that greater good would flow from ignoring any prescription against them. We can at least be sure that the list of evils given in Veritatis Splendor harm some person; we can never be absolutely sure that the deliberate performing or instituting of these species of action will give overall benefit. The Christian Church would argue that the likelihood of these actions resulting in human long-term flourishing is minuscule: "Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the mental integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit;

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whatever is offensive to human dignity such as sub-human living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment...slavery, prostitution..." [Pope John Paul 1993].

For the Christian, there is another reason for not performing such actions: God. If God really does command man to avoid these types of thing and if God really did institute the Ten Commandments, then given He is a loving God with a perfect understanding of our nature, it is rational to come to the conclusion that His judgements are best. This, as I will argue, does not compromise our autonomy in any significantly damaging way (p.84). As Finnis points out, "to respect the moral absolutes which are made known to us by God, who has practical knowledge of everything without limit. And to cooperate thus with God is to take into account everything (the principle demands of proportionalists), in the only way we can." [Finnis 1991 p.20].

So, then, a Christian, non-utilitarian ethic is preserved. It seems to me that when Christians like Fletcher and Robinson commend a kind of utilitarian approach, they forget the significance of the fact that man has a particular nature and a telos. It is not through lack of love that Aquinas warns against homicide, it is on account of love - a love that recognizes what human nature is and sees that man's telos is God-directed. Of course, neither Robinson nor Fletcher would ever recommend the killing of innocents in order to achieve some hoped-for long-term good, but that is what their ethical statements seem in the end to lead to. I do not, then, think the conception of ethics I advocate leads to utilitarianism.

What about objection number two - that this understanding of ethics leads to self-interest; morality becomes another way of putting self first. The objection claims that morality becomes identical with prudence since it is seen as a kind of policy that leads X from an unfulfilled to a fulfilled nature. This change is in X's best interests and, therefore, it is prudentially rational for him to pursue it. This is seen as a muddying of the pure waters of morality.

We will investigate some of these arguments in Replying to the Charge of Autonomy. For now I shall concentrate my attention on what I conceive is man's telos. Man's telos is to live in a community of mutual love with his fellow men and God. Morality is or should be directed to that end. What we should do, therefore, is to seek to establish loving relations with people, indeed, we should seek to allow

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them to establish loving relations with us as well. Thus we aim in our actions towards a community of mutual love. Christian prescriptions and proscriptions are directed towards man realizing this nature.

What can be selfish about this? If my conception of man's telos is an accurate one, we have avoided the problem of a particular person doing good just because it is the best policy. To seek after loving, mutual relationships is to exclude reducing morality to "mere expediency" [Hudson 1983 p.344].

Naturally, my conception of morality - the fact that it has a point - provides rational reasons for being moral, but it does not make you moral. Morality enjoins two principles: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and Love your neighbour as yourself. So if one decides to try to obey these two commands because one sees that it is one's own best interests (which it indeed is) one must immediately throw aside such motivations and seek the good of others; only then is one truly fulfilled. Only by seeking to be last can one come first [Mark 9v35].

Basil Mitchell in Morality: Religious and Secular makes a similar point. He calls the view that morality is the best policy the "down-to-earth" view while the idea that morality or virtue is its own reward is called the "high-minded" view. The down-to-earth view is too crude, but the high-minded view "is doubly unsatisfying" [Mitchell 1980 p.142]. First of all, if virtue is a "principled concern for others' needs then these needs matter or virtue so conceived is pointless". Secondly, "...if other men's happiness, at which the good man ought to aim, is distinct from their virtue, the good man's own happiness cannot consist in his virtue alone." [p.142]. If both the high and down-to-earth view on their own are unsatisfactory we need a way of bringing them together. We need to insist along with "Plato and Aristotle on the contentment which attends the life of moral virtue, which is the highest and purest pleasure and flows from the recognition that one is achieving excellence as a man" [p.143]. I have attempted to do something along these lines. We gain a deep sense of fulfilment by pursuing virtue, but we do not act virtuously for this fulfilment, we do it for the love of God, others and ourselves. This approach to ethics does not, it seems to me, lead to it becoming just an instruction book for obtaining one's own best interests.

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What about the third objection? Here the critic claims that there is no such thing as human nature, or that man has no telos, or both. Frankly I find the view that claims that there is no such thing as human nature to be pretty bizarre and implausible. It seems to me to be obvious that, as humans, we have certain needs, capacities and ways of being. Here I identify human nature with those capacities and needs that, in some way, indicate or direct the person towards his end. Thus it appears that for healthy, psychological integrity we need friendship. Friendship is a kind of taste of man's final end. Consequently, in my definition, friendship or the capacity to seek companionship of a certain sort is part of what it is to be human. Again, the need to tell the truth is part of the conditions of man's final end. So telling the truth and communicating is part of what it is to be human. I could go on, but it would be pointless since I do not think it necessary to prove that there is such a thing as human nature. The kind of nature man has is, of course, a subject for debate. For me, the Christian understanding of human nature seems closest to what we really find when we study the science of mankind. But this is a matter that cannot be debated here.

Perhaps one of the motives undergirding those who deny that there is no single human nature is a concern that we, as Westerners, will impose our view of the world upon other cultures. We will see them as being a kind of reflection of ourselves and not appreciate them for their own uniqueness. This is a laudable motive, but it is, I fear, self-defeating. Without some kind of shared characteristics we could not understand other cultures at all. If they were totally and radically alien, we would not be able to appreciate them for their own uniqueness because all we would be able to hear would be babble, a charivari of discordant noises. When we interact with other cultures, they move a bit towards us and we (hopefully) move a bit towards them: we find in the middle our shared humanity - for the Christian this shared humanity is God's image. This seems to me a noble conception of what it is to be human.

I think, then, that all three major objections have been dealt with. Now I want to look at one more objection to the position I espouse. I deal with it separately because it is more theological than philosophical.

James Gustafson argues in Theology and Ethics that the Thomist picture of ethics being primarily about the good for man is too anthropomorphic. Science has,

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he argues, shown us that we are a small part of creation and to think the universe is there for our benefit is implausible. What we need to do is replace a man-centred ethic with a theocentric ethic. It may be that our place in God's scheme of things is not the grand one that Christian tradition has taught. He says, "In terms of good or value the question is, usually, What is good for man? or What is of value to human beings?...Alternatives are these: What is good for the whole creation? What is good not only for man but for the natural world of which man is part?" [Gustafson 1981 p.88].

Gustafson develops his argument saying that it could never be part of Christian thinking that God was made for man [p.92]. If this is the case, why should we assume that God's purposes are exclusively for the benefit of mankind? The Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac shows us that God's purposes are not always in accord with a man-centred ethic where human life must be preserved at all costs [p.89-90].

Some of what Gustafson points out is valid, but I disagree with his conclusion that we should revise our overall picture of the relationship between God and man and move toward a more Eastern religious tradition. The reason for this is simple: the choice is not between an ethic that is exclusively man-centred or an ethic which is more 'green' and world- or nature-centred. In Thomist understanding ethics IS theocentric, but God is a God of love and so ethics is not man-centred but rather love-centred. Of course, there has been as Gustafson points out some distortion of this, but it would, I believe, be seriously unchristian to entertain the idea that God is not powerful enough to intend the good for both nature and man. Gustafson complains that Walter Rauschenbusch writes that "the will of God is identical with the good of mankind" [p.94]. But do we want to come to the conclusion that God intends mankind's bad - of course not!

I agree that Christian teaching is that God's purposes are directed towards man. That is because we have a God who is identical with Love. But this does not mean that God cannot have any other intentions other than those that are man-oriented. There are teasing glimpses in Scripture that God's purposes are wide, but that mankind plays a central part: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself

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will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." [Romans 8v19-21].

We can, therefore, agree with Gustafson that we should not be anthropomorphic in our thinking about God, but deny the basically unchristian tenets of his overall philosophy. This point is made by Jean Porter in After Virtue [Porter 1994 p.27&185].

Finally in this chapter, I turn to the question of the relationship between Love and Justice.

### Love and Justice

The question is this: can justice be accommodated into a theory of love, or is justice contingent in the sense that other goods are contingent. Are principles of justice only valid given that man has the particular nature he has?

In this section, I will argue that there is a deep conceptual relationship between love and justice and that it is not, therefore, dependent on human nature.

Fletcher makes this claim, "Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else." [Fletcher 1966 p82]. William Frankena thinks that this kind of identification cannot be made. In Ethics Frankena argues that justice and the principle of beneficence are two related, but distinct parts of morality. The principle of beneficence which says that one ought to do good and avoid or prevent harm [Frankena 1973 p. 45] is the nearest thing to a morality based on love. Frankena says, "The clearest and most plausible view, in my opinion, is to identify the law of love with what I have called the principle of beneficence, that is, of doing good..." Now because the principle of beneficence cannot cover the whole of morality (since it gives no indication of how good is to be distributed) Frankena adds the following point, "...and insist that it [the principle of beneficence] should be supplemented by the principle of distributive justice or equality." [p. 58].

Now if Frankena is right about the distinctness of love and justice it would appear that my case is weakened. However, before this conclusion is jumped at we must remind ourselves of what I am claiming. I am not claiming that justice and love are exactly the same thing. Rather I am claiming that justice is an aspect of love, that

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there is an intimate conceptual connection between the two such that a correct understanding of love leads us to a correct understanding of justice, that love and justice cannot be understood apart from each other.

However, Frankena seems to be making the point that there is not even this conceptual connection. This is the point that needs arguing against.

I will concentrate my attention on distributive justice. Here many different locutions try to grasp the essential nature of this type of justice; for example, we have; similar treatment for similar cases, to each according to his merits or works, to each the same thing and to each according to his needs [Outka 1972 p.88-91]. For the purposes of this thesis, the last locution seems most appropriate. (Of course, not all philosophers would agree that it captures all that the notion of justice is meant to cover. Locke, for instance, argues that one has a right to what one has justly acquired; this seems to be something that is lost in the locution that identifies justice as being about needs. I cannot argue for it here, but it seems to me that the notion that one's justly acquired items are owned rightfully is an idea that can be met by a need-conception of justice; one can say that to own what one has worked for is a need that human beings have.)

Now the ethical theory I have been advocating seems to meld very well with this conception of distributive justice. An ethic that has as its aim the promotion of agape, i.e., a love which aims at a positive opening up of the benefitter of my actions, must consider the individuality of the particular person and the individuality of the set of circumstances that surround that person. One cannot know what to do to encourage his positive response if one does not know the individuality of that person; one must attempt to gain that personal intimate knowledge which is necessary for the existence of agape. One is, in other words, trying to know the needs of that person and, in trying to fulfil them, encouraging him to participate in a loving relationship.

Now it may be objected at this point that this requires the impossible: knowledge of each individual. This is not the case. With an adequate conception of what it is to be human, i.e., an understanding of human nature, we are in possession of much of the requisite knowledge. For example, Sonia in Crime and Punishment knows that the killing of the old woman is wrong because the old woman is a person made

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in the image of God. Her knowledge of humanity gleaned from Scripture enables her to have compassion for what Raskolnikov can only see as "a useless, harmless, nasty louse". It seems to me that with a rich and accurate understanding of what it is to be human, we have enough personal, intimate knowledge to at least lay the basis of love. If there were no such thing as human nature and each person was an absolute *sui generis* individual then my theory would face insuperable objections.

If justice is about needs in general its essential character does not depend upon the types of being that any ethical theory is dealing with. The way in which a type of being's needs are met depends upon what these needs are, but the prescription that one ought to aim at the fulfilment of a particular being's nature is absolute, since love would always aim at the good for any being. Thus I think I have shown that justice is not contingent, but an absolute.

Does this mean that love and justice are identical? I think not - as I have argued before certain abstract moral principles may be aspects of love (p.39). They can be deduced from what love is without a consideration of the types of world we have and the type of natures we have. They are *a priori* in the sense that a consideration of what love is alone leads to an understanding of them. How these principles are applied is contingent in the sense that we have to see what kind of world we have before we know how the specifics of their implementation is to be achieved.

The reason why I think love and justice need to be logically distinguishable but conceptually linked is because most traditional understanding of the Cross have seen it as the resolution of a conflict between love and justice. If the two were identical such understandings - understandings I have sympathy with - would be inadmissible [See Carey 1986 for a round-up of various theories of what the Cross means].

So I have in this chapter tried to show how God's Goodness being identified as Love is meant to work as an ethical theory.

## Replying To Autonomy

In this chapter I want to re-examine the arguments brought against a Divine command morality from those who believe it in some way compromises 'autonomy'. First I will briefly remind the reader what the substance of these arguments involve.

One argument claims that it is inevitable that each individual is his own moral arbiter; even if one were to choose to defer one's moral decisions to God this initial choice would be one which could be morally judged. The Divine command theorist, the argument claims, cannot surrender his moral decisions to God for even this act of surrender would involve a moral choice as to whether it was right or wrong so to surrender. This argument lays a great deal of stress on the inevitable responsibility of each individual to make his own choices. This decision making is part of what dignifies each person. Giving up this decision making is impossible; to want to give it up is "infantile" [Nowell-Smith 1961].

A second group of arguments looks at the foundations of morality and how inappropriate foundations can have disastrous consequences. To be moral is to do one's duty and to do one's duty is to follow the dictates of reason. Morality is categorical and is in no need of external support in order to make its absolute demands any more absolute than they are. Divine command moralities try to provide an inappropriate foundation for morality. Such moralities claim that ethical demands are based on contingent, non-categorical bases such as the commands of the Church or historical events such as the death of Christ or the New Testament Covenant.

Furthermore, it is believed that these improper foundations can change the character of moral motivation. Thus one might do something not because it is the dutiful thing to do, but because one is attempting to avoid Divine punishment. In contrast, when morality is based on the categorical imperative such mere prudential reasoning is avoided.

These, in essence, are the charges I wish to examine. First of all I will concentrate my attention on the point that we are inevitably our own moral arbiters, that the Divine command theorist cannot escape his responsibility. I think this charge makes two distinguishable claims that are often confused: there is the

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LOGICAL point that when confronted with alternatives one must make a choice; even if one were to 'refuse to make the choice' that itself is a choice. In this logical sense, we are always responsible (leaving aside difficult cases where one is drugged or hypnotised. Being coerced to do something by threat is incidentally not a case of losing one's logical responsibility. One can, even under threat of death, choose death). The second claim is the MORAL claim that to surrender your will to authority is wrong; it is a wilful misuse of one's moral responsibility. Even if this authority is Divine one needs to consider its demands according to one's own conscience and reason. To do less is to cease to be a responsible moral agent. Here we get a new concept of responsibility compared with the one mentioned above; roughly, it is responsibility in the sense of making carefully worked out adult decisions

The conflation of these two senses of the idea of responsibility results in bad argument. The problem is that the particular argument I have in mind is very commonly used against Divine command ethics with an unjustified confidence that it is pretty well conclusive. Here I will look at how it is expressed by MacIntyre. The kind of ethical position it seems to commit him to is purely the result of his failing to distinguish between the two senses of responsibility outlined above. My exposition of MacIntyre is not meant to show anything substantive about his own ethical position; all I am attempting to do is show the inadequacies of a commonly used argument [It is, for example, used by Nielsen 1973 p.7]. The fact that I use MacIntyre's formulation is incidental.

MacIntyre says this, "Suppose that a divine being, real or alleged, commands me to do something. I ought only to do what he commands if what he commands is right. But if I am in a position to judge for myself whether what he commands is right or not, then I have no need of the divine being to instruct me in what I ought to do. Inescapably, each of us is his own moral authority." [MacIntyre 1961 p.195]. It is this last sentence that I find curious. If MacIntyre is making the purely logical point that one must, when faced with an alternative, make some kind of choice, then I agree with him, but I find it hard to work out what he can mean by saying that this inescapability of choice-making makes us our own moral authorities. Is MacIntyre making the claim that because morality inevitably involves choice-making, moral standards are a matter of choice? Are we "moral authorities" to such an extent that whatsoever we decide becomes, by virtue of that decision, the moral thing to do?

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This cannot be MacIntyre's meaning [See MacIntyre 1985 for his own moral philosophy].

Let us examine this further. We must decide whether or not to surrender our will to God. I agree. That this is a moral choice, I agree. That my choice creates morality, that my logical authority as inescapable choice-maker makes me the creator of morality, I deny. MacIntyre says I must judge whether or not to obey God's commands. I agree. But how am I to judge whether or not to follow God's commands? It would be a curious moral philosophy that maintained that if I choose to obey I am right by virtue of my so deciding AND if I choose not to obey I am right by virtue of my so deciding. This philosophy would be unacceptably subjectivist to philosophers like MacIntyre and Rachels (who also emphasises individual moral responsibility [Rachels 1971]).

It seems to me that the argument MacIntyre uses conflates the logical point about the inescapability of choice-making with the moral point about the impropriety of surrendering wills to authority. Because of this the argument appears to show that since it is always in the end up to us whether to obey a particular authority, this makes us inevitably authoritative in regard to morals. But is this true, say, in science? It seems to me a logical truth that in the end it is "up to me" whether or not I embrace Darwin's theory of evolution, but whether I embrace it or not makes not a jot of difference to its truth or falsity. Certainly the inevitability of me being my own chooser does not make me authoritative in matters of science. It seems the same way with morality: most philosophers of Kantian leanings want to emphasise our making choices, but they should not think that morality becomes a matter of choice. Most neo-Kantians would, I believe, want to avoid this kind of conclusion.

The criteria for successful choice-making in morality are "out there" in the world so to speak. I believe these criteria come from God who is "the source of all good desires and right judgements" [From the Evening Collect]. By this I mean that it is God who is the foundation or final ground of the moral. We must choose, but our choices do not I believe make a difference to the ontology of morality. What is right or wrong stays the same independent of our desires. Here Kant was quite right to insist on morality's autonomy. It seems to me that the logical point does not affect the validity of my theory. That we have to be our own choosers does not affect the

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essence of what morality is.

There is another more general argument against the MacIntyrean idea that we are "inevitably our own moral authorities". Consider this quotation from Kant, "Even the Holy One from the gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognise him as such." [Kant 1948 p.73]. Here Kant is concerned to show, as is MacIntyre, that we are inevitably autonomous because we have to compare even Christ with our prior notion of goodness before we can recognize Him as good. This means that, strictly speaking, we have no need of the example of Christ in order for us to know what to do. We already know what to do because we have this prior understanding of goodness. As Basil Mitchell observes, this argument, if successful, makes what is an ordinary fact of moral education logically impossible [Mitchell 1980 p.148]. It means that we cannot learn anything morally new from good men and women. Moral examples can only confirm what we already know. But surely, Mitchell says, this is highly paradoxical for the fact is that we do learn new things about morality from good people. Do we have to say that the Disciples, because they recognized Christ's goodness, could have preached the Sermon on the Mount [p.153]? Surely such a conclusion must be nonsense. We do need SOME understanding of what is moral to recognize someone's virtue, but we do not have to be a moral genius ourselves. The conclusion Mitchell draws about autonomy is much the same as the one I have already stated: "The logical force of Kant's dictum is simply that recognition of Christ's moral perfection is in itself a moral act and this we cannot and need not deny." [p.153]. The logical point that we, as our own choosers, have to make a choice and that this choice is necessarily a moral one if it is about what we ought to do, does not supply any reason for thinking that morality cannot be based on the Divine nature.

I will now look at the moral point that it is immoral for us to surrender our will to God. I hope, in the course of these remarks, to partly answer one of the other autonomy charges, namely, that a Divine command theory puts morality on an improper foundation.

Perhaps the best way to understand what motivates the autonomy attack is to examine the historical circumstances surrounding its conception. We shall find that my thesis about the nature of morality does not require any censure from these

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types of motivation.

As I have already mentioned (p.5), Kant's insistence on the the categorical nature of morality, unneeded of empirical grounding, can be seen as a pre-emptive strike against utilitarianism [p.38 Murphy]. The problem with empiricism in ethics, as Kant saw it, was that it did not do proper justice to the unique status of morality. Utilitarian-style theories believe that morality is founded in empirical facts about human aspirations towards certain types of satisfaction. The problem with this is two-fold. Firstly, this seems to put human desire too near the centre of deciding what ought to be done. For Kant, human desire was too fickle a source for an adequate theory of morality. Secondly and more generally, morality cannot be based on anything liable to change and empirical 'facts' are just that kind of thing. Anything empirically grounded is potentially subject to revision in the light of new discoveries and so is essentially contingent. Morality's basis needs to be something more solid and substantial than this. Hence Kant's urgent appeals that morality should be based on rationality or some kind of allegiance to consistency. Thus morality, for Kant, is nearer logic than science.

But if these are the appeals of Kantian morality and the motivations behind his insistence on the foundational autonomy of morality, then I think there is not much for the Kantian to complain about in my theory. It seems to me a correctly construed Divine command ethic fits the Kantian bill. Let me explain why.

In my theory God's commands are not arbitrary pronouncements, but are an expression of His immutable nature which is Goodness itself. Thus all God's commands flow from an immutable basis. Now the Kantian might complain that, even allowing this, it is still the case that morality is based on an empirical fact about the nature of the Divine essence and thus not categorical in the required sense. Now I would agree that in my theory morality is based in something other than a non-Divine "objective order of value" [Maclagan 1961], but I would deny that facts about the Divine essence are empirical facts in any straightforward sense. The inadequacy of empirical facts as a foundation for morality is their essential contingency, their potential mutability. Thus, for Kant, it is foolhardy to base morality on a contingent historical fact such as the death of Christ [Kant 1960 p.105-114]. (In fact, recently Enoch Powell has (rather eccentrically) disputed whether Jesus did in fact die on a cross; perhaps this kind of liability towards

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disputation was exactly what Kant had in mind when he rejected such contingencies as any fitting basis for morality.) But facts about the essential nature of the Divine are, I have argued, not subject to this contingency. Such facts are immutably true because God is necessary Being and by that I mean that whatever God essentially is could not have been different nor ever will be different. Thus God, for example, essentially exists so He necessarily exists. His existence is not contingent. The same is true of His Goodness.

In other Divine command theories such contingency is not avoided. For Ockham, it was an purely by arbitrary command that God pronounced what was moral. 'Moral' was DEFINED in terms of God's commands. Thus God's created morality out of thin air. God can also presumably change what is moral at any time. As pointed out before (p.17), God could have no moral reason for doing this, since morality is only defined as that which God desires. In contrast, my theory does base morality on something, that thing is His immutable essential nature. If Kant had in mind Ockham-like theories when he rejected Divine commands as a basis for morality he was right to do so.

The kind of argument that I have presented here is used by G. F. Woods. He too believes that theological ethics have no adverse effects for autonomy. He says, "[when morality is interpreted as] the creative will of God it is no way subject to the will of man. No human decision can abrogate or modify what is the case about the will of God our creator. The autonomy of the moral standard is here not simply affirmed without explanation but interpreted as a characteristic of what is ultimately the case. Moreover, the creative will of God is accepted as autonomous in the sense that He is not subject to any will greater than His own...I cannot see how the autonomy of the moral standard can be taken more seriously than it is taken in theological ethics..." [Woods 1966 p.102]. I agree with Woods although I would take exception to the phrase "creative will of God". If ethics is just the creative will of God, we then have to defend the theory from those that say such a morality would be arbitrary. It is better to say that morality depends on the nature of God as Goodness itself, rather than His will per se.

The critic might object at this point claiming that the main reason Kant rejected a morality based on what he called "ecclesiastical faith" (as opposed to "pure moral faith") was that the former required revelation. I agree that in Religion within the

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Limits of Reason Alone Kant's worry was that a Divine command theory had, in his mind, to rely on revelation in order to find out what was right or wrong. I do not agree, however, that this genuine worry affects my theory. I do not claim that because God is numerically identical with Goodness that an agent needs to rely on revelation in order to decide what to do. My thesis is not an epistemological one. I think that it is obvious that most people know what is moral or immoral quite apart from any religious faith. Perhaps this independence of morality from revelation is over-emphasised, but, on the whole, I am quite happy to say that it is metaphysically rather than epistemologically that morality is dependent on the Divine. Vincent MacNamara makes this kind of claim in Faith and Ethics [MacMamara 1985 p.177-196].

It appears to me, therefore, that my theory avoids many of the Kantian worries over a Divine command ethic and to that extent I hope that, at least partly, some of the concerns regarding autonomy have been answered. The idea that the Divine command theory is like utilitarianism in any worrying way is not true, since morality is based on something akin to a logical truth, namely, God's immutable, essential nature. It is not based on a straightforward empirical observation like the human pursuit for kinds of happiness. Likewise, in an epistemological sense there is no worry. I am not claiming that one needs to know about revelation or any historical event in order to establish the morality or immorality of an action. I have said, however, that the epistemological independence of morality from religion is exaggerated. I think it a matter of historical fact that much of Western present day morality is at least inspired by the Christian ethic as espoused in Scripture. I think that without this support other false ethics can intrude. We could, for example, have an ethic that pronounced honour as being the central guiding moral notion. This has occurred in the past (and in many cultures is occurring in the present, e.g., Japan) and I see little reason once society is more and more secularised why such an ethic should not gain precedence. If this then why not the ethic of the Cossack [See Phillips 1991 Chapt. 15]?

I do not deny, however, that religion can be a potent force for evil if God's commands are ignored and false 'divine' commands put in their place. It is part of mankind's tragic condition that this is the case. However, the fact that something can be misused is not a conclusive argument against it. One could crudely argue that the idea of natural selection provided the Nazis with a scientific justification for

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the Holocaust. What one must judge in cases where ideas or philosophies are mishandled is not so much the ideas themselves, but those who mishandled them.

I hope, then, to have gone some way in showing how Divine command ethics can respond to neo-Kantian concerns. However, the central point has still not been directly addressed. The critic still claims that a Divine command ethic requires what is itself immoral - a surrendering of one's will before the authority of God. James Rachels uses this type of idea to attack religious morality in his article God and Human Attitudes [Rachels 1971]. Let me explain the basic point Rachels attempts to show.

To begin with Rachels looks at the concept of worship. He claims that at least part of the notion of God is that He should be worthy of our worship. A God not worthy of this is no God at all. Rachels sees worship as the worshipper's reaction to certain beliefs about the universe and God's relation to it. Thus the religious person believes that he inhabits "a world created by an infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, perfectly good God; and it is a world in which he, along with other men, occupies a special place in virtue of God's intentions. This gives him a certain role to play: the role of a 'Child of God'." [p.40]. Worshipping is "acknowledging and accepting this role". As a 'Child of God' one realizes that God is superior to oneself. This recognition of God's superiority is part of the role played by one who accepts the role of 'Child of God'. Now comes the crucial part. Since the believer has the beliefs he holds about God he must realize that God has "an unqualified claim on [his] obedience" [p.44].

Now Rachels argues such a recognition of unqualified obedience is opposed to one important tradition in moral thought, "According to this tradition, to be a moral agent is to be an autonomous or self-directed agent...The virtuous man is therefore identified with the man of integrity, i.e., the man who acts according to the precepts which he can, on reflection, conscientiously approve in his own heart." [Rachels 1971 p.44]. The two ideas of unqualified obedience to God and following conscientiously the precepts of one's own heart are opposed. God requires we obey Him without question; responsibility requires we weigh up each of His commands in our own heart before accepting them. Thus the two outlooks are fundamentally inimical to one another. Rachels concludes from this that God cannot exist since it is part of the definition of God that He demands such

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unqualified obedience.

So, according to this tradition, a Divine command ethic demands the ethically impermissible. Surrendering one's will to God is simply wrong. I think this attack is fairly easily countered, since I do not think the Divine command theory I have espoused demands one to give up moral autonomy. Certainly one must give up one's 'right' to do anything one wants to do, but I would hope this is a feature of all theories of morality! To see why moral autonomy is not affected by my theory let us conduct the following thought-experiment.

Let us imagine that one night Faithful is praying beside his bed when a voice clearly and audibly breaks the silence. The voice commands Faithful to assassinate the President of the United States. Faithful is a good Christian. He fears and obeys God and certainly believes that God requires unqualified obedience. So what should Faithful do? If Faithful had no moral autonomy he might well concoct a cunning stratagem to ensure the President's death, but must he do this, even if he is a Divine command theorist in the sense I have defined? I do not think he must kill the President because he must be sure that the command is indeed a Divine one. Faithful has a brain and must "test the spirits" [1John 4v1]. Faithful, as a good Christian, will know that God has a certain type of nature and that such a command is extremely unlikely to have a Divine origin. Faithful must use his adult, decision making facilities in order to reach the conclusion that the command is a temptation rather than a Divine order.

The critic might reply that Faithful is not committed to automatically obeying this 'command', but he is committed to the hypothetical, "If God commands X, then Faithful must obey without question." To my mind, as a Christian, Faithful is indeed committed to this hypothetical, but it all depends upon what particular action is put in place of the variable. It is impossible that God, for example, could command wholesale slaughter of innocent civilians or the torture of children, so it is not the case that just any action can replace the variable. God cannot command such things since He is identical with Goodness itself which is opposed to any such actions. So, although, Faithful is committed to the above conditional there is no harm in it. The Christian could just as well accuse the Kantian of being committed to the conditional, "If the categorical imperative demands X, then X must be performed." I think the Kantian is quite happy to be committed to this since he

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believes that the categorical imperative always delivers the proper moral 'command'. No dictum delivered by duty can be immoral; no command issued by God can be wrong.

We do not lose our autonomy, since we must still use our minds and come to carefully thought-out rational decisions. The Christian uses much the same thought-processes as the non-Christian, but has two other important guiding principles: Scripture and prayer. Of course, the Christian can make moral mistakes. There are many examples of this! But the non-believer can make mistakes also. Holding the Divine command theory is no guarantee of moral excellence any more than being a Kantian is.

Phillip Quinn, in his article, uses this distinction between a genuine Divine command and a putative Divine command. He comes to much the same conclusion as me. We do not lose our autonomy if we are a Divine command theorist [Quinn 1978 Chapt 1].

There is, however, one major difficulty for my theory. It is one which both Rachels and Quinn mention. It is the problem over the interpretation of Genesis 22 or the story of Abraham's willingness to obey the Divine command and sacrifice his innocent son, Isaac. I said before the Divine command theorist can be sure that God's commands are always moral and yet, in this story, we have God telling Abraham to kill his innocent son. In all interpretations of the story, Abraham is seen as a hero and there is no question that the command at issue was a genuine Divine command. How do we explain this? Is the Divine command theorist committed at least in principle to the idea of human sacrifice?

In this section of this chapter, I am going to look briefly at the interpretation of this puzzling piece of Scripture. I am going to take it for granted that the story tells of a real historical event rather than see it, as some do, as a myth symbolizing the end of human sacrifice and the start of the use of animals instead (hence the ram caught by its horns at the end).

Kierkegaard's radical interpretation of this story in Fear and Trembling is the starting point of modern scholarship in this matter. Let me quickly explain what Kierkegaard's interpretation is. Kierkegaard sees Abraham as a "Knight of faith"

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who is willing to go beyond ordinary morality for the sake of God and his relationship with God [Kierkegaard 1983 p.71]. Kierkegaard compares Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son with various similar events in classical literature and the Bible. He looks at the story of Jephthah who vows that if God delivers the Ammonites into his hands he will sacrifice whoever first comes to meet him when he returns home. Unfortunately, it is his own daughter that is the first to meet him. He and his daughter agree that the sacrifice must still be made and so it is done [Judges 11: 30-40]. This kind of sacrifice, Kierkegaard argues, does not go beyond morality. He says, "...every freeborn man will understand, every resolute woman will admire Jephthah, and every virgin in Israel will wish to behave as his daughter did, because what good would it be for Jephthah to win the victory by means of a promise if he did not keep it - would not victory be taken away from the people again?" [p.58]. Jephthah is a tragic hero, but this does not put him on a par with Abraham because Jephthah never goes beyond the ethical: "He allows an expression of the ethical to have its telos in a higher expression of the ethical...Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical itself" [p.59].

Abraham's act suspends the ethical because there is no moral justification for his action. He does not save a nation. He is not adhering faithfully to a solemn vow. There is no understandable moral reason for Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Thus "The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac." [Kierkegaard 1983 p.30].

The justification for the deed goes beyond the ethical, but it does have a justification. Kierkegaard is not saying that this is a reasonless event, just that the teleology behind it cannot be expressed in ethical terms. It is not just a suspension of the ethical, it is a teleological suspension of the ethical. "Why then" Kierkegaard asks, "does Abraham do it?" Kierkegaard's answer is that he does it for God's sake and for his own sake. These two justifications are really identical [p.59]. In this story the ethical itself is the temptation that may prevent Abraham from doing his duty. Kierkegaard says, "Duty is simply the expression for God's will." [p.60]. So Abraham is to be admired and approached with a horror religiosus [p.61] because he is prepared to face the spiritual trial that accompanies a deed for which there is no ethical justification. He does what he does for God's sake.

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It is clear from Kierkegaard's reading of Genesis 22 that the believer may be called upon to perform deeds which are in moral terms wrong. Obviously, this reading of the Bible story does not square with my thesis that God will not command the believer to do that which is ethically impermissible. In fact, my thesis is stronger than that: I am committed to the notion that God CANNOT require the ethically impermissible.

What, then, can I say in reply? First, I think we have to note that Kierkegaard's reading of the text is enormously eccentric. In Religion and Moral Reason Ronald Green provides a study of Jewish and Christian commentaries on Genesis 22 [Green 1978]. The vast majority try to show how the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son can be morally justified. For example, in rabbinic midrashic tradition, it is a guiding principle that God only tries the righteous; "Because of his foreknowledge and omniscience, God fully knows the outcome of a test and in his mercy and justice, he tries only those who can sustain the adversity." But if God knows the outcome of the trial, why does He go through with the exercise? In the Jewish commentary God replies, "It was my wish that the world should become acquainted with thee, and should know that it is not without good reason that I have chosen thee from all the nations." [Green 1978 p.87]. The commentators are not, in Kierkegaardian fashion, celebrating the inherent anti-moral and anti-rational of Abraham's act, but rather trying to express the moral and rational reasons behind it. Another rationalizing and moralizing circumstance that is taken into consideration is that, despite Kierkegaard, traditional Old Testament notions of sonship did not always allow that the son was a autonomous agent separate from the father. The son was seen as part of the father, his possession (Green 1978 p.90-91). So Abraham's sacrifice is not seen as the sacrifice of a separate entity, but rather as an instance of self-sacrifice. Further comment is provided to the effect that Isaac was not unwilling to die, but offered himself [p.92-93]. Finally, many commentators think that the story shows God's hatred of child sacrifice and His unwillingness to accept such sacrifices [p.98].

The point I am trying to make is this - Kierkegaard's reading is not the orthodox one. God was not mysteriously teleologically suspending the ethical. His act can be ethically understood and traditional Jewish and Christian commentary has tried to do just that. Of course, the whole incident is still a challenging and puzzling one,

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but I do not think that Genesis 22 demands that the believer be prepared to do immoral actions for God's sake. The believer has very good reasons for believing that a loving and just God opposes such actions with all His Being. I do not, therefore, think that Genesis 22 constitutes any kind of argument against my thesis<sup>2</sup>.

Philip Quinn's answer to the problem of Abraham is to accept that the Divine command theorist may indeed be committed, in principle, to "If God commands someone to kill an innocent person, then he ought to kill that person." [Helm 1981 p.60 Quinn 1978 p.15]. His claim is that the principle is not "manifestly repugnant" because God can compensate "both the killer and his victim in the relevant or beatific respects either here or hereafter.". My thesis cannot accommodate this principle. The reason Quinn can allow it into his theory is that his Divine command ethic seems to make few assumptions about the nature of God. It seems to me that given God is love he would not command the ethically impermissible. There is, however, a way in which my thesis could allow God to command, not so much the ethically impermissible, but perhaps the ethically questionable. I have stated that God's Goodness is to be understood as being Love. This is necessary; God cannot be anything but Love; it is an essential attribute. However, I have argued, along with Duns Scotus, that some of God's commandments may be merely contingent exemplifications of His will since they are essentially based on human nature which is not necessary [See Swinburne 1989 p.127]. Given a different kind of human nature God could, for example, have allowed intercourse with another's spouse. Perhaps this kind of qualification could be made in regard to, not only different 'human' natures, but also different cultures and belief systems. Thus, as seen before, the ancient Jewish culture thought of the son as the possession or extension of the father. So the Divine command to kill Isaac is perhaps morally justifiable as an example of self-sacrifice rather than the murder of a separate person. I think most Christian thinkers have always allowed qualifications like these. There are many Divine commands in the Old Testament which, by modern day standards, are morally questionable. Not many believers who take the Old Testament seriously are prepared to allow that these were anything more than

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2. It may be objected that there are many more Old Testament stories that show God issuing morally untenable commands. Of course, there is not the space here to deal adequately with each of these. The general problem showing itself here is the balancing of metaphysical accounts of Deity and accounts given in revelation.

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temporary Divine commands which suited the circumstances in which they were uttered. This is, of course, a dangerous line of argument. Some religious fanatics may argue that all kinds of Divine pronouncements are merely contingent. So I am not sure how far Divine commands are based on the relatively stable contingencies of human nature and how far on the more temporary structures of culture and belief systems. With this in mind, perhaps it would be more accurate to clarify the point about the ethically impermissible and God's inability to command it. The new formulation could be: God cannot command anything that is contrary to His nature as being an essentially loving God. Since love is a relational term, what is commanded depends upon the nature of who is commanded. I think, however, that human nature is quite highly uniformly stable and cross-cultural. I would, therefore, favour a quite conservative view of ethical permissiveness.

However, despite this, the main point about autonomy is preserved, as is the anti-Kierkegaardian argument which claims that God cannot be anti-ethical. We are autonomous because we still have to make proper decisions based on our understanding of what morality demands. Just because in my system morality is personalized and made identical with the Divine makes no difference as regards autonomy. Furthermore, God does not require us to do things which, in Kierkegaardian understanding, go beyond morality, although we have to make the distinction that I think all sensible theories of morality make. We need to distinguish between that which is an essential feature of morality and that which is merely a cultural feature. If we do not do this, no moral progress is possible. It would be the case that anything currently accepted as moral is, by virtue of that cultural acceptability, truly moral. This calls into debate all kinds of complex issues about contingent and essential features of morality and which is which. In my theory what is essential is Love. It seems to me that this is the core that cannot be lost. This core is identical with God. Some of His commands are contingent but stable and 'absolute' in so far as it can be held that human nature is stable and 'absolute'; other commands may be only temporary injunctions based on relations between Love and cultural aspects of our humanity. I do not intend, in this thesis, to address the issue of these complex relations.

We can now concentrate our focus on another aspect of the autonomy attack, namely, the issue of prudence. It will be remembered that this attack claimed that a Divine command ethic introduced questionable non-moral or even immoral

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motivations into the heart of morality. The believer could, for example, be accused of doing an action because he believes it is God's will, rather than doing it for the more praiseworthy reason, "Because it's kind." Moreover, he might do an action not because duty demands it, but because he believes God will reward him. These kind of motivations are, according to a philosopher like D.Z. Phillips, nothing short of scandalous [Phillips 1991 p.182].

My reply to this accusation will be two-fold. Firstly I will argue that improper motives are a possible, but not necessary feature of my Divine command ethic. Secondly I will argue that a concern for reward in morality is sometimes not misplaced.

Let us, then, look at my first argument. Earlier in my thesis (p.10-11), I used an illustration to show the powerfulness of the prudence attack. Say a believer had given money to charity and was asked to give his reasons why he had done this. It appeared that he had to say, if he were a Divine command theorist, that he had done it because that was what God wanted. A non-believer, on the other hand, could just say he had done it because it was kind or a generous action. It appeared more moral to do a good action because it was kind rather than because God required it. This kind of thought is the essence of this type of attack.

Before we examine this illustration in more detail a clarification is called for. Giving money to charity is not normally something that anyone would believe is DEMANDED by morality. It would be regarded, in most instances, as a supererogatory action. That is, something not, strictly speaking, required by morality, but something morally noble or above the call of duty. If this is the case the wording of the Divine command theorist's motivation needs to be modified; perhaps it is better seen as an action that God does not require (though He may do, depending on the circumstances), but an action which is pleasing to Him.

What I want to question is the foundation of this kind of illustration. Why is it exactly that it sounds more moral to justify an action by saying it is kind rather than because one believes God is pleased with it? It seems to me that a question mark appears next to the Divine command theorist's justification because the relevance of his remark is not clear. If one realizes that, for my kind of Divine command

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theorist, God is identical with Goodness the question mark fades away. It's all a matter of how deep the questioner wants to go in his investigation of motivation. Since God is Goodness the believer does not have to say that he gives money to charity because God is pleased with such actions, he could just leave it as "Because it's kind." God is identical with Goodness, so this justification can be made without loss of truthfulness. If asked to go further he would say, as his final foundational reason, that God is pleased with such an action.

Perhaps this point will be clearer if we compare the believer's final justification with the answers a Kantian might give. It seems to me the Kantian could, as I have done, leave his justification with the unremarkable, but praiseworthy "Because it's kind." However, if asked to go further he would appeal to the rationality of the universalisability of kindness. He might mention the categorical imperative. I do not think the Kantian would be impressed if his questioner said in a disappointed tone of voice, "Oh, is that the real reason? I thought you were just trying to be a good person." The Kantian would reply that to be a good person and to obey the demands of rationality were really the same thing. The Divine command theorist is in the same kind of harmless position, although as we shall see shortly his position is even better.

Part of the problem of motivation is that we are not normally required to give detailed philosophical justifications for our moral acts. The unfamiliarity of these kinds of reply maybe contributes to their sounding not quite as 'moral' as they could. I do not think, however, this kind of attack constitutes a serious problem for the Divine command theorist.

The real difference between the Kantian and the Divine command theorist is that the latter introduces personality into the foundations of ethics. Because we have a person who is the source and demander of all moral actions, there is a danger that the believer will do what God wants because he wants reward or fears punishment. The purity of his motives can be questioned in a way that is not possible for Platonic or Kantian theories where duty is seen in a more impersonal, abstract light. There are complex questions here about what is a moral, non-moral or immoral motive for an action. Most of us, I suppose, do good actions for a whole host of reasons, some of them pure, some of them not, some of them neither pure

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or impure, but neutral. I do not intend to go into this difficult area, but I will say that my theory does not DEMAND that the believer does X because X is going to be rewarded or because not-X is going to be punished. Such motivations are an accidental feature of a morality based on Divine commands; they are not necessary.

Furthermore, it seems to me that the Divine command theorist may have this particular disadvantage, but there are far more advantages that are a part of his personal conception of morality. We can, for example, talk sensibly of loving Goodness, of being grateful for its nature. This would be strange speech for a philosopher who believed that morality was an impersonal set of values. I am not saying he could not speak like this, just that such speech appears incongruous in a way not apparent where morality is seen as a personal God. H. P. Owen says this, "...values exert an obligation. Their obligatoriness is inexplicable unless they are personal. Platonic Forms could, perhaps, attract. But how could they impose an obligation? How could we be indebted to them? Why should failure to enact them engender guilt? I can betray a person and I know that I deserve the guilt that I feel. But I cannot see how I could betray values if they are IMpersonal." [Owen 1965 p.80 emphasis in original]. There may be a danger of wrong motives, but the advantages of a personal conception of morality far outweigh this kind of worry.

My second argument against the prudence attack is to try to show that a concern for reward is not always misplaced. Bernard Williams has warned philosophers against thinking the distinction between moral and prudential motivation is as clear-cut as Kant thought. He argues that there needs to be some way of distinguishing acts that are motivated by selfishness and those that are motivated by an interest for others, but he argues that we should be vigilant in not making it the case that the only thing we are interested in is moral motivation per se [Williams 1972 p.79-81 ,Helm 1981 p.136-138].If that were the case, we would not be able to distinguish between a situation where a self-centred business-man gives money to charity to promote his public standing, or where the same man simply buys himself another cocktail cabinet. Surely, Williams argues, to give money to charity is better than increasing the number of drink dispensers anyone owns.

Williams' warning that the distinction is not as clear as some believe is salutary.

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I will argue, similarly to Williams, that moral or prudential motivation does not always constitute an exclusive disjunction. I will argue it is not wrong to have as one of your motives a concern for yourself. Selfishness is wrong, but a sensible concern for oneself based on an appeal to love or justice is not misplaced. Let me explain what I mean.

The reader will recall some of my arguments about the nature of love. I argued that agapeistic love is only possible when there is mutuality. If this is the case, then one is not being selfish if one is concerned with how a particular person will respond to my love for him. If one ought to aim at mutual love as the highest ideal, then it is not wrong to put oneself in the overall picture. If all that matters is loving X, then it would be impossible to morally distinguish between a situation where X spurns my love and a situation where X responds. It appears to me that the latter situation is the more moral situation and, therefore, the one that ought to be aimed at.

Now some Kierkegaardian-inspired thinkers may argue that either you love X simply because X is your neighbour or you love X because you want reciprocation. This argument, however, presupposes that loving X and wanting reciprocation is an exclusive disjunction. It seems to me that it is not. Consider Romeo and Juliet: we do not say that Romeo's love is somehow compromised because lurking in his inner psyche is the desire that Juliet returns his love. Romeo is concerned wholly with Juliet, but this does not exclude Romeo considering what heaven it would be if Juliet were to respond! If he did not care whether Juliet responded but simply 'loved' I would question the validity of this 'love'. A desire to be 'rewarded' in love is part of what it is to love. Naturally, if Y does truly love X, then Y will carry on loving X even if Y does not respond. The Christian believes this to be the case with God's relationship to mankind: He loves Bill even if Bill always remains indifferent to His love. But this does not mean that God does not want Bill to respond to Him, far from it. God's desire that Bill responds is part of God's love for Bill.

A similar, but much weaker argument can be made in regard to justice. Would it be wrong for a just and upright man whose life is full of misery and pain to cry out, in the name of justice, that the wicked prosper? If it is then Gerard Manley Hopkins was deeply morally mistaken to have contemplated such a thought in his Dark Sonnets:

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Thou are indeed just, Lord, if I contend  
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.  
Why do sinner's ways prosper? and why must  
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

"Moral work merits moral reward": this is the idea behind Hopkins' complaint before God. This does not seem to me to be an improper thought. The Psalms are full of instances where the writer seeks some kind of just outcome to his moral pursuits. Even Kant, of course, had something thoughts like these where he required the existence of God as a postulate of practical reason in order that there be a correspondence between virtue and happiness.

Now the objector will say at this point that either one does a moral action because it is moral to do it or one does it for reward. The former motivation is properly moral whereas the latter is merely prudential and either non-moral or even immoral. Again I believe the disjunction is not exclusive (although I believe it to be more exclusive here than in the former case where we talked about love). A concern for what one merits may be part of a wider picture where one requires that a just world order is established where everyone's virtue or immorality is either rewarded or punished.

As I have said, I am not so certain about this argument. I believe we have to be concerned with justice, but Christianity has always emphasised love rather than justice. The Christian believes that if everyone got what he or she deserved we would never enter Heaven. No one deserves any reward, rather they merit, in the sight of an absolutely Holy God, only punishment. This religious humility must not be confused with self-hatred. We may deserve punishment, but we are not worthless. In fact, Kant would argue that it is precisely because we are not worthless that we merit the moral possibility of punishment. If we were mindless brutes we could not be punished in a moral sense because we would not be capable of moral choice.

Love demands mercy. Hence we get the traditional conception of the Cross being an atonement for sin, a satisfaction of justice so that mercy can be had. Strictly speaking, it would not be sensible, therefore, for the Christian to demand

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justice. This kind of reasoning makes me suspicious of my own argument, Nevertheless, I think it has some merit and deserves some consideration even if only for the reason that such thoughts seem to have a sound Biblical ancestry.

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In this chapter, we will be looking at why a believer should be concerned to defend some conception of the Divine command theory. My main audience, in contrast to most of my thesis, is other believers. I will try to show that the position that holds that good is independent of God is religiously inadequate because it impugns the sovereignty of God.

Let us examine my basic argument. God's sovereignty is impugned because if the standards of goodness are independent of Him He must, in order to be called morally perfect, always follow the dictates of these standards. I do not think the believer, who is concerned to preserve God's absolute sovereignty, can allow that God must follow the demands of something independent of Him.

My argument thus far may raise two objections: one would be a call for clarification, What concept of sovereignty am I working with here? The other objection would argue that most believers have thought that logical truths are independent of God. Surely to admit this kind of independence has no serious implications for God's sovereignty; analogously then nothing serious follows from the independence of goodness from God.

First of all let me try to clarify what concept of sovereignty I am using. A traditional attribute of the Divine has been His aseity. Aseity is defined in the O.E.D. as underived or independent existence. It is the latter part of this definition that I want to concentrate upon in my explanation of sovereignty. By sovereign I mean that God does not depend upon anything else in order to be the type of being He is. [I use the word "sovereignty" in the sense used by Alvin Plantinga in Plantinga 1980 p.1-2]. If he were dependent His aseity would be impugned. Thus aseity and sovereignty are strongly connected ideas. They are not identical, however, because sovereignty has a wider meaning than aseity. For X to possess the attribute of aseity implies only that X is independent of all other things. For X to be sovereign means not only that, but also that all other things depend on X, that X has some kind of priority in regard to everything else. Here the locution "depends on" is meant to cover both logical and causal dependency. Thus everything that is independent of God depends on Him either logically or causally.

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With this in mind, let us turn our attention towards the position that goodness is independent of the Divine. We see that such a doctrine runs counter to my definition of sovereignty in two ways. Firstly, God is not independent of goodness since He depends on this to be the type of being He is. God must obey the demands of goodness if He is to be called good. God must do His duty - where what is dutiful is defined independently of Him. The type of dependency that obtains here is logical not causal, that is, this independent goodness does not cause God to be good, rather the existence of goodness is necessary for the truth of the statement, "God is good". If there was no such thing as goodness, there would be no sense in calling anything good. Secondly, there is no priority of God over this independent good, rather the converse is the case. As just mentioned, God depends on goodness to be the kind of being He is, but goodness does not depend on God, in fact, goodness just is. Spelled out in these terms, I think it plain that there is a problem.

What shall we say though about the status of logical truths? Surely their generally accepted independence from God does not cause any detriment to His sovereignty. I shall argue that, in fact, most traditional, mainline Christian thinkers have NOT thought that logical truths are independent of God. Furthermore, one of the main reasons they have had for defending this doctrine has been a concern for the sovereignty of God. So, then, let us turn our attention on this position and try to show that traditional Christian thinking has not separated God from the truths of logic.

Descartes is perhaps the most famous philosopher to have held this position. Descartes accuses those who believe logical laws are independent of God of blasphemy. Thus he says, "As for the eternal truths, I say once more that they are true or possible only because God knows them as true or possible; they are not, contrariwise, known to God as true as though they were true independently of him. And if men properly understood the sense of their words, they could never say without blasphemy that the truth about something is antecedent to God's knowledge of it; for in God knowing and willing are but one thing; so that from the very fact of his willing something, He knows it, and

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for this reason alone is such a thing true.”[p.260 Descartes 1954]. It seems here that Descartes is accusing the scholastic tradition of drawing a clear line between God and the eternal truths. Descartes' aim is to bring everything under the sovereignty of God. Plantinga recognizes that this was Descartes' aim: “Descartes' central claim here is that God's power and freedom must be infinite, i.e., without limits; “the power of God,” he says, “cannot have any limits.”...he believes that God is the sovereign first being of the universe on whom EVERYTHING depends, including the eternal truths.”[Plantinga 1980 p.110].

Descartes' position is known by two names: it is called universal possibilism by Plantinga, theonomic positivism by Leszek Kolakowski [Kolakowski 1982]. I will use the former to refer to it.

Now Descartes' universal possibilism has never been popular among theologians and philosophers. Probably the main reason for this is that it seems to make any proposed solution to the problem of evil impossible. God could, it seems, have made a world whose logic made it possible that He gives us free will and the robotic ability to do nothing but good actions. That this is a contradiction in this world is no problem to a God who can make nonsense sense and vice versa.

This general rejection of universal possibilism does not mean, however, that orthodoxy has opted for the other extreme of maintaining that truths of logic are independent from God. Rather, as Anthony Kenny observes in *The God of the Philosophers*, the scholastics maintained that logical truths were independent of the Divine will, but were “entirely dependent on God's essence.” [Kenny 1979 p.17]. Leibniz is a good example of a philosopher to hold this kind of position. He believed that logical laws were not created by Divine fiat, but still depended for their being by being involved with the Divine essence: “...eternal truths do not depend on the divine will. The reason of truths lies in the ideas of things which are involved in the divine essence itself.” [Copleston 1963 p.328]. Again, he says, God “is the source of whatever is real

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in the possible." but carefully distinguishes between his doctrine and Descartes': "Yet we must not think that the eternal truths being dependent on God are therefore arbitrary and depend on his will, as Descartes seems to have held..."[Leibniz 1902 p.260-261] .

Now there is one anti-Leibnizean argument in favour of Descartes. It involves the doctrine of Divine simplicity. If willing and knowing are in God the same thing, then if the eternal truths depend upon the Divine understanding they must also depend on His will. Kenny comments on this argument, saying that traditionally scholastic philosophy had NOT allowed that whatever God knows He wills [p.19]. Although they would have believed that, in metaphysical reality, there were no distinctions in God, they did think that our finite human minds had to make some distinctions when thinking about God.

It is not then the case that Christian thinkers have been prepared to admit that the truths of logic and God are sharply distinguishable. But, the question presents itself, what exactly did they mean by saying that these truths depend on the Divine essence? Perhaps the best way of understanding this difficult doctrine is to see how it relates to another doctrine - the doctrine of the Divine ideas.

For Plato there existed supremely above this world of appearance, a real world of Ideal Forms or Ideas. The things of the world we inhabit are merely the copies of these Ideal Forms. It was intolerable for Christianity that a supreme God could have this eternal realm co-inhabiting metaphysical reality with Him. This opposition between Platonism and the Christian belief in a supreme, creating God is commented on by Thomas Morris in his article, Absolute Creation. He says, "The apparent conflict is between what is arguably the central idea of the theistic tradition, the idea of a God as absolute creator of everything which exists distinct from him, and the characteristic, metaphysically powerful claim of...Platonism that there are strong theoretical reasons for recognizing in our ontology...a realm of necessarily existent abstract objects..." [Morris 1987 p.161]. The two traditions are opposed,

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nevertheless Augustine tried to reconcile them by arguing that the Ideal forms were not extra-mental, but resided eternally in God's mind. This basically is the doctrine of Divine ideas.

Now the relation between this doctrine and the doctrine of the logical truths being part of God's essence should begin to be clearer. The doctrine of Divine ideas states that all possibility (the Ideal Forms) has no ontological status apart from God. One of the functions of logic is to map the area of the absolutely or logically possible. Thus logic explores the area of the possible; it is a description of what is coherent or consistent and therefore a potential candidate for real existence. But, as said before, the possible has no ontological status apart from God. In other words, if there is no God nothing is possible. Logic is, then, just a way of exploring the Divine ideas which is the domain of the possible. Thus when we discover a logical truth - say that a triangle's internal angles always add up to 180 degrees - we should not suppose that this description about what is necessarily possible about triangles is somehow imposed on God by an co-eternal Platonic realm. Rather we should see this truth as a description of what has always been the case in God's mind or essence. Logical truths are still necessary, according to this way of thinking, but they are grounded in a deeper reality - the Supreme Necessity of God. Again logical laws are not chosen by God. He could not have decided to institute a different set of logical laws had He so wished. This is impossible, since God's essential nature is immutable. God is only 'constrained' by who He is. To think it possible that logical laws could have been different is a difficult statement to make sense of [see Plantinga 1980 p.116-125].

Of course not all scholastics accepted the doctrine of the Divine ideas. Ockham, notoriously, did not do so. He thought that this doctrine limited God's freedom. This is Ockham's famous nominalism<sup>1</sup>. He rejected universal forms, which were, as we have seen, identified with the contents of the Divine understanding. Ockham believed that the Divine ideas were finite in number,

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1. S.J Curtis argues that Ockham's position is best called conceptualism: nominalism, he argues, is a wholly modern position [Curtis 1950 p. 50]

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following Plato who thought that the Ideal Forms were numerically limited [Sontag 1962 p.51]. He assumed that having this finite number of pre-existent entities competing for actuality was limiting for God. God HAD to actualize one of these finitely numbered pre-existent ideas; therefore His freedom was curtailed. For Ockham God's freedom means that he could create completely ex nihilo any of an absolute infinity of individuals<sup>2</sup>. It is hard to gauge how much of Ockham's rejection of universal forms was motivated by thinking of them as limited in number or by his thinking that the idea of universal forms per se is theoretically redundant. However, this is a question we do not have to investigate here. All we need to see, for the purpose of this thesis, is that Ockham would not have concluded from his rejection of universal forms that God and the truths of logic were separate and co-eternal. Certainly, Ockham with his emphasis on God's freedom, would have thought such an external curtailment of God's possible activity was unacceptable.

It is not so clear then that the objector to my central thesis - that God and morality are linked - can point out that no similar linkage occurs in the relation between God and logic. It seems to me that it is still up to the advocate of Divine and moral ontological separateness to show how his view does not impugn God's sovereignty.

What I intend to do in the rest of this chapter is to look at another motivation behind the concern to defend Divine command ethics and then take the attack to my opponents and try to show how their views show up as inadequate once examined closely. For the sake of brevity and convenience, I will call the position that holds that God and value are ontologically and metaphysically

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2. Ockham, claims Copleston, preserves the language of the theory of divine ideas, but really rejects it. Thus, Ockham holds, that the divine idea, say, of Abraham Lincoln, is identical with Lincoln himself. There is no middle order of abstracts, even within God's own mind, that he must possess in order to create. All we need is God Himself and his power to create ex nihilo; A middle order of possible individuals is not needed to explain how God creates FROM NOTHING.

James Ross puts forward a similar view to this, although he seems to disagree with Copleston's interpretation of Ockham [Copleston 1963a p.100-103 and Ross 1986 p.315-344].



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separable, the Cudworth thesis [See Ralph Cudworth's A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality Book 1 Chpts 1-3].<sup>3</sup>

A worry that some believers have when God and morality are separated concerns the notion of the dignity of God. If there are values independent of God, then it appears we can judge God using these values and not God Himself as our criterion. This seems an affront to God's dignity: it is God's prerogative to judge, how can sinful man judge the Divine Judge?. This kind of complaint is especially strong in protestant thinkers like Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. Brunner, in particular, is so impressed by man's capacity for sin and self-deception that he sees all secular ethics as a manifestation of man's sinfulness, as man's desire to dispense with God and set up his own idolatrous ethic. He would see the philosopher's independent set of values as a hideous monstrosity, an abomination of desolation, something that is attempting to oust God himself from his rightful throne. For Brunner "what God does and wills is good; all that opposes the will of God is bad. The Good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God." [Brunner 1937 p.117]. To actually try to judge God would merely compound our blasphemy.

It seems to me that Brunner has a good point here, but it needs some modification. I do not think it is religiously wrong to judge God as long as one finds Him good. The verb "judge" sounds irreligious because there is an

3. Actually Cudworth, although usually cited as an opponent of Divine centred ethics, is very close in opinion to the position I have defended. In his Treatise he considers an objection to the idea that the essence of things in themselves is not dependent upon the will of God - namely, that such a conception holds it to be the case that, "there would be something that was not God, independent upon God" [p.34]. His reply to this is to claim, "that the essence and verities of things are independent upon the Will of God, but that there is an eternal and immutable Wisdom in the Mind of God." [p.34-35]. Cudworth claims that God's will is subordinate to his wisdom and that "...all the Knowledge and Wisdom that is in creatures, whether Angels or Men, is nothing else but a participation of that one Immutable and Increated Wisdom of God." [p.35]

Cudworth goes further and argues that God's wisdom is subordinate to the "Top or Crown" [p.36] which is God's Goodness. God's nature is better expressed as "an infinite circle whose inmost Centre is Simple Goodness." [p.36].

Later, in his Treatise, Cudworth says, "...it is not possible that there should be any such Thing as Morality, unless there be a God, that is, an infinite eternal Mind that is the first Original and Source of all things, whose nature is the first Rule and Exemplar of morality; for otherwise it is not conceivable, whence any such thing should be to particular intellectual Beings." [p.298]

So, even Cudworth, an apparent enemy, is a friend and ally.

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ambiguity: "judge" can imply censure as well as to come to a correct decision about. The problem Brunner has hit upon is when we judge God by our own wrong standards, where we, for example, let our secular moral values become the guiding force in our coming to a decision about the Divine. The believer must come to a decision about the goodness of God, but the criteria he uses must be the correct ones. Now, according to the Divine command theorist, the correct moral criteria are from God, so these are what we must use if we are to come to a correct moral decision. For Brunner anything other than God-given values are a kind of idolatry.

Now the objector might object that this sounds curiously circular. Aren't we using God to judge God? Don't we need a position independent of God to come to a correct, impartial decision? I think Brunner would say that, in the case of God, we need to be circular in our judging. After all, we often judge people by the standards they espouse. Sometimes we see they live up to those standards, sometimes we see that they don't. Brunner would insist that God always is absolutely true to the standards He espouses. Of course, to judge whether or not a person lives up to his own standards does not mean that we must accept these standards for ourselves. But in the case of God we would, according to Brunner, condemn ourselves if we were to reject His standards. This condemnation could not be explained except by reference to God's standards, so the circularity of justification is evident.

The problem with Brunner's argument is that it begs the question between the proposed explications of Divine goodness. Brunner says that we must use the correct criteria when judging God. The proponent of the Cudworth Thesis would agree, but say that the values need not be a human invented, idolatrous, secular ethic. The choice is not between God given value and a sinful ethic; there is a third alternative: an a-secular, a-divine ethic, an ethic that is based on values which are independent of God and not invented by man. In other words, he insists the true ethic or set of values is autonomous of man and the Divine. Brunner's reply to such an idea is unequivocally negative. He says, "There is no such thing as an 'intrinsic good'. The hypostatization of a human conception of the Good as the 'Idea of the Good' is not only an abstraction in the logical sense; it is due to the fact that man has

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been severed from his Origin...the IDEA of the Good did not create life...it is merely the shadow of the real force, namely, the will of God." [Brunner 1937 p.114].

But the Cudworthian theist would maintain that God always fulfils perfectly the duties demanded by this independent set of values, so it is always the case that we reach the religiously adequate conclusion that God is good. God's dignity is thus preserved.

It seems then that, although Brunner's recognition of the possibility of false ethics is important, his approach cannot be used to defeat those that believe in the Cudworthian model of value. The best way of seeing the religious inadequacy of this model is in an understanding of the sovereignty of God and what this involves. Hendrick Hart argues, "As far as I can see, a view that commits one to holding that God is subject to laws...that are neither created by him nor identical with him, is a view that commits one to holding that God is neither sovereign nor omnipotent." [Plantinga 1980 p.8]. Both Luther and Calvin seem to agree with Hart here. Luther says, "He is God, and for his will there is no cause or reason that can be laid down as a rule or measure for it, since there is nothing equal or superior to it, but it is itself the rule of all things." [Luther 1957 p.209]. In Calvin we have a similar thought expressed, "God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatsoever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous." [Green 1988 p.119]. For the believer who is committed to a strong concept of sovereignty, God must be ALL in the sense that nothing metaphysically deeper can be His foundation. There cannot be something that He must follow the dictates of in order to be the type of Being He is. He is the type of Being He is because He is. I believe any other view is religiously inadequate. To show this even more starkly, I intend now to look at some of the accounts of those who believe in the Cudworthian approach. First of all, I will examine the views of Richard Swinburne.

In Responsibility and Atonement Swinburne explains his views on the relationship between morality and God. He claims that some duties arise whether God exists or not - "There are certain minimal duties to one's fellow

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men which are duties whether or not there is a God - both positive duties (to tell the truth and to keep promises - possibly subject to certain qualifications) and negative duties (to refrain from murder and torture, rape, and theft)." [Swinburne 1989 p.123]. God's existence is relevant to morality in that if He exists there are certain other duties that arise from his relationship with us. We have a general duty to benefactors. For example, children have a duty to obey parents since they have caused their existence and have clothed and fed them for a number of years. God is mankind's supreme benefactor. At every moment our very existence relies on His sustaining power. So one set of duties that we owe to God arises out of the fact that He is our creator and sustainer.

Other duties arise if God seeks man's eternal well-being. Swinburne writes, "...If there is a God there is so much more to be made of our lives than there would be otherwise; we let down those who give us life, above all God, if we fail to take any steps to make something of that life." [p.125].

Swinburne believes that there is a core of "necessary moral truths which do not depend for their truth on the will of God and to which, in virtue of the necessity of his goodness, he will conform." [p.127]. Added to this core there are the extra duties that arise from God existence and His relationship with mankind.

This Cudworthian view of the relationship between God and morality has some interesting consequences. It means that the core of necessary moral truths constitute, "limits both to the areas over which God has absolute authority and to the amount of service men are obliged to render." [Swinburne 1989 p.127]. God can, therefore, not command a person to do something that has no good purpose whatsoever [128-129]. Our obligations to God are limited since on the "normal Christian view" life is a gift. A gift is not a gift if the benefactor 'gives' us something with tight specifications for its use; "I cannot 'give' you five dollars and tell what I want you to buy for me with it." [p.129].

My dissatisfaction with Swinburne's position covers two main areas. Firstly

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his general description of our relationship with God seems inadequate to religious experience. Secondly his defence of the idea that some moral truths are necessary seems very weak.

In Swinburne's picture our duties to God arise in an analogous way to our duties to human benefactors, only God is much more of a benefactor, so our duties are correspondingly stronger and more general. This seems to me to not do justice to religious experience. If God is simply a supreme benefactor is it so very wrong to be ungrateful and refuse to repay our debt to Him? We are seen, in this view, as no more than rebellious children who ought to be more grateful. But is a refusal to be grateful, though hurtful to the benefactor, such a great crime? Yet, in the Bible, a refusal to obey God is not seen as analogous to rebellious teenagers being moody and dismissive of parental authority. Rather such an act is seen as supremely wrong, an abomination, an action that merits severe and terrible Divine punishment. I could bore the reader with a hundred quotations to force home my point. Here is only one which I choose more or less at random: "Thus says the LORD GOD: "Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man, and no god...Because you consider yourself as wise as a god, therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, the most terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendour. They shall thrust you down into the Pit, and you shall die the death of the slain in the heart of the seas." [Ezekial 28 2-8]. If this nation were guilty only of refusing to be grateful would it be right for God to inflict such terrible revenge? Swinburne seems to me to have underestimated what we owe God and certainly used the wrong analogy in order to explicate the nature of our duty toward God. (There is, of course, the Parable of the Prodigal Son which apparently sees wrong-doing as analogous to a refusal to obey a father. I am not saying, however, that wrong-doing cannot be partly explicated by using the analogy of disobedient children, just that this is not the whole story. As with all parables and analogies we have to work out what is the central point that is being made. It appears to me that in this Parable the central point is that God waits with father-like faithfulness for

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His children to return; the Parable is not trivializing the enormity of rebellion against God.)

Another question presents itself: why is it when we do wrong it is seen, in Biblical terms, as an affront to God? Certainly when we do wrong it is not seen as a case of an individual transgressing an autonomous code that God has taken upon Himself to defend. Rather it is seen as a rebellion against God Himself. Thus, in Genesis, Adam and Eve do something that is, in all appearance, ethically neutral; they eat from a tree. The wrong-doing arises out of disobedience to God, usually interpreted as a "grasping for spiritual and moral autonomy rooted in unbelief and rebellion." [Ferguson and Wright 1988 p.642].

Again if God and morality are separate, why is it that God is seen as being able to forgive wrong-doing? What right has God got to take it upon Himself to forgive what I do to Bill unless what I do to Bill is, in some way, a wronging of God? Swinburne would presumably say that God commands not to do wrong and as our great benefactor we ought to obey him. In doing this action we wrong Bill AND go against the commands of God. Again, this seems to be inadequate. Nowhere in Scripture does it suggest that our final (Judgement Day) forgiveness for a particular action depends upon the forgiveness of the human beings we wrong. Our forgiveness relies solely upon God. If the wronging of Bill was equally a wrong to him and to God it would seem to necessitate that Bill be my Judge as well as God. Since this does not seem to be the case, I conclude that the wrong I do to Bill is primarily a wronging of God<sup>4</sup>. It seems to me that this can only be explained if we say that any wrong-doing is a direct personal rebellion against One who is Goodness itself. The

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4. This does not mean that a wronging of Bill is not a bona fide wronging, as if Bill were not really important. What I am trying to say is that the final explanation of what it is to wrong Bill must make reference to God and His nature. It does not follow from this that no wrong to Bill is done. To see this more clearly, imagine how a Kantian would explain any wronging of Bill. He would say that a wronging of Bill is an instance of non-compliance with the law of the Categorical Imperative in relation to Bill. It does not follow from this that no wrong to Bill is performed and that we really only failed to comply /-with the Categorical Imperative. In the same way, in my system the final explanation of wrong-doing is that it goes against God's nature, but that does not mean that Bill is not really wronged.

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concept of the Divine is the central guiding notion in the Biblical explication of good and evil. Good is basically a doing of God's will, evil is to set oneself against this will. The Kantian notion of ethics being autonomous is alien to the spirit of Biblical witness.

In modern theology this idea that there is a strict separation between God and value has taken hold. Under the grip of this Kantian inspired picture, God can only be seen as analogous to a Superman who decides to defend the autonomous American Way. Thus Hanson and Hanson in *Reasonable Belief* claim that "We must not think of God as growing angry with people [who do wrong] and punishing them." [Hanson and Hanson 1980 p.125]. The wrath of God should be seen as merely the disastrous natural consequences of sin. It is GOD'S wrath because this is God's universe and He made it such that sin would have the consequences it has. But the most important point they wish to communicate is that we "must not indeed represent God as being personally angry with us." [p.125]. It is my contention that they cannot countenance God's personal anger with wrong-doing because God is seen merely as the defender of something that is ontologically separate from Him. When we do wrong we do not offend God, but rather an autonomous set of values. Because Hanson and Hanson subscribe to the Kantian-Cudworthian position they can make no sense of a vast amount of Biblical data. They cannot do justice to religious experience as it is witnessed in Biblical terms. Sin is seen as an impersonal wronging of some abstract set of principles, rather than the rebellion against the essential nature of God that it really is. Can this explain the guilt believers feel before God when they offend Him? Can it really be just a matter of being ungrateful? Can we merit terrible punishment for being churlish towards our benefactor? Can God forgive us when we have offended something ontologically distinct from Him? All these questions arise from a false account of the nature of the relationship between God and morality. It seems religiously dubious at the very least.

My second suspicion concerning Swinburne's account is directed at his defence of the contention that some moral truths are necessary. In *The Coherence Of Theism* Swinburne argues that moral truths are necessary and therefore there is no restriction on God's power to claim that morality does not

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depend upon Him. Unfortunately his argument often seems to rely on a kind of faith that one day we will discover that moral truths are necessary and that there is a deep incoherence in certain seemingly contradictionless moral viewpoints. He says, "There may be a...incoherence buried in "capital punishment is always wrong" or in "capital punishment is sometimes right." [Swinburne 1993 p.199]. He likens the difficulties in discovering the buried inconsistencies to the difficulties in discovering certain logical or mathematical truths. Just because it is often difficult to prove that a statement is logically or mathematically contradictory is no proof that it is not so; the same with moral truths - it may be difficult to discover their logical necessity but that is no proof that they are not logically necessary. I agree that sometimes there may be great difficulties in discovering logical absurdities in statements that have the appearance of being consistent, but surely it takes a great deal of faith to believe that there are buried inconsistencies in statements like "Capital punishment is always right." Our faith that one day a proof of Goldbach's conjecture (one of Swinburne's examples p.200) will be discovered is based upon past successes in mathematics and logic; there seem to be no past successes in moral thinking of such an order that they would justify a belief that any moral truth can be proved to be necessary; in fact, it's quite the reverse: moral thinking has such a bad past record that it appears quite staggering to believe that there is a kind of undiscovered logical necessity buried deep down in certain moral statements! Naturally, until proven otherwise, it may be the case that certain moral truths are logically necessary, but I think the onus is on Swinburne to show this to be the case, rather than to suggest the possibility.

In any case, Swinburne's case seems to rest on a fundamental misconception. He thinks that the only way to avoid universal possibilism is to hold that God and the truths of logic are metaphysically distinct. Thus he mentions Aquinas' rejection of universal possibilism [p.154 Swinburne 1993], but does not go on to explain that, for Aquinas, logical truths still, nevertheless, depend on God. Aquinas claims, "The idea of a circle, and the equality  $2+3=5$ , possess eternal truth only in God's mind." [Aquinas 1989 1,2,16,7 p.46]. Brian Davies states that Aquinas maintained that God and His knowledge are indistinguishable [Davies 1992 p.130]. Thus God's knowledge of eternal truths

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is not knowledge of independent Platonic Ideas [See Aquinas 1,2,15,1-3 p.44], but knowledge of Himself and what He is by His very nature. The reason Aquinas held such a doctrine was to preserve God's aseity and sovereignty.

Swinburne thinks it does not matter if logical truths are seen as independent of God and since, in his view, moral truths seem a species of logical truth his reasoning is that the Cudworthian independence of moral truths has no real implications for our traditional understanding of God. If he does think this I suggest he show how such a doctrine does not impugn the sovereignty of God as defined by me (p.96). The Manichaeian heresy declared that there is an eternal dualism in the universe. Good and evil or light and darkness are the ultimate metaphysical foundation of the world. This dualism was rejected by Augustine since it detracted from the primacy and unity of God [Hick 1966 p.45 See Augustine 1972 xi,22 p.454]. Swinburne's dualism is less destructive to theism, since it is not evil or darkness that cohabits reality with God, but a world of Platonic value or goodness. Nevertheless it is dualism.<sup>5</sup> The independent eternal truths of morality (and logic) exist with God forever. They do not depend on God, but He depends on them to be who He is. Is this what belief in an all-sovereign, underived God amounts to?

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5. Swinburne has argued recently that logical truths and mathematical truths are not real things independent of God, but rather are fictions [Swinburne 1994].

## History Of The Metaphysical Identification

What I intend to do in this chapter is show that my claim is an orthodox one, that many classical and modern philosophers make essentially the same claim as I have. I will, of necessity, leave many important philosophers out, but I hope to include enough to show that there is ample historical precedent for the identification I espouse.

The Enneads of Plotinus makes a good beginning to the study of the history of the identification between God and Goodness. Plotinus' metaphysics is inspired by the Platonic idea that the Forms have an arche or explanatory principle [Gerson 1994 p.57]. Plato calls this entity 'the Form of the Good'. It was commonplace in antiquity that the Form of the Good and God were one and the same (although the Form of the Good was not personal) [Gerson 1994 p.62]. Plotinus' philosophy is an attempt to investigate the nature of this One (as he calls it). His investigation forces him into a largely negative philosophical theology. Plotinus insists that the One is so unlike any other thing that positive predication is nigh on impossible: "The One is not a thing among things, all we can do is but try to indicate, in our own feeble way, something concerning it." [Plotinus 1956 5,3,13,1-3 p. 380].

Part of Plotinus' attempt to 'define' the One is to call it, along with Plato, 'the Good'. He says, "When we speak of The One and when we speak of The Good we must recognize an identical nature; we must affirm they are the same." [Plotinus 1956 2,9,1 p.108].

In the Fifth Ennead Plotinus says, "The Supreme, as the Absolute Good and not merely a good being or thing, can contain nothing, since there is nothing that could be its good...it is void of all but itself...Any good thing has become so by communion [in The Good]; but that in which it has communion is not a thing among things of the All; therefore The Good is not a thing of the All. Since there is this Good in any good thing...it must enter from elsewhere than the world of things: it must be simplex, good alone: and therefore - and much more - must that source be a Good absolute and

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isolated" [Plotinus 1956 5,5,13 p.404-405].

Plotinus's point is that The Good cannot be good in the sense that ordinary things are good. Ordinary things are good due to their participation in The Good. The Good itself is not Good by virtue of anything external to itself. It is Good "absolute and isolated".

Now, although Plotinus' One is not a personal God in the Christian sense, we can see a fairly good parallel to the view I am arguing for. The Supreme Arche or starting point of all is not good, rather it is Good or Goodness itself. The 'jump' from this view of the Supreme creative Being and the idea that the personal Supreme Being of Christianity is identical with Goodness, is quite small.

I will now briefly examine the views of St. Anselm as expressed in the Proslogium and the Monologium. Anselm argues that God is every true good, but that these goods are not part of God, but are to be identified with the whole of God: "Assuredly thou art life, thou art wisdom, thou art truth, thou art goodness, thou art blessedness, thou art eternity, and thou art every true good. Many are these attributes: my straitened understanding cannot see so many at one view, that it may be gladdened by all at once. How then, O Lord, art thou all these things? Are they parts of thee, or is each one of these rather the whole, which thou art? For, whatever is composed of parts is not altogether one... But these things are alien to thee... Hence there are no parts to thee, Lord, nor art thou more than one. But thou art so truly a unitary being, and so identical with thyself... Therefore, life and wisdom and the rest are not parts of thee, but all are one; and each of these is the whole, which thou art, and which all the rest are." [Anselm 1962 Pros. chpt xviii.70-71].

In the Monologium the same point is reiterated: "Is it to be inferred, then, that if the supreme Nature is so many goods, it will therefore be compounded of more goods than one? Or is it true rather that there are not

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more goods than one, but a single good described by many names?" [Anselm 1962 Mon. chpt xvii p112-113]. Anselm's answer to his question is an unequivocal Yes. This view seems identical to my own, except that I do not subscribe to the scholastic thesis that maintains that all of God's 'attributes' are identical with Himself. I think such an identification makes God logically incapable of change.

Aquinas, too, is committed to saying that God and Goodness are the same thing. As we shall see (later on in this chapter), Aquinas believes that Goodness is to be identified with being. Now since God is "Being itself" He is also Goodness itself. Aquinas' views are expressed succinctly in the following quotation: "There is a threefold perfection in things: firstly, they are established in existence; secondly, they possess in addition certain properties necessary to perfect their activity; and a third perfection comes when they attain their extrinsic goal. Now this threefold perfection belongs by nature to no caused thing, but only to God, who alone exists by nature, has no added properties (power, wisdom and the like which are additional to other things belonging to him by nature), and is not disposed towards some extrinsic goal but is himself the ultimate goal of all other things. Clearly then only God is perfect and good by nature. The goodness of created things is something added to their nature..." [Aquinas 1989 1,1,6,3 p.19-20]. What Aquinas is saying here is that when we say of some created thing 'X is good' we mean either it exists or it actualizes some potentiality proper to itself or it attains its proper end. Thus we can always divide a thing from that which constitutes its goodness. God, on the other hand, is alone good by nature. It is not possible to make a distinction between God and what makes him good. Nothing makes God good; to admit that would be to impugn God's self-sufficiency. What God is is Goodness itself: He is "the pattern, source and goal of all goodness " [Aquinas 1989 2,6,4 p.20]. We will briefly return to Aquinas when we look at the views of Eleanor Stump and Norman Kretzmann who give the same interpretation [See also Gilson 1960 p.172].

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Some modern thinkers do not explicitly make the identification of God and Goodness. However, their views amount to just about the same thing. G.F. Woods is one such thinker. In A Defence of Theological Ethics he argues that it is impossible for believers to see morality as an independent standard to which God must adhere. Instead, it is better to say that morality is identical with the "creative will of God" [Woods 1966 p.101]. The accusation of arbitrariness is avoided in much the same way as I have argued it ought to be avoided. What ought to be and what is are fused together in the nature or personality of God. Wood says, "In [God's personal being] what is the case and what ought to be the case are the same." [p.97].

Naturally much of what we might posit as being moral in the nature of God is learnt separately from an appreciation of the Divine essence. However, such an epistemological admission, as I have argued above, does not affect the metaphysical identification. That is to say, one does not need to know that God and Goodness are identical in order to arrive at a moral position.

While not as clear in his commitment to my thesis as others, Ian Ramsey seems to be moving quite close to it in Freedom and Immortality. He discusses the notion of absolute value and how a "humanist" like Russell is hard pushed to justify his belief in such a thing. Ramsey argues that belief in absolute value is to move in the "direction of religious belief." [Ramsey 1960 p.46]. Because of the religious import of belief in absolute value, it is legitimate to talk in terms of God's will. Although Ramsey makes the important point that God's will should not be seen as analogous with the will, say, of a Sergeant-Major as if by merely ordering His commands become moral standards. Ramsey says that talk of moral absolutes and God's will are "alternative descriptions" [p.54].

He leaves this suggestion more or less like this. Nevertheless, he appears close to the thesis I have been defending. To see this, one need only ask what these alternative descriptions could be descriptions of. If

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Ramsey answers, "God's nature", then he is very close indeed. I have already maintained that the words "God" and "Goodness" can be understood as having different senses, but the same referent, i.e., God's nature. Ramsey's qualification that God's will should not be made analogous to a Sergeant-Major's seems close to my qualification that God's commands are not the capricious whims of a minor deity, but are an expression of an essential and necessary and immutable Nature.

The crucial metaphysical identification is made even more clearly by H.P. Owen in Concepts of Deity. He remarks upon the relationship between morality and Divine perfection. Owen commends Aquinas' view that God, if He is to be fully perfect, must not be defective in any part and says, "This argument demonstrates, not only God's intellectual attributes, but also his moral goodness. Perfection [in the case of God] must include moral perfection; for if God were morally imperfect in his nature, he would to that extent be defective in his being." [Owen 1971 p.28].

This idea per se is not equivalent to the metaphysical identification - viz, God could be morally perfect by exemplifying an ontologically distinct universal. However, if we conjoin Owen's thesis that moral perfection is part of the Being of God to the doctrine of Divine simplicity no such move is logically permissible. And it is precisely the doctrine of Divine simplicity that Owen also commends: "...only he [God] possesses a complete identity of essence and existence (so that he is all that he could become)." [Owen 1971 p.27].

If God merely exemplified perfection to the most perfect degree, it would be possible to do that which the doctrine of simplicity expressly denies can be done, i.e. it would be possible to distinguish between God and His properties. In other words, it would be possible to have a metaphysical distinction between substance and attribute. As Plantinga shows, God's simplicity is the very opposite of such an idea [See Plantinga 1980].

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Owen makes his case even more plainly in The Moral Arguments for Christian Theism. He argues that Maclagan is right to say our experience of obligation presupposes an extra-mental, independently existent order of value. However, Owen complains that Maclagan leaves the matter here - in a kind of quasi-Platonic mishmash. Owen's solution is to push the ethical frontiers back a little and claim that a more adequate formulation admits the objective order of value, but identifies such an order with God. He says he agrees with the view that "absolute values inhere in the personality of God." [Owen 1965 p.80]. Even more clearly he argues that "in the order of being [and by this he means metaphysically]... Goodness and God are identical." [p.82].

In God and the Processes of Reality David Paulin argues that it is not "satisfactory to regard divine judgement about what is good as dependent upon a standard of value external to the divine." [Paulin 1989 p.23]. Neither is it satisfactory to maintain that value is dependent upon divine choice [p.23]. Paulin recognizes that the only solution is to argue for some kind of union of God with value: "... God is that by which the goodness of all else is finally to be judged but is not subject to judgement... The divine nature essentially makes final sense without reference to what is other than the divine. [p.23].

E. L. Mascall in He Who Is is similarly clear. He examines the claim made by voluntarists that the moral law was freely chosen by God's will. Mascall rejects this contention, but does not conclude from this that God and the moral law are separable. He says, "The moral law is thus in its essence neither antecedent to nor consequent to God; it is simply the expression of his own self-consistency. To say, therefore that God is bound by [the moral law] is merely to say...God is God." [Mascall 1966 p.122]. This view seems to be the same as mine: if this is unclear look at this other quotation from Mascall: "God [in contrast with a creature's good] is not merely good, he is Goodness itself." [p.116]. The moral law is neither antecedent to nor consequent to God because the moral law is an

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expression of what God essentially is, that is, Goodness itself.

Vincent MacNamara in Faith and Ethics: Recent Roman Catholicism is in agreement with those in the Church who support the notion that morality is autonomous. By this he means we can discover what is right or wrong from morality alone and not necessarily from anything else, that is, morality is epistemologically autonomous. MacNamara, however, makes a very important clarification to this remark: "To my way of thinking this movement for a 'morality from below' is not only right in its understanding of moral obligation but in its realization of the importance of the emphasis on autonomy. Moral demand is epistemologically independent of knowledge of God or belief in a command of God. **BUT IT IS NOT METAPHYSICALLY INDEPENDENT.** For the Christian there cannot be a split between morality and religion and one must try to express this further dimension." [MacNamara 1985 p.189-190 My emphasis].

MacNamara is arguing that our knowledge of what morality requires may be independent of knowledge of God, but nevertheless he believes that for the Christian, there can be no similar metaphysical separation. This lack of metaphysical separation seems a close relative of the theory I have proposed about the sameness of Goodness and the essential nature of God.

The last philosophers I will discuss are Norman Kretzmann and Eleanor Stump. In their paper Being and Goodness they endorse, in most essential details, the thesis I have been defending. They begin their paper with an exploration of Aquinas' moral theory. Roughly they argue that Being and Goodness have the same referent for Aquinas, but different senses. The referent these two designations share is "the actualizing of specifying potentialities." [p.28 Morris 1988]. They say that Aquinas held that a thing's goodness is dependent upon its realizing the potentialities proper to its nature as the thing it is. In other words, goodness depends upon its degree of being.

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Now since God is "being itself", "it is God alone who is essentially Goodness itself." [Stump and Kretzmann in Morris 1988 p.306]. This formulation, they argue, avoids both the embarrassment of making God's will the sole source of morality and the religiously inadequate view that holds that God and the standards of goodness are independent. Thus they say, "The doctrine of divine simplicity entails a third alternative [to the positions where God decides arbitrarily what is good or where the standards of goodness are independent of Him... Because God is simple, he is identical with his goodness; that is, the divine nature itself is perfect goodness. Thus there is an essential relationship between god and the standard by which he judges; the goodness for the sake of which and in accordance with he wills only certain things to be morally good, is identical with his nature. On the other hand, because it is God's whole nature, not just his arbitrary decision, which is said to constitute the standard for morality, only things consonant with God's nature could be morally good." [Stump and Kretzmann 1985].

Here we can see the close conceptual connection between Stump and Kretzmann and myself. There are differences: their account of goodness being the realization of being is different to my account of Goodness which claims the Goodness is Love. However, the same metaphysical identification is made and the same advantages seen in its adoption.

I hope I have shown in this chapter the way my thesis fits in historically. Having a long and venerable history is no guarantee of truth, but at least it shows an idea has withstood a lot of weathering!

## Conclusion

For many hundreds of years, in Western culture, it was an unacknowledged precept that ethics was centred on some kind of theistic understanding of the universe.

Since the Enlightenment this kind of approach to ethics has come under increasing attack, not only by those who do not believe in God, but also from those in the Church who think God makes little difference to our understanding of morality.

In this thesis, I have attempted to show how a Divine centred version of ethics can be defended. I have said little about the positive merits of this theory. Where I have tried to illustrate the theory's merits I have aimed at believers - for those who have a serious belief in God's sovereignty only a theory that puts God at the centre has any plausibility. I have tried to show how this works.

Non-believers, who take ethics seriously have, I believe, to face various problems. For them, morality is paramount. Moral principles are worth dying for; they are worth revering and approaching with awe; guilt is suffered before such principles, and the belief is held that even if the world were to crumble to dust, it would still make sense to say that Faith, Hope and Love are all-important. What kind of secular ethical theory can make sense of these perplexing facts?

At the end of the day, only a Divine centred ethics believes in the momentousness of our actions. They have eternal significance in the scheme of things. They are not just temporary ripples fated to die and fade away for ever. Without God, we have a godless ethic.

## Appendix: A Solution To The Pelagian Controversy

One of the most enduring problems facing Christian thought is the relationship between Divine Grace and human will. For St. Augustine God's Grace is both the necessary and sufficient condition for the salvation of any individual. This idea made it difficult to find a place for the human will. If only the Grace of God is needed for X to be saved has X any choice in the matter? Are we saved (or damned) despite ourselves? Arguably Augustine's position is that the will of X is irrelevant to the matter of X's salvation [O'Daly 1989 p.96]. Against this idea Pelagius argued that a combination of Divine Grace and the submission of human will are the necessary and sufficient conditions of salvation. God freely gives X the chance of salvation, but it is up to X to choose to take the opportunity. Since we do not deserve this opportunity, the chance is God's undeserved act of Grace. The Pelagian position appears to avoid the morally questionable consequences of the Augustinian position, but it appears to exalt the human will too much. At least, that has been the general opinion of the Christian Church. Surely we are too given over to sin for us to choose God rather than evil. Surely God has to do it all. Another difficulty for Pelagianism is the question of the relative importance of Divine Grace and human will. Do we say that in X's salvation he contributes 50% of the causal factors involved in his own salvation while God supplies the remaining 50%? Do we exalt the role of God by saying that X's role is 0.1% while God's Grace is the overwhelming (but still insufficient) causal factor contributing 99.9%? Hanson and Hanson [p.148] say that a mathematically valid resolution to this problem is impossible and irrelevant. They cite Blaise Pascal in support and say that we must say that in salvation God's Grace and the human will are not mutually exclusive; they each contribute 100% - "We are most ourselves when we are most under God's guidance".

This seems to me to be the correct solution. The problem is how do we resolve the paradox that seems to say that Pelagius is right, i.e., X's will must freely choose the good, and that Augustine is right, i.e., God's Grace is all that is needed and that X is saved despite himself? I believe the thesis that I have proposed - that God and Goodness are the same thing - resolves the dilemma. Let us consider X who is trying to decide whether to choose God or not. Let us imagine that X resolves to turn to God and that by doing so he is saved. Now the Augustinian would claim that this is not the correct description of the situation. He would claim that X's debating is itself the result of God's Grace at work. In the same way X's decision at the end is the result of God's Grace. X does do something, but all that he does is the result of Divine Grace at work in him. Any talk of X meriting salvation because of his choice is seen as a

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blasphemous exaltation of will. But let us look at this again, this time remembering that God is Goodness. X is trying to decide whether to become a Christian. How is he to do this? I think he must see this as a moral matter. He must be deciding whether it is good to submit his will to God. What criteria is he to use in order to arrive at any decision? If God is Goodness any moral considerations he puts before himself are really redescriptions of the nature of God, since He is alone Good. We cannot say that any good in X is somehow ontologically independent of God. We do not have to conclude from this ontological dependence that X's choice is not free, that he could not decide to deny God. X is free to choose God or not, but all the moral considerations that he puts before himself are ontologically completely God dependent. If God did not exist, there could be no genuine moral considerations. Thus whatever good X chooses is completely dependent on God in the sense that God's Goodness underlies any good that there is. X is nevertheless free to choose one way or the other. God does not determine X's choice, rather without the Goodness of God no genuine moral choice could be made at all. Thus we can say that God contributes 100% to X's decision, while X himself fully determines what he does. We can say that X, as a result of his decision, 'deserves' salvation, but note that even the notion of desert, being a moral notion, is absolutely God-dependent.

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