

THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE MOST RECENT BRITISH PHILOSOPHY
AN ENQUIRY INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF SIGNIFICANT THEOLOGICAL
DISCOURSE TODAY

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Philosophy
University of Manitoba



In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Laurence Frank Wilmot
August 1963

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
Preface	i
I The Elimination of Metaphysics and Theology .	1
II The Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein's <u>Tractatus</u>	13
III The Later Wittgenstein and Philosophy as the Analysis of Ordinary Language	26
IV Linguistic Analysis, Metaphysics and God in the Philosophy of John Wisdom	49
V The Abandonment of Positivism and the Recognition of Metaphysics in the Philosophy of A.J.Ayer	78
Summary and Conclusions of Part I	97

PART II

Title	Contemporary Philosophers and the Problem of 'God'	100
VI	The Breakdown of the Attempt to Meet the	

	Demands of the Verification Principle and the Recommendation that Religion is the Inexpressible	101
VII	Theology and Falsification	117
VIII	The Application of Philosophical Analysis to the Central Theological Problem	131
	Bibliography	158

PREFACE

THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE MOST RECENT BRITISH PHILOSOPHY AN ENQUIRY INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF SIGNIFICANT THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE TODAY

PART I

An analysis of the present philosophical climate in Great Britain with a view to discovering the possibility of meaningful theological discourse.

With the ascendancy of Logical Positivism in British philosophy in the early decades of this century, both metaphysical and theological utterances were declared to be meaningless.

The attack on metaphysics is in some sense as old as philosophy itself, and in British thought may be traced back to the writings of David Hume. It took the form of an explicit attack in the works of W.K.Clifford and Karl Pearson, both of whom were imbued with the anti-metaphysical attitudes of Comte and Mach. Pearson regarded both natural theology and metaphysics as pseudo-sciences which should be abandoned in the maturity of the scientific age.

The attack of the twentieth century Logical Positivists was much more incisive than anything which had hitherto been attempted. Earlier philosophers had regarded metaphysics as

a body of idle speculations because they cannot ever be proved by recourse to empirical tests; the new attack declared all metaphysical propositions to be nonsense, -- metaphysical sentences are mere assemblages of words without any meaning whatever. This type of argument which appeared to be completely successful in the attack on metaphysics was directed at theology by Professor Ayer, then of London University. According to the Logical Positivists, of whom Ayer was a typical representative, although metaphysicians and theologians may think they are engaged in significant studies, they are mistaken; what they are saying and writing is sheer nonsense.

Metaphysics and theology are disciplines which throughout the centuries have been regarded as meriting the serious attention of scholars. If it is true that both rest upon false assumptions, then this should be made quite explicit. If it should be discovered, on the other hand, that the accusation against them is itself based upon mistaken premises, then it is important that this should be brought to light and these branches of study restored to the position they intrinsically merit.

It is widely recognized today that philosophy in Britain has been undergoing a process of gradual change throughout the past thirty years and has now reached a stage where it is possible to survey the situation. A number

of recent books have undertaken this task, such as J.O. Urmson's Philosophical Analysis - Its Development Between the Two World Wars, published in 1956, which is a good survey so far as it goes, but is incomplete, inasmuch as important developments have taken place since 1939; a series of Essays, The Revolution in Philosophy, by a number of leading philosophers who have lived and worked throughout the period, also published in 1956; and a rather more extensive survey by John Passmore, entitled A Hundred Years in Philosophy, published in 1957. All are agreed that within the past sixty years nothing short of a revolution in philosophy has taken place and that very important gains in the further clarification of philosophical propositions have resulted. The present outlook is well summed up by G.J. Warnock, a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford:

If any one thing is characteristic of contemporary philosophy, it would be precisely the realization that language has many uses, ethical, aesthetic, and indeed metaphysical uses among them. There is no tendency to say 'You must not (or cannot) say that'; there is a readiness to appraise on its merits whatever may be said for whatever purpose, provided only that something is said and words are not used idly."¹

If advances in understanding have resulted from the application of the new approach to philosophy, then it is important to realize that this is so, and to discover, if possible,

¹ G.J. Warnock, "Analysis and Imagination", in The Revolution in Philosophy, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 125.

the extent to which these advances have affected our understanding of metaphysical and theological utterances. This investigation is being undertaken to that end.

In the first Part of the study, attention will be focussed upon the major writings of three philosophers whose thought has been formative of philosophical opinion, and whose writings disclose the nature of the changes which have taken place. An attempt will be made to trace the development of the discussion from the first definitive statement of Logical Positivism in English by Professor Ayer in 1935, to his Inaugural Lecture as Wykeham Professor of Logic in the University of Oxford in 1960; to investigate the background of the anti-metaphysical attack; and to follow the discussions which have led to the present philosophical climate as it is characterised by Professor Warnock. Writings of Professors A.J.Ayer, Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Wisdom will be examined in Part I.

The aims of Part I will be increased insight into the nature of the attack upon both metaphysics and theology, a disclosure of the extent to which the ground has been cleared for the theologian to pursue his traditional tasks, and an understanding of the discipline which he must impose upon himself in all his utterances if he would illuminate theological discourse.

CHAPTER I

The Elimination of Metaphysics and Theology

The most forthright presentation in the English language of the views of the logical positivists was made by Professor A.J.Ayer, then of the University of London, in 1935, in a book entitled Language, Truth and Logic. In the preface to the first edition he acknowledged his close agreement with the group known as the Vienna Circle and of which Moritz Schlick was the leading member.

The positivists saw philosophy as "that activity through which the meaning of statements is revealed or determined."¹ The major task remaining for the philosopher, according to this group, was to clarify the propositions of the sciences by exhibiting the logical relationships of the various scientific hypotheses to one another. It is the task of the sciences to formulate hypotheses and to verify them as to truth or falsity; the philosopher's role is to define the symbols employed by the scientist and, by so doing, disclose the meaning of scientific propositions. In his new role the philosopher does not make speculative

¹ Moritz Schlick, "Turning Points in Philosophy", Logical Positivism, Ed. A.J.Ayer, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1959), p. 56. (originally appeared in Erkenntnis, Volume I 1930-31).

assertions.² A major aim of Professor Ayer's book is declared to be to show the reasoning by which the positivists sought to eliminate metaphysics and those other studies which depend upon metaphysical reasoning, such as theology.

Kant had maintained in the Transcendental Dialectic of his Critique of Pure Reason that the mind is so constituted that all attempts to employ reason beyond the limits of possible experience are fruitless. The new critique sets out to delimit the field of knowledge by carefully defining the conditions under which a sentence can be literally significant. This task is accomplished by employing the Logical Positivist's Principle of Verification.

Professor Ayer adopts what he describes as a modified form of the verification principle. It requires of any empirical hypothesis, not that it should be conclusively verifiable, but that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood. His charge against the metaphysician is that he produces sentences which fail to conform to this condition of meaningful utterance. In the early years of the Vienna Circle, its leaders employed what came to be known as the 'strong' verification criterion, according to which a proposition is

2 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2nd edition, 1946) pp. 151-153.

verifiable if, and only if, its truth can be conclusively established in experience. Professor Ayer, however, realizes that such a principle would render too many propositions meaningless. One of the contentions of his book is that no propositions, other than analytic statements which are tautologies, can be anything more than probable. He therefore adopts what he refers to as the "weak" sense of the term "verifiable",³ and points out that, in contrast to the principle of conclusive verifiability, his principle does not deny significance to general propositions or to propositions about the past. It does rule out as fictitious disputes such as those concerning the number of substances that there are in the world, for it is admitted by the disputants on both sides that "it is impossible to imagine any empirical situation which would be relevant to the solution of their dispute."⁴ The controversy between the realists and idealists is next examined and, by the application of the verification criterion, it also is shown to be senseless.

In an article in Analysis, published in 1934, Professor Ayer pointed out that a great many metaphysical puzzles have resulted from the failure on the part of philosophers to realize that sentences which have grammatically the same form

3 A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 37.

4 Ibid., p. 39.

may yet be of a quite different logical type. To illustrate his meaning he quoted an extensive passage from Heidegger's Was ist Metaphysik, a work which had been criticized by Carnap in his previous attack on metaphysics. Even in the following abbreviated form the quotation exemplifies clearly the kind of error which the positivists were seeking to expose, and which they considered to be responsible for the meaninglessness of almost all metaphysics:

Only Being ought to be explored and besides that -- nothing: Being alone and further -- nothing: Being solely and beyond that -- nothing. How about this nothing? Is there the nothing only because there is the not -- that is Negation? That for which and about which we made ourselves anxious was "really" nothing. In fact the nothing itself, as such, was there.⁵ How does this nothing? The Nothing nothings itself.

One cannot but agree with the positivists in their attack upon such a gross misuse of language. Professor Ayer points out that Heidegger's whole complex discussion is based on the false assumption that two sentences such as "there is snow on the ground" and "there is nothing on the ground" have the same logical form.

It is this that leads the author to enquire into the state of the nothing, just as he might ask about the state of the snow, and finally to the introduction of the nonsense verb to nothing by analogy with the verb to snow.⁶

⁵ A.J. Ayer, "The Genesis of Metaphysics", Analysis, Volume I, No. 4, 1934. (Philosophy and Analysis, ed. Margaret MacDonald, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1954), pp. 23-24.)

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

The metaphysician does not intend to write nonsense, says Professor Ayer, but "he lapses into it through being deceived by grammar, or through committing errors of reasoning, such as that which leads to the view that the sensible world is unreal."⁷ The positivists ruled out all speculative philosophy; the belief that there are some things in the world which are possible objects of speculative knowledge and which yet lie beyond the scope of science is, they say, a delusion. The function of philosophy is wholly critical; the philosopher, as analyst, is not concerned about the nature of things, but only with the way in which we speak about them. Philosophy, it is asserted, "must develop into the logic of science."⁸

Professor Ayer now applies the method of analysis to "judgements of value"⁹ and concludes that the majority of ethical statements do no more than describe the phenomena of moral experience, and so belong to either psychology or sociology. Philosophy, regarded as linguistic analysis, deals only with the definitions of ethical terms. But normative ethical symbols are indefinable in factual terms and are therefore pseudo-concepts. All statements in which they appear are purely "emotive". They are used to express

7 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 45.

8 Ibid., p. 153.

9 Ibid., p. 102 ff.

one's feelings about certain actions, but not to make any assertions about them. They may serve a purpose by arousing feelings and thus stimulating us to action. On another interpretation, ethical statements may be construed as commands. It is impossible, however, on either interpretation to find a criterion for determining the validity of ethical judgements, not because they have an "absolute" validity acquired from some mysterious source, but simply because they have no objective validity whatsoever. They are pure expressions of feeling or covert commands and as such are neither true nor false. This being the case, all that remains of ethics belongs to psychology or sociology.

While Kant, in his Critique of Pure Reason, had found it necessary to reject the traditional arguments -- the Ontological, Cosmological, and Physico-Theological -- as proofs for the existence of God, he found in the moral law and the autonomy of the will the basis for the postulation of God's existence. No such way out is left after the positivistic analysis of ethical statements has been given:

. . . Any attempt to make our use of ethical and aesthetic concepts the basis of a metaphysical theory concerning the existence of a world of values, as distinct from the world of facts, involves a false analysis of these concepts. Our own analysis has shown that the phenomena of moral experience cannot fairly be used to support any rationalist or metaphysical doctrine whatsoever. In particular, they cannot as Kant hoped, be used to establish the existence of a transcendent god.¹⁰

10 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 114.

Ayer is obviously convinced that the very possibility of religious knowledge has been ruled out by his treatment of metaphysics; but because of the wide-spread interest in theological questions he devotes some space to an analysis of religious statements.

The theologian who would produce a logical demonstration of the existence of God is now caught on the horns of a dilemma. If he would argue from premises to conclusion in order to provide a logical demonstration, his premises must be certain, for any uncertainty in his premises will be reflected in the conclusion; but it has already been shown that no empirical proposition can ever be more than probable. It is only a priori propositions which are certain, but as they are tautologies they can provide no factual information; therefore "there is no possibility of demonstrating the existence of a god."¹¹ This point, however, is generally admitted by philosophers, but what is not so generally recognized, says Professor Ayer, is "that there can be no way of proving that the existence of a god, such as the God of Christianity, is even probable."¹² Were even this much possible, however, it would not prove to be a satisfactory solution to the problem, for it would have the effect of

11 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 115.

12 Ibid., p. 115.

reducing God to the status of a working hypothesis for the discovery of fresh empirical truths. But this is not the objective of the theologian. God is not just one of the observables of the Universe. For those who believe in Him, God is much more than a working hypothesis; He is rather the basic presupposition of their whole approach to life.

If the religious man makes his appeal to the observed regularities in nature as evidence for the existence of God, the positivist replies by reminding him that this is tantamount to equating God with the physical world. No religious person would consent to such a view. He would maintain instead that he was referring to a transcendent being who might manifest himself through the orderly empirical events of the world, but who could not be defined in terms of those manifestations. The positivist's rejoinder is that the word "God", when so construed, is a metaphysical term.

And if "god" is a metaphysical term, then it cannot be even probable that a god exists. For to say that "God exists" is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance.¹³

It becomes evident that the principle of verification, as wielded by Professor Ayer, renders meaningless any talk about the existence of God.

In order to make quite clear that his critique is

13 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 115.

being based solely on a linguistic analysis of the sentences under consideration, Professor Ayer now contrasts his view to that of atheists and agnostics. Each of these treats of the question of the existence of God as a serious and genuine problem upon which they take up different positions. It is the conclusion of the positivists, however, that all such utterances are nonsensical, and on this basis alone they would rule out both atheism and agnosticism as meaningless views. The subject of God's existence cannot even be meaningfully discussed. The theist is thereby assured that he may take comfort in the thought that while his assertions cannot possibly be valid, they cannot be invalid either, for they are meaningless.

It becomes most evident that Ayer's discussion is not about the existence or non-existence of a being, God, who originated and sustains the Universe. It is rather about the meaning and significance which may be given to words and sentences which purport to speak of any entity whose existence and nature cannot be verified by empirical tests. When words, normally used to refer to empirical matters of fact, are employed to refer to super-empirical beings or entities they lose their proper significance and, Professor Ayer maintains, "cannot be said to symbolize anything."¹⁴ This is particularly so in the case of religious utterance in which God is likened

14 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 116.

to a "person". In this context the term "person" "is not an intelligible notion at all. . . . It is only when we enquire what God's attributes are that we discover that "God", in this usage, is not a genuine name."¹⁵

As for the matter of mystical experience, the positivists would admit that it is possible, and that it may be a source of true cognitions. To deny this would be to make an a priori judgement about the possibility of other ways of discovering truth. But, if the mystic, through his experience, is able to discover truths, he should be able to submit them to empirical verification. The fact that he confesses himself incapable of so doing and declares that it is impossible to define "God" in intelligible terms is an indication that his utterances are not cognitive. In his silence, the mystic is in virtual agreement with the basic positivist thesis "that it is impossible for a sentence both to be significant and to be about God."¹⁶ And Professor Ayer concludes that the mystic, in describing his visions, does not give us any information about the external world, but merely indirect information about the condition of his own mind.

To philosophers who would maintain that it is logically

15 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 116.

16 Ibid., p. 118.

possible for men to be immediately acquainted with God, just as they are immediately acquainted with a sense-content, Professor Ayer concedes that they may indeed be having sensations or emotions of an unusual sort; the person, however, who justifies his belief in God in this way, is not content to speak of God merely as a sense-content. He wishes also to assert that "there exists a transcendent being who is the object of this emotion."¹⁷ The man who says that he sees a yellow patch also asserts the existence of the object which is the cause of his having the sensation; but whereas he is able to submit his assertion to the test of verification, the person who asserts that his experience is of a transcendent God is incapable of producing any empirical evidence that would submit his assertion to the test. His sentence, therefore, has no literal significance.

We conclude, therefore, that the argument from religious experience is altogether fallacious. The fact that people have religious experiences is interesting from the psychological point of view, but it does not in any way imply that there is such a thing as religious knowledge, any more than our having moral experiences implies that there is such a thing as moral knowledge. The theist, like the moralist, may believe that his experiences are cognitive experiences, but, unless he can formulate his "knowledge" in propositions that are empirically verifiable, we may be sure that he is deceiving himself.¹⁸

Here, then, we have a clear statement of the case

17 A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 119.

18 Ibid., pp. 119-120.

against theology in the twentieth century. Human beings have experiences which they ascribe to their having been in relationship with a transcendent being, but, according to the positivists, the limitations of our language provide an insuperable barrier to the giving of any meaningful interpretation to that experience in terms of God. It would seem evident that, unless some effective refutation of the thesis can be produced, there is no point in engaging in theological discussion.

But, is it necessary to accept the thesis that the only cognitively meaningful statements are those which can be empirically verified? Perhaps it may be well to enquire first where the positivists found the principle and on what authority they adopted it.

CHAPTER II

The Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein's Tractatus

The group of philosophers with whom Professor Ayer acknowledged himself to have been in close agreement met under the leadership of Moritz Schlick, then professor of philosophy at Vienna University, and called themselves the Vienna Circle. In the early years of the movement they published a journal, Erkenntnis, as a means of spreading the new ideas, and it is evident from articles in early issues that Wittgenstein's Tractatus played an important part in the development of their program. Writing in the first number of Erkenntnis in 1930, Schlick states, "I am convinced that we now find ourselves at an altogether decisive turning point in philosophy."¹ He believed that the group had penetrated into a deeper understanding of the nature of logic and were in possession of methods whose application would result in the disappearance of traditional philosophical problems, and he pays tribute to those whose leadership has made possible this advance:

Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege opened up important stretches in the last decades, but Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1922) is the

¹ Moritz Schlick, "The Turning Point in Philosophy" A.J.Ayer, editor, Logical Positivism, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1959), p. 54.

first to have pushed forward to the decisive turning point.²

While Wittgenstein was not at any time a member of the group, his Tractatus was eagerly read and discussed by the Circle and they found justification for their positivistic doctrines and, in particular, for their anti-metaphysical arguments, within its pages.

The great turning point, Schlick explains, is not to be attributed to logic itself but rather to an insight into the nature of logic by which it has been disclosed that "all knowledge is such only by virtue of its form. It is through its form that it represents the fact known. But the form cannot itself in turn be represented."³ This insight is drawn directly from the Tractatus, thesis 4.12. The members of the Circle felt that it enabled them to dispose of the traditional problems of the theory of knowledge.

Questions regarding the 'validity and limits of knowledge' disappear. Everything is knowable which can be expressed, and this is the total subject-matter concerning which meaningful questions can be raised. There are consequently no questions which are in principle unanswerable, no problems which are in principle insoluble. What have been considered such up to now are not genuine questions, but meaningless sequences of words.⁴

This conclusion was also taken from the Tractatus, in which

2 Moritz Schlick, "The Turning Point in Philosophy", p. 54.

3 Ibid., p. 55.

4 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Wittgenstein had stated:

4.003 Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but non-sensical. We cannot therefore answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness. Most questions and propositions of philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language.

4.11 The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences).⁵

And we find Schlick emphasizing that there is no way of testing and corroborating propositions other than by observation. This is the method of empirical sciences.

The totality of sciences, including the statements of daily life, is the system of cognitions. There is in addition to it no domain of 'philosophical' truths. Philosophy is not a system of statements; it is not a science.⁶

It was, he suggests, one of the most serious errors of former thinkers to have supposed "that the actual meaning and ultimate content was in turn to be formulated in statements, and so was representable in cognitions."⁷ Metaphysicians, consequently, attempted to utter the unutterable. "Qualities cannot be 'said'. They can only be shewn in experience. But with this showing, cognition has nothing to do."⁸ Not all members of the Circle were happy with this Wittgensteinian

⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, theses 4.003 and 4.11.

⁶ Moritz Schlick, "The Turning Point in Philosophy", p. 56.

⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

⁸ Ibid., p. 57.

doctrine of the 'unsayables' which are 'shewn', and which in the Tractatus seemed to lead on to the 'mysticism'. In order to avoid it Carnap proposed to use the 'formal mode of speech'.

Carnap's essay entitled "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis"⁹ appeared in the second volume of Erkenntnis in the year 1932. Here he applies the new method of philosophy to demonstrate the meaninglessness of metaphysics. Carnap outlines the series of logical steps by which the significance of a word and of a sentence may be deduced, and in his account we find the verification principle taking shape. The meaning of any statement whatsoever, he says, will be discovered by an examination of the method of its verification.¹⁰ The logical and epistemological conceptions which underlie this new method are found in Wittgenstein's Tractatus.

In the preface to the Tractatus, Wittgenstein had expressed confidence that he had, in the propositions set out in the body of the book, produced a definitive statement whose position was unassailable, and concluded with the assertion: "I am, therefore, of the opinion that the

9 Rudolf Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics", A.J. Ayer, editor, Logical Positivism, pp. 60 ff.

10 Ibid., p. 76.

problems have in essentials been finally solved."¹¹ This confidence that he had made the final statement about what could and could not be said was shared by Schlick and Carnap and, in the early days of the movement, it is evident that they believed they were moving forward to establish a totally new approach to philosophical problems. Because they were pioneering, they believed they could afford to be dogmatic. This confidence is most evident in the concluding paragraph of Schlick's article:

... We too believe in the dignity of philosophy and deem incompatible with it the character of being uncertain and only probable; and we are happy that the decisive turning point makes it impossible to attribute any such character to it. For the concept of probability or uncertainty is simply not applicable to the acts of giving meaning which constitute philosophy. It is a matter of positing the meaning of statements as something simply final.¹²

That the positivists found these doctrines expressed in the Tractatus there is no doubt whatsoever.

4.0031 All philosophy is 'Critique of language'.

4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

¹¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, (Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1961), English translation by Pears and McGuinness, Preface, p. 5

¹² Moritz Schlick, "The Turning Point in Philosophy", pp. 58-59.

4.114 It must set limits to what can be thought; and in so doing, to what cannot be thought.

6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e., propositions of natural science -- i.e., something that has nothing to do with philosophy -- and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although this would not be satisfactory to the other person -- he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy -- this method would be the only strictly correct one.¹³

Here, clearly, we find the basic theses of Logical Positivism expressed in terse statements of atomic facts, each of which is of the nature of a directive of thought and rules out any alternative point of view. It was upon these as presuppositions that the positivists developed their arguments against metaphysics and theology. The task of philosophy is to set limits to what can be thought; thought must be articulated in propositions and these are to be restricted to the propositions of the natural sciences. Questions are not permitted unless there are answers available.¹⁴ This last point would be found unacceptable in science, for there progress has resulted by refusing to be put off by difficulties. Negative results only stimulate the scientist to a more determined sifting of the evidence and a re-testing of hypotheses until answers are forthcoming.

¹³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, pp. 37, 49 and 151.

¹⁴ Ibid., Theses 6.5, 6.51, 6.52.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the positivistic sections constitute the only significant statements in the *Tractatus*. There are a number of other theses which, had the members of the Vienna Circle considered them, might have lessened somewhat the dogmatic optimism of their early views. Three theses in particular call for comment, as being profound observations upon life as it must be lived on this planet, but upon which philosophy as enunciated in the *Tractatus* is forbidden to speak. The first is found in theses 6.41, 6.42, and 6.421 inclusive:

The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists -- and if it did, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie within the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world.

And so it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing of what is higher.

It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same).¹⁵

If Wittgenstein meant here that the meaning of the world must lie outside the world, then he said something very significant, -- that the world, considered as a physical universe, fails to provide an adequate explanation for its being a world and calls for some explanation in terms of a

¹⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, pp. 145-147.

reality outside itself. The further statement to the effect that "in the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen," would suggest that this is what Wittgenstein is inferring. Here we live in a world in which things happen and just are and, as Whitehead would say, are in process of happening, and in the process, are becoming. But the whole process has a meaning which is not explainable in physical terms. The process cannot explain itself or account for itself. It requires explanation from without if it is to be understood. But such an explanation is ruled out by the limitation imposed upon language in the Tractatus.

A further acknowledgement of the severe limitation which he has imposed on philosophy in the Tractatus, is found in Wittgenstein's statement that science cannot hope to answer the real problems of life, for it does not even touch them:

6.52 We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.¹⁶

The implications of these passages are clear: there are serious problems of life with which the sciences are not capable of dealing because they are not equipped to do so,

¹⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, p. 149.

and, consequently, to restrict philosophy to the status of a grammar of science is tantamount to removing it from effective contact with the real problems of life. Problems are not solved by refusing to acknowledge their presence, and Wittgenstein had seen too much of life to think that what he was offering was adequate. Yet the picture theory of language as expounded in the Tractatus precluded all attempts to speak of other than possible states of affairs. As Miss Anscombe sums up the situation in the Introduction to her study on the Tractatus:

The world is the totality of facts -- i.e., of the counterparts in reality of true propositions. And nothing but picturable situations can be stated in propositions. There is indeed much that is inexpressible -- which we must not try to state, but must contemplate without words.¹⁷

One of the paradoxical features of the Tractatus consists in the number of significant utterances Wittgenstein succeeded in making about these inexpressible aspects of experience. In thesis 6.4312 he had stated: "... The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time. (It is certainly not the solution of any problems of natural science that is required)," indicating his awareness that there were real philosophical problems calling for genuine solution.

¹⁷ G.E.M. Anscombe, An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1959), p. 19.

Finally, we must take notice of Wittgenstein's mysticism, as it finds expression in the Tractatus:

6.432 How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world.

6.44 It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists.

6.45 To view the world sub specie aeternitatis is to view it as a whole -- a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole -- it is this that is mystical.¹⁸

And again, in the brackets following one of his most paradoxical utterances:

6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have been unable to say what constituted that sense?).

6.522 There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.¹⁹

It is evident that the author of the Tractatus was aware of some reality which gave meaning to the world, but about which he was at that time incapable of speaking. Bertrand Russell, in an Introduction which he wrote for the first edition of the Tractatus, commented:

The totalities concerning which Mr. Wittgenstein holds that it is impossible to speak logically are nevertheless thought by him to exist, and are the subject matter of his mysticism.²⁰

18 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, p. 149.

19 Ibid., pp. 149-151.

20 Bertrand Russell, Ibid., Intro. p. xxii.

Dr. Russell also comments upon the fact that while the whole subject of ethics is placed by Wittgenstein in this mystical, inexpressible region, he is, nevertheless, capable of conveying his ethical opinions. His defence, Russell suggests, "would be that what he calls the mystical can be shown, although it cannot be said"; and concludes with the reflection: "It may be that his defence is adequate, but, for my part, I confess that it leaves me with a certain sense of intellectual discomfort."²¹

In the closing paragraphs of the Tractatus it becomes evident that Wittgenstein will not long remain satisfied with the severe limitation of philosophy to the propositions of the natural sciences. He frankly recognizes that though this method would be the "only strictly correct one,"²² yet it will not be found to satisfy anyone who is really interested in finding a solution to life's problems. His advice to his readers to use his propositions "as steps -- to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it),"²³ is a clear indication that he has recognized the paradoxical nature of the Tractatus, which is itself a metaphysical document, one of whose central

21 Bertrand Russell, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Intro. p. xxi.

22 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ibid., Thesis 6.53, p. 151.

23 Ibid., Thesis 6.54, p. 151.

aims has been the elimination of metaphysics. In committing his thoughts to print he has contravened his own advice in proposition 6.53 to the effect that the correct way in philosophy would really be "to say nothing except what can be said, i.e., propositions of natural science."²⁴ The concluding sentence in proposition 6.54 might be taken as advising the reader to seek the vision of reality through the mystical experience, -- "he must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright";²⁵ or it may simply be a reminder not to allow the Tractatus to limit the scope of one's philosophizing. He must leave it behind and press on in search of larger perspectives.

What is to be one's reaction to the paradoxical utterances with which this work concludes? On the face of it, it would appear that Wittgenstein is poking fun either at himself, his readers, or his own philosophy -- or perhaps at all three. F.P. Ramsey, in his Foundations of Mathematics, made the observation that if we are to continue to philosophize:

Philosophy must be of some use and we must take it seriously. It must clear our thoughts and so our actions. Or else it is a disposition we have to check, and an enquiry to see that this is so; i.e., the chief proposition of philosophy is that philosophy is

²⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Thesis 6.53, p. 151.

²⁵ Ibid., Thesis 6.54, p. 151.

nonsense. And again we must then take seriously that it is nonsense, and not pretend, as Wittgenstein does, that it is important nonsense!²⁶

The writers of the Vienna Circle took seriously that Wittgenstein meant what he said in the Tractatus about the limitation of philosophy to the analysis and clarification of the propositions of the natural sciences, and bent all their efforts to give effect to it. Metaphysics was declared to be a logically impossible enterprise, since their analyses showed all such propositions to be meaningless. The fact that the utterances by which they gave expression to their opinions were metaphysical did not occur to them, apparently, until it was pointed out by their critics. In the meantime, Wittgenstein had returned to Cambridge and was making a re-appraisal of the whole philosophical undertaking he had set afoot.

26 F.P.Ramsey, Foundations of Mathematics, p. 263.

CHAPTER III

The Later Wittgenstein and Philosophy as the Analysis
of Ordinary Language

Wittgenstein was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of Cambridge in 1929 and it very early became apparent that he was not likely to be bound by the restrictions imposed upon philosophy in the Tractatus and by the Logical Positivists. During the period of his active work of lecturing at Cambridge, Wittgenstein published nothing. His Philosophical Investigations, published posthumously in the year 1953, contains a preface which he had written for the work in 1945. In the preface he explains that two considerations urged upon him the necessity of publishing his philosophical findings. He was aware, on the one hand, that his ideas were being misunderstood and were being put in circulation in a very much diluted form; this, he says, stirred him to action to undertake the difficult task of sorting out his ideas in an effort to prepare them for publication. But another and equally strong motive appears to have been his realization of the important changes which had taken place in his thinking, and in particular in his conception of philosophy, since writing the Tractatus. At one time he evidently contemplated a new edition of the Tractatus and of publishing his new material with it in the

same volume.

It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together; that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking. For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, sixteen years ago, I have been forced to recognize grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book.¹

There is, therefore, every reason to assume that Part I of the Philosophical Investigations contains the substance of his philosophizing throughout the sixteen years from 1929 to 1945.

It is difficult to assess this work. To the reader who approaches it without the background of participation in the discussions out of which it arose, it does not appear to have any consciously ordered plan. In Part I there are no chapters nor subject headings, and the material is presented in the sequence in which thoughts presented themselves for consideration to the mind of the author. His short definition of the aim of the philosopher as being "to shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle,"² would seem to be based upon his own experience. Reading this book after the Tractatus, one is reminded of a squirrel which has broken out of the narrow confines of the squirrel cage and suddenly discovers himself free to scamper through the open forest;

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Preface, Philosophical Investigations, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2nd Edition, 1958, tr. by G.E.M. Anscombe), p. xe.

2 Ibid., Part I, section 309.

chattering to himself and calling to his friends, he scrambles up every tall tree in the forest, investigates every hollow log, every knot hole, every broken-down tree trunk, scarcely pausing for more than a cursory glance at each familiar sight before he dashes on to the next, so glad is he to be rid of the restricting walls of the cage.

Perhaps the most adequate analogy for the new view of philosophy is that of the psychiatrist's case room in which the mind, with all the barriers down, pours forth its burden in the order in which the thoughts arise to consciousness. Because it is a philosophic mind, the problems and tangles are those which trouble the philosopher. The author has broken out of the enclosure, -- the net thrown over the mind by the dogmatism of the Tractatus with its restrictions upon the possibility of meaningful philosophical discussion, -- and now ranges over the wide field of the great basic human problems which have puzzled thinkers at least from the time of the early Greeks. The philosopher, he suggests, is seeking to clarify his own thoughts, remove the logical muddles from the expressions of others, penetrate beneath the surface of old familiar utterances and, by disclosing their true nature, cause the problems to disappear:

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to, -- the one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question. -- Instead, we now demonstrate a method,

by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. -- Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem. There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.³

As the title of the book indicates, it is a compendium of philosophical investigations. Their author is throughout aware of his own inability to provide conclusive answers to the problems which he sets, or to provide statements of philosophical truths. To do so he does not believe to be the purpose of philosophy. Indeed, this earlier conception represents a misunderstanding of the philosopher's role. Wittgenstein is simply seeking to unravel the muddles in his own thinking and recommending an exercise which others may also find beneficial. The philosopher is, as it were, a psycho-analyst who recommends his procedure to his clients by practicing it himself. At one point the author describes what he is saying as "the raw material of philosophy";⁴ in other respects, and looking at it from the point of view of the new direction which his writings gave to philosophy, we might liken them to laying a new foundation upon which others may build after him.

The book opens with an analysis of language which

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I, section 133.

4 Ibid., section 254.

takes as its starting point a passage from the Confessions of St. Augustine. The bishop recalls the manner in which, as a child, he learned to interpret the sounds which his elders made as they pointed to objects, and developed the ability to identify the objects by means of the sounds without the assistance of pointing. This, he explains, was the way in which he came to understand and to use language, which he had learned from others, as a medium for the expression of his own desires. These words of Augustine's, says Wittgenstein,

... give us a particular picture of the essence of human language; -- it is this: the individual words in language name objects -- sentences are combinations of such names. -- In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.⁵

However, this is, in Wittgenstein's opinion, an over-simple conception of language and represents a point of view from which he now departs.

In a paper on "Logical Form" which Wittgenstein presented to the Aristotelian Society in 1929, he had argued that philosophy seeks to construct an 'ideal language', with precisely defined terms whose sentences reveal the logical form of the facts to which they refer. This would appear to have been his last attempt to defend the philosophy of

5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 1.

Logical Atomism and here, at the commencement of his Philosophical Investigations, he indicates the insights which led him to abandon his old ways of doing philosophy. He now recognizes that the functions of words are as diverse as the functions of the objects in a carpenter's tool-box. Augustine's description of language is suitable for the narrowly circumscribed situation of a child in the family, of a member in a tribe, or of the language required to serve as signs between a builder and his assistant. Here the utterance of the one word "brick" or "slab" would be a sufficient indication of what the builder required at the moment. At this elementary level learning takes place by naming things and pointing to them until the name and the thing become permanently associated in the mind of the learner. We require a much more complex language system for the multiplicity of activities and needs for which language is required in more familiar human associations, and there we find that the functions of words in use are diverse.

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. -- The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects.⁶

We are confused, Wittgenstein suggests, by the uniform

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 11.

appearance of words when we hear them spoken or read them in print. "For their application is not presented to us so clearly, especially when we are doing philosophy."⁷ If we looked into the cab of a locomotive, we would see handles all more or less alike in appearance, but it would be a gross error to suppose that their uses are identical; each has a separate and widely different use from the others.

"Think of the different points of view from which one can classify tools or chess-men."⁸ Or, again, we may imagine

a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes or no. And innumerable others. --
And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.⁹

There follows a long discussion on the various uses to which words and sentences may be put in ordinary conversation.

By the metaphor of the language-game, a wide variety of types of activity is indicated. As to the variety of types of sentence, he replies that:

There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols," "words," "sentences." And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten... .

Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:

Giving orders, and obeying them --

Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements --

7 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 11.

8 Ibid., section 17.

9 Ibid., section 19.

Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) --
 Reporting an event --
 Speculating about an event --
 Forming and testing an hypothesis --
 Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams --
 Making up a story; and reading it --
 Play-acting --
 Singing catches --
 Guessing riddles --
 Making a joke; telling it --
 Solving a problem in practical arithmetic --
 Translating from one language into another --
 Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.
 - It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus).¹⁰

Later, he states that, when writing the Tractatus, a "picture" held him captive, "and we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably,"¹¹ and he urges the importance of bringing words "back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."¹² "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words."¹³ "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about',"¹⁴

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 23.

¹¹ Ibid., section 115.

¹² Ibid., section 116.

¹³ Ibid., section 122.

¹⁴ Ibid., section 123.

and the philosopher's task is to seek for the meanings of words through analyzing their use in sentences in ordinary discourse. It is not the task of philosophy to seek to regularize language; the language games of the philosopher "are rather set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities."¹⁵

An excellent illustration of the new method of doing philosophy is provided by an analysis of the proposition: "This is how things are," as expressing the general form of propositions. The author now questions this assertion; it is, he points out, "first and foremost itself a proposition, an English sentence, for it has a subject and a predicate."¹⁶ This sentence is now analyzed as it is applied in our ordinary every-day language, and it becomes evident that "it is employed as a propositional schema only because it has the construction of an English sentence."¹⁷ Declaring this to be the general form of propositions is, in effect, defining as a proposition whatever can be true or false. But, Wittgenstein points out, in addition to a concept of what a proposition is, we also have a concept of what we mean by 'game', and he further elucidates his point:

15 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 130.

16 Ibid., section 134.

17 Ibid., section 135.

The proposition that only a proposition can be true or false can say no more than that we only predicate "true" and "false" of what we call a proposition. And what a proposition is is in one sense determined by the rules of sentence formation (in English, for example), and in another sense by the use of the sign in the language-game. And the use of the words "true" and "false" may be among the constituent parts of this game; and if so it belongs to our concept 'proposition' but does not 'fit' it.¹⁸

There follows an investigation of the way in which we actually fit words together in sentences according to our understanding of their meanings and uses, and this is illustrated by the way in which we use the word "cube". It is suggested that when we hear the word "cube" a picture comes before our mind, and the picture suggests a certain use to us, but that it was quite possible that any one of a number of alternate uses might have presented themselves. It is a mistake to think that the picture forces a particular use on us: "we are at most under a psychological, not a logical, compulsion. And now it looks as if we knew of two kinds of case."¹⁹ It becomes evident, therefore, that there are other processes, besides the propositional, which we should sometimes be prepared to call "applying the picture of a cube."

At this point is introduced Wittgenstein's method of clarification of meanings by the use of a variety of

18 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 136.

19 Ibid., section 140.

pictures or models. The effectiveness of the teaching process will be tested by two kinds of criteria; on the one hand, the time will come in the process of story telling when the picture will come before the learner's mind and he may actually exclaim: "Now I can go on!"²⁰ and, from his ability to carry on the process he demonstrates that he has understood the lesson. The other criterion is constituted in the application which, in the course of time, the learner makes of what he has imagined. The essence of the philosopher's task is to change the student's way of looking at things. It is further explained that the picture may exist in his imagination, as a drawing or model in front of him, or again, as something that he constructs as a model.

There follows an investigation of the various phrases which we employ to indicate knowledge. When we say that we understand the rule of a series we mean that we "know the application of the rule of the series quite apart from remembering actual applications to particular numbers."²¹ Is knowledge in this case a state of consciousness or a process, or "a state of mind"? The grammar of the word "knows", Wittgenstein points out, is closely related to that of "can", "is able to," but also closely related to that of "under-

20 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, sections 141-144.

21 Ibid., section 148.

stands."²² Various uses of the phrase "to know" are now examined: we say "Now I know!" - and similarly, "Now I can do it!", and "Now I understand!"; illustrations of each of these uses are analyzed, but these do not lead very far towards the location of the solution; "for even supposing I had found something that happened in all those cases of understanding, -- why should it be the understanding?"²³ It is concluded that, in the sense in which there are processes (including mental processes) which are characteristic of understanding, understanding is not a mental process.

This problem is returned to again in sections 179-186 in which it becomes evident that the criteria for "fitting," "being able to," and "understanding" are much more complicated than might appear at first sight. The employment of these words in the linguistic intercourse that is carried on by their means,

is more involved -- the role of these words in our language other -- than we are tempted to think. (This role is what we need to understand in order to resolve philosophical paradoxes. And hence definitions usually fail to resolve them; and so, a fortiori does the assertion that a word is 'indefinable').²⁴

A further discussion of the problem is reported in sections

22 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, sections 150, 151.

23 Ibid., section 154.

24 Ibid., section 182.

525 to 532, in an examination of the sense in which we may say we understand a sentence plucked out of context in an account, such as the statement: "After he had said this, he left her as he did the day before."²⁵ In isolation from its context we should have to say that we do not know what the sentence is about; but, all the same, we should know how it might perhaps be used, and could readily invent a context for it: "a multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction." Yet another approach to the problem is made by the analogy of viewing a picture or a drawing. Here again there will be understanding and "failure to understand."²⁶ There may be some parts of the picture which are familiar, and yet others which are merely patches of colour on canvas so far as our understanding of them goes. Or, to vary the metaphor once again, it is suggested that understanding a sentence is more akin to understanding a musical theme, with its particular pattern of variation in loudness and tempo.

There are, then, different senses in which we may speak of understanding a sentence; on the one hand,

... in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another). In the one

²⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 525.

²⁶ Ibid., section 526.

case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions.²⁷

This brings Wittgenstein to a grasp of the insight for which he has been searching, to the effect that: "these kinds of use of 'understanding' make up its meaning, make up my concept of understanding. For I want to apply the word 'understanding' to all this."²⁸

The foregoing series of investigations, in addition to disclosing the complex role of such words as 'understanding' and 'consciousness', has provided an illustration of the new method which Wittgenstein was introducing in his Cambridge lectures. "The work of the philosopher," he had said, "consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose."²⁹ The philosopher in turning his attention upon ordinary usage of words, does so with a definite aim of disclosing insights into particular problems; he must make selection of those sketches which will serve his special purposes and arrange them in such a way that they provide a picture of the landscape. G.A.Paul summed up this aspect of Wittgenstein's procedure as follows:

... The very nature of philosophical investigation compels a man to travel over a wide region of uses, criss-cross in every direction, the same use being

27 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 531.

28 Ibid., section 532.

29 Ibid., section 127.

approached again and again, each time from a different direction, from a different point of view, from a different use. These various sketches do not of themselves fall together to form a picture, or even a map, of a place or region; they have to be arranged 'so that if you looked at them you could get a picture'³⁰ of the landscape there, and so to some extent get to 'know your way about'.³¹

When the philosopher neglects to carry out this extensive investigation into the usage of language he may fall into serious error through the employment of words out of context. To illustrate the consequences of the improper employment of words, Wittgenstein examines the concept of the 'machine' when this is used by philosophers as a symbol by which to describe the workings of the Universe. He points out that when a machine is being constructed by a workman for some special use, all its possible movements are determined empirically by the maker; whereas, in the machine-as-symbol the movements are pre-determined in a quite different sense, in some mysterious way, and read into the Universe the type of determination which we have built into the machine. "When we do philosophy," he suggests, "we are like primitive peoples, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest

³⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Intro. p. ix.

³¹ G.A.Paul, "Wittgenstein", The Revolution in Philosophy, (London: MacMillian & Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 95.

conclusions from it."³² If we are to avoid error in such matters, the word 'machine' must be understood and taken in the context of its empirical use. Such a sentence as "the machine's action seems to be in it from the start" only seems queer "when one imagines a different language-game for it from the one in which we actually use it."³³ We make the mistake of thinking that we can grasp the whole use of a word as in a flash when we see it in a particular context, and then assume that we may employ it in some other context in which it does not fit; in this way we confuse ourselves and our readers. "Language," he says, "is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about."³⁴ There are rules for the use of words in the language-game, just as there are in the playing of a game of chess, and we can avoid muddles in our thinking only by obeying the rules, -- by observing the grammar of the words which we employ.

Two brief interlocking sections in Part I of the Investigations are followed by a parenthetical passage of particular interest to the philosophical theologian. In

32 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 194.

33 Ibid., section 195.

34 Ibid., section 203.



section 371 Wittgenstein states "Essence is expressed by grammar", and in 373 "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar)."³⁵ This would appear to be the only direct reference to theology in the Investigations. Brief as it is, however, it does suggest a clue to the thoughts of the author upon the subject. The designation of theology as 'science' went out of fashion when science became an empirical investigation. Theologians use scientific method to investigate records and study historical events which form a part of theological study, but the theologian, as such, is concerned with much more than the ascertainment of empirical and historical facts. It could be said, on the other hand, that to designate theology as grammar would seem to be an accurate description of an important part of what the theologian is doing; in his efforts to define and elucidate the terms of religious discourse, he is especially interested in showing the way language functions when it is employed in talk about God.

There is much in the Philosophical Investigations which has a direct bearing upon the theologian's task. The central theme of the work -- that the meaning of a word or of a sentence will be found in its use, and that its uses are as various as human needs for thought and expression --

³⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, sections 371 and 373.

suggests that human interest and concern will determine significance. If a form of words has significance in human experience, then it is a meaningful utterance. In terms of this thesis, the religious experience of mankind will provide "the raw material"³⁶ for the philosopher as theologian. The author of the Investigations refrains from entering into this deeper level discussion as he does from entering many other doors which his investigations have opened. But his analysis of propositions and statements which are expressive of belief, hope, and expectation indicates his awareness of the importance of inner qualities or states of consciousness and that the experience of giving expression to them is something more than simply uttering words. This is clearly put in section 594:

"But the words, significantly uttered, have after all, not only a surface, but also the dimension of depth!" After all, it just is the case that something different takes place when they are uttered significantly from when they are merely uttered. -- How I express this is not the point. Whether I say that in the first case they have depth; or that something goes on in me, inside my mind, as I utter them; or that they have an atmosphere -- it always comes to the same thing.³⁷

Wittgenstein reiterates over and over again that language is an instrument; its concepts are instruments, and it is a matter of considerable importance what concepts we employ.

³⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 254.

³⁷ Ibid., section 594.

"Concepts lead us to make investigations; are the expression of our interest, and direct our interest."³⁸ There is an illuminating comparison and contrast of the ways in which the physicist and the psychologist respectively approach their subject matter.

The investigation of 'expectation' would seem to have important implications for the task of the theologian:

Expectation is, grammatically, a state; like: being of an opinion, hoping for something, knowing something, being able to do something. But in order to understand the grammar of these states it is necessary to ask: "What counts as a criterion for anyone's being in such a state?"³⁹

While an expectation is a state of consciousness, it has an objective reference; it is, as the author expresses it, "embedded in a situation, from which it arises."⁴⁰ This is illustrated by an account of an engineer watching a slow fuse burning its way towards a charge of high explosive; should someone whisper in that tense moment, "It'll go off now", "still his words do not describe a feeling; although they and their tone may be a manifestation of his feeling."⁴¹ A thought, it is suggested, can be the expression of belief,

38 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 570.

39 Ibid., section 572.

40 Ibid., section 581.

41 Ibid., section 582.

hope, expectation, but believing is not the same as thinking. "The concepts of believing, expecting, hoping are less distantly related to one another than they are to the concept of thinking."⁴² The same problem is approached from yet another point of view in Part II of the Investigations; by asking the question: "How did we ever come to use such expressions as 'I believe'...?" This assertion, it is suggested, throws light upon the inner state of consciousness of the person who makes it and certain conclusions about his conduct may be drawn from it; but, to say this does not exhaust the meaning of the assertion. "At bottom, when I say 'I believe... .', I am describing my own state of mind -- but this description is indirectly an assertion of the fact believed."⁴³

In his investigation of these concepts -- believing, expecting, hoping -- the author makes no attempt to provide answers, but seeks rather to elucidate the terms employed by asking relevant questions. It will be the task of theologians to apply the methods here exemplified in an examination of the concepts employed in the records of the living religions of the world. They will seek to elucidate the language used by religious leaders and thinkers in other ages and in their

⁴² Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, section 574.

⁴³ Ibid., Book II, Chapter X, p. 190e.

own and by so doing provide insight into the significance of religious utterances for their own generation.

Once it is recognized that language is an instrument, and that its concepts are instruments, it becomes clear that the major problems posed, and answers offered by one's religious heritage can be investigated. An enquiry into the significance of such questions as the following becomes a task of urgent concern for the theologian:

What is the word "God" used to designate in the higher religions of mankind?

What is the significance of the announcement reported to have been made to Moses in Exodus: "I AM THAT I AM"? What did it mean to the Israelites and to Moses?

What is the meaning of the message of the Prophets?

What is the significance of the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ? As in the Gospels?

As interpreted by the first Christians?

In the theology of the Church Fathers?

In the historic Creeds of Christendom?

What is the significance of the concepts used in all these utterances, and what are their implications for the life of mankind today?

What does the theologian of today mean when he asserts that "God is"; that "God is love"; that "God is a Saviour"?

Once such questions as these are answered, other tasks remain. Embedded in sentences such as the above are words for notions such as the Kingdom of God, the hope of the world to come, the Church and its Ministry, and the Sacraments. Each of these will call for further investigation by the theologian.

Inasmuch as the investigation of these notions will be linguistic, it will call for a careful examination of the languages originally employed in communicating the religious message from earliest ages to the present time.

Wittgenstein has made possible a philosophical emancipation; here is the modern Plato, reintroducing the open dialogue and setting the mind free to range over the great human problems which have confronted the minds of men ever since they learned to exercise thought. Philosophy, as here interpreted, is an activity which raises relevant questions, and indicates the direction in which solutions may be found. "In philosophy we do not draw conclusions."⁴⁴ According to the author of the Investigations, the role of the philosopher is fulfilled when he has succeeded in elucidating the problems.

This book contains the "precipitate of philosophical investigations"⁴⁵ which occupied its author during the sixteen years of his academic work in philosophy at Cambridge University. Consequently, although the book was not published until 1953, the ideas which it contains were disseminated and became widely known through the activities of his students and associates and were actually in circulation

⁴⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I, section 599.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Author's Preface, p. ix^e

in the form of lecture notes. During the decade of the years 1930 to 1940 the new way of doing philosophy which Wittgenstein introduced became the basis for a further development in philosophy, linguistic analysis. To this we must now turn our attention to discover the use made of the new way of philosophizing in the elucidation of theological problems.

CHAPTER IV

Linguistic Analysis, Metaphysics and God
in the Philosophy of John Wisdom

The new approach to philosophy which was being initiated by Wittgenstein in his Cambridge lectures found its way to the philosophical public through articles and papers written by his students and associates who had participated in the oral discussions which he conducted. One of the early interpreters of the new way of doing philosophy was John Wisdom, of Cambridge University. As early as 1933 he had pointed out that the primary intention of the philosopher "is not to provide information, but to promote insight" into the structure of facts.¹ The philosopher's primary intention, says Wisdom, is clearer apprehension of the form, elements and arrangement of facts already known; while the philosopher intends to say what he does about words, he does so only as a means to insight.

In the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society for the year 1936, Professor Wisdom developed Wittgenstein's suggestion that the philosopher is perplexed and is seeking

1 John Wisdom, "Ostentation", Psyche, Volume XIII, 1933, as quoted from Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), pp. 6, 7.

to unravel the muddles in his thinking by investigating the uses of language. A philosophical answer, he says, is really "a verbal recommendation in response to a request for clarification."² The statements of the philosopher are puzzling because while they are verbal, their purpose, the illumination of the ultimate structure of facts, is non-verbal.

A number of familiar philosophical conundrums are examined in order to illustrate the difference in intention of the philosopher's undertaking from the intentions of those who employ the same words in their ordinary sense. An interesting comparison is made between the work of a decoder and of a philosopher investigating the two expressions 'monarchy' and 'set of persons ruled by the same king'. The decoder, after long and patient investigation, comes to the conclusion that they mean the same, and the philosopher may agree, but the point of what he says will be different. In order to understand the decoder's identification it will be necessary to know one of the pair of phrases but, to appreciate what the philosopher is seeking, familiarity with both will be essential.

The philosopher draws attention to what is already known with a view to giving insight into the structure of what 'monarchy', say, means, i.e. bringing into

2 John Wisdom, "Philosophical Perplexity", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Volume XVI, 1936, as in Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 36.

connection the sphere in which the one expression is used with that in which the other is.³

There is a misleading feature in almost all philosophical statements, says Wisdom, in that they have a non-verbal air.

The philosopher laments that we can never really know what is going on in someone else's mind, that we can never really know the causes of our sensations, that inductive conclusions are never really justified.⁴

By his lament the philosopher gives the impression that things should be otherwise. Such laments as these were, for Wittgenstein, symptomatic of deep-seated puzzlement, and Wisdom feels that Wittgenstein "too much represents them as merely symptoms of linguistic confusion. I wish to represent them as also symptoms of linguistic penetration."⁵ The central thesis of his paper might be summed up as follows: Philosophical theories are illuminating ... when they suggest or draw attention to a terminology which reveals likenesses and differences concealed by ordinary language."⁶

In order to point up the puzzling nature of philosophical discourse, Wisdom now investigates the assertion that "there is cheese on the table". This, according to the particular philosophical point of view, raises three puzzles:

3 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 38.

4 Ibid., p. 40.

5 Ibid., p. 41.

6 Ibid., p. 41.

- (1) The category puzzle, -- 'We ought not to speak of cheese, but of sense-data'.
- (2) The knowledge puzzle: expressed by 'We ought not to say "I know there is cheese on the table," but "Very, very probably there is cheese on the table"';
- (3) The justification puzzle: expressed in the statement 'Empirical conclusions are not really justified'.⁷

Professor Wisdom now analyses the knowledge or pointless doubt puzzles which suggest that there is something improper about saying "I know" about any empirical fact. Such suggestions are misleading inasmuch as they imply that empirical knowledge is not dependable. Wittgenstein suggested that this type of doubt should be designated pseudo-doubt, because the one who puts it forward does not really have any lack of confidence in his judgement. If we were to take such advice seriously, and at all times prefix all our statements about material things with 'probably', this word would soon lose its meaning for us. Yet there is an important insight to which the philosopher is calling attention. Summing up the situation, Wisdom concludes: "It may now be said 'In the ordinary use of "know" we may know that that is cheese on the table, but this knowledge is not real knowledge'."⁸ The statement that "There is cheese on the table" or "I know there is cheese on the table" is actually

7 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 42.

8 Ibid., p. 44.

an inference from past experience of similar instances and there is always the possibility that we may have to correct ourselves tomorrow when presented with new evidence. There is a sense in which we may be mistaken in our inferences about material objects, whereas we do have certainty about our bodily sensations so that "I am in pain" is a statement which cannot be contradicted. Consequently, says Wisdom, "the sceptic's doubts become a recommendation to use 'know' only with statements about sense-experience and mathematics and to prefix all other statements with 'probably'."⁹ This recommendation, he says, is prompted by a certain insight; there is an important difference between saying "this is my thumb" and such statements as "I see a pinkish patch", or "I feel a softish patch", or "I am in pain", the latter being simply direct reports of sense experience.¹⁰ "The difference is not one of subject-matter (stuff) but of a different manner of use (style)."¹¹

Here we find the beginnings of a new way of doing philosophy presented by one who worked very closely with and acknowledged great indebtedness to Wittgenstein. Rather than propound solutions and pronounce upon their truth or

9 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 45.

10 Ibid., p. 47.

11 Ibid., p. 46.

falsehood, the philosopher seeks to unravel confusions which result from the ways in which we use language.

In an article published in Mind in 1938, Professor Wisdom applies the new philosophical approach to the controversial subject of "Metaphysics and Verification". He asks, What are people doing when they accept the verification principle? At the beginning of his essay he states that the Verification Principle is:

... the generalization of a very large class of metaphysical theories, namely all naturalistic, empirical, positivistic theories. While its opposite, which I venture to call the Idiosyncratic Platitude, is the generalization of all common-sense, realist, transcendental theories.¹²

Typical conclusions arrived at from the application of the principle of verification are cited as: "A cherry is nothing but sensations and possibilities of more; a mind is nothing but a pattern of behaviour." By way of contrast, the application of the Idiosyncratic Principle will lead to the discovery that "every sort of statement has its own sort of meaning"; and "when philosophers ask 'What is the analysis of X- propositions?' the answer," says Professor Wisdom, "is that they are ultimate."¹³ He further elucidates his meaning by pointing out that according to this principle, ethical propositions involve value predicates and are ultimate; and

¹² John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 51.

¹³ Ibid.

statements about nations may not be reduced to statements about individuals. "Most or all metaphysical conflict," says Professor Wisdom, "finds expression in 'Shall we or shall we not accept the principle that the meaning of a statement is the method of its verification?'"¹⁴

While this theory is itself a metaphysical theory it deceives those who accept it "by appearing in the disguise either of a scientific discovery removing popular illusion, or of a logical equation (incorrect) from which deductions may be made."¹⁵ Ayer had, as a matter of fact, used the principle as a device for ridding himself of both metaphysics and theology. But, says Wisdom, those who reject the principle are also taken in by its disguise and consequently fail to recognize the merit which it conceals, and he suggests that it will be helpful to examine the nature of other metaphysical theories to discover what light they may throw on the nature of the Verification Principle.

The nature of a metaphysical theory is now investigated from various points of view. At one time it was considered that metaphysical theories were super-scientific discoveries, and they are sometimes so presented even today; but this way of regarding metaphysics went out of fashion

14 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 51.

15 Ibid., p. 55.

with the advent of the empirical sciences and the emphasis upon empirical methods for obtaining new factual information. But neither is Russell's definition of the metaphysician as a profound logician satisfactory. Russell had argued that when the metaphysician asked the question 'What is an X?' he was requesting a logical analysis, and on the surface it may appear that this is what he is asking for. But, says Wisdom, as soon as we commence to provide answers for him in terms of analysis, he reveals his dissatisfaction with our results and we discover that "nothing in the way of analysis satisfies him".¹⁶ The problem may be expressed either by saying "that we have not found the analysis of what he wants analysed, or, in other cases, that what he wants analysed is ultimate, unanalysable."¹⁷ It is Wisdom's contention that the latter statement expresses the truth of the matter and he suggests that what the metaphysician wants is not definition but description. He now examines a large variety of attempts, based on analysis, to meet the request of the metaphysician. Each attempt demonstrates the truth of the assertion that the metaphysician is requesting an analysis of the unanalysable. But, when we have said this, we have still not dealt with the matter adequately and puzzling

16 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 64.

17 Ibid., p. 65.

questions remain. Positivism suggests a way of removing these by simply refusing to recognize anything beyond the sense-data as having meaning, but Wisdom is unable to accept the positivist interpretation, regarding it as merely an evasion of the problem:

The answer 'The classes of proposition which puzzle us are ultimate, unanalysable' insists that the positivist's way out will not do. But it leaves us where we were, except in the important respect that we can no longer imagine that definition will help us out.¹⁸

To exemplify the problem which remains, it is suggested

We are left giving the answer '"Smith is good" is about Smith and goodness, about an ego and a value predicate; it is not a statement about a body and how it behaves'.¹⁹

To the question "What is a metaphysician?" Wisdom is now in a position to reply that this is not a request for a definition, but rather for explanation, which may be given externally and internally:

... we can explain what a metaphysician is 'internally' by explaining that positivists and 'ultimatists' are metaphysicians, and 'externally' by explaining that grammarians, logicians and poets are not.²⁰

The metaphysician is concerned with the descriptions of ultimate classes of fact which bear on the great group of puzzles created by the analogies suggested by ordinary language. A number of puzzling questions are now examined

18 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 86.

19 Ibid., p. 86.

20 Ibid., p. 90.

by way of illustration, such as the problem: "Did the dog go round the cow?", "Fido is intelligent", and "There is cheese here". In each of these cases there is an inclination to say that there is a sense in which the answer would be 'Yes' and yet another sense in which the answer would be 'No', and Professor Wisdom suggests that what the philosopher is being asked for here "is a decision and the reasons for it in the sense in which reasons can be offered for a decision -- by counsel for the plaintiff and counsel for the defendant."²¹ The positivists and the ultimatists would each have their own decision and their own reasons for it, in each case arriving at opposite conclusions. But the matter is not quite so simple, and what is required is that the nature of the dispute should be explained by describing what leads each to say what he does. In this way the dispute is seen in its more ultimate nature.

The positivist and the logical atomist both make the mistake of thinking that philosophical difficulties can be solved by definition and by applying a priori rules, whereas Wittgenstein's discussions emphasized the multiplicity of uses that words and phrases have. The method of naming, as employed by the logical atomists failed to take account of this complexity of language; at an elementary stage naming may be a necessary part of instruction, but it is merely

21 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 97.

preliminary to the employment of language in meaningful discourse. Depth of understanding will result from the patient examination of language as actually employed, rather than by arbitrarily attaching labels and eliminating all other shades of meaning except that covered by our formula. This latter was also the mistake of the positivists; their attempt to eliminate from meaningful discourse all statements except those verifiable by scientific methods on the one hand or shown to be analytic truths on the other, led them to discount statements as meaningless when, but for this pre-judgement, significant aspects which they failed to note would have become evident. In the second Part of the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein refers to this tendency as "aspect-blindness".²²

It is this need for patient reflection without the restriction of arbitrarily imposed rules which Wisdom is advocating. There are fine shades of difference in the meanings of statements which, if observed, will result in deeper insights, -- insights which the application of pre-conceived formulas will serve only to conceal. The assumption of the advocates of the Verification Principle, that the sole function of indicative sentences is to state facts, has, he suggests, been shown to be false in the case where

²² Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part II, Chapter XI, p. 213.

the factual functions of an indicative are zero; and he recommends that we are now:

ready to look for non-factual functions in cases where the factual functions are not zero, in ethics, in mathematics, in psychological statements, in metaphysics, and thus in the principle itself. A flood of light is thrown on the numerous philosophical disputes arising from the fact that sentences may agree in factual function while they do not in other functions.²³

The most difficult problems to resolve, Wisdom suggests, are those in which there is a tendency both to say "that two sentences stand for the same fact"²⁴ and at the same time to deny this. Such disputes will only be resolved by setting out the various aspects of the two sentences which respectively lead the disputants to opposing conclusions. In this way insight is gained.

Thus the metaphysical paradoxes appear no longer as crude falsehoods about how our language is actually used, but as penetrating suggestions as to how it might be used so as to reveal what, by the actual use of language, is hidden. And the metaphysical platitudes appear as timely reminders of what is revealed by the actual use of language and would be hidden by the new.²⁵

If we would appreciate the value of what the philosopher is doing, says Wisdom, we must take our attention off the goal of our striving for a time and think of his work as a re-description of the point he has already reached. By setting

23 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 99.

24 Ibid., p. 99.

25 Ibid., pp. 100-101.

that which is familiar in a new light, he enables us to gain a new and greater apprehension of reality.

In a paper entitled 'Gods', published in the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society for 1944, Professor Wisdom applied the new method of doing philosophy to theology. As well as being the pioneer work in this field, this paper is historically important because it initiated a series of discussions between philosophers and theologians on theological questions.

The author reminds the reader at the beginning that this will be a philosophical discussion of belief in gods or God. In explaining the nature of the dispute between theist and atheist it is pointed out that "the existence of God is not an experimental issue in the way it was,"²⁶ and it is assumed, therefore, that metaphysical arguments for the existence of God will not play any part in the discussion. What will be under investigation will be a more sophisticated theistic belief in a God or gods, and in order to focus the field of attention more clearly it is indicated that the belief in a future life will play no part in the investigation. The aim of the study will be to "consider the differences between atheists and theists in so far as these

26 John Wisdom, "Gods", Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, Chapter X, p. 149.

differences are not a matter of belief in a future life."²⁷

Eliminating any consideration of the effect of their belief as far as a future life is concerned, what are the differences between theists and atheists here and now? Is it that theists are people who have retained their primitive childish superstitions long after the time when such immaturities should have been shed, or is it that atheists are afflicted with what Wittgenstein called 'aspect-blindness'? In a story-model of a child's memories of his father, recognition is given to the difference that it will make to a man when he comes to die to be able to expect a friendly meeting in the far country; but this is not the only difference between one who believes in God and one who does not.

This other difference may still be described as belief in another world, only this belief is not a matter of expecting one thing rather than another here or hereafter, it is not a matter of a world to come but of a world that now is, though beyond our senses.²⁸

It is suggested that the "question 'Is belief in gods reasonable?' has more than one source",²⁹ and that our investigation, to be thorough, ought to be prefaced by an examination of "the logic of belief in animal and human minds."²⁹ This, however, would involve an extensive study

27 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 150.

28 Ibid., p. 150.

29 Ibid., p. 151.

(one which the author carried out in a series of articles in philosophical journals). It is suggested that for the purposes of this essay we should acknowledge the reasonableness of our belief in human minds and give our full attention for the present to the question of the reasonableness of belief in divine minds, which "then becomes a matter of whether there are facts in nature which support claims about divine minds in the way facts in nature support our claims about human minds."³⁰

There are two parts to the problem so stated: a metaphysical component which prompts us to raise the question 'Is there ever any behaviour which gives reason to believe in any sort of mind?'³¹ If we are able to answer this in the affirmative, we may move on to the second stage of the investigation to ask 'Are there other mind-patterns in nature beside the human and animal patterns which we can all easily detect, and are these other mind-patterns super-human?'³¹ Such a statement of the problem, however, raises a number of puzzling questions, partly metaphysical and partly scientific, which at the present stage of human knowledge we are not in a position to answer. Wittgenstein was pondering the mystery of mind in the questions which he asked about his dog:

30 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 151

31 Ibid., pp. 151-152.

One can imagine an animal angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, startled. But hopeful? and why not? A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? -- And what can he not do here? How do I do it? How am I supposed to answer this? Can only those hope who can talk?³²

The old method of doing philosophy would be to launch into an exhaustive treatment of these questions, but Wisdom recommends that we leave them for the time being and concentrate on a third source of the dispute which finds expression in the words 'I believe in God', on the one side and 'I do not' on the other. This source is found in our ignorance as to the full extent of mind-like behaviour in the natural world, and as to whether it is sufficiently "similar to or superior to human behaviour to be called mind-proving."³³

Likewise, even when we are satisfied that human behaviour shows mind and even when we have learned whatever mind-suggesting things there are in nature which are not explained by human and animal minds, we may still ask 'But are these things sufficiently striking to be called a mind-pattern? Can we fairly call them manifestations of a divine being?'³⁴

Having eliminated the metaphysical puzzles and isolated the basic questions under discussion, we find that there are features in the problem which suggest that perhaps, after

³² Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part II:1, p. 174.

³³ John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 152.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

all, its solution is merely a matter of attaching a name to a familiar object. If this is so, is the problem really significant?

In reply to this question, Professor Wisdom points out that "the line between a question of fact and a question or decision as to the application of a name is not so simple as this way of putting things suggests."³⁵ He illustrates this point by a number of stories, each of which discloses a dimension of depth which may enter into our understanding of a situation when factors are brought to our attention which, though present, had not hitherto been noticed. "It is possible," he concludes, "to have before our eyes all the elements of a pattern and still to miss the pattern."³⁶ Indeed, it may well be that the pattern is the most important fact in the total situation, providing the clue to the understanding of all else; to miss the pattern is to miss the meaning of the whole and, "therefore, difference as to there being any gods is in part a difference as to what is so and therefore as to the facts, though not in the simple ways which first occurred to us."³⁷

It is now recommended that we "approach these same

35 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 152.

36 Ibid., p. 153.

37 Ibid., p. 154.

points by a different road."³⁸ The method of discussion is laid aside momentarily, while a parable story is told in which the respective attitudes of believer and unbeliever are disclosed in their reactions to a particular situation. The story is designed to illustrate how belief in God "may start by being experimental and gradually become something quite different."³⁹ As this story exemplifies the central argument of Wisdom's essay it will be well to reproduce it in its entirety.

Two people return to their long neglected garden and find among the weeds a few of the old plants surprisingly vigorous. One says to the other 'It must be that a gardener has been coming and doing something about these plants'. Upon inquiry they find that no neighbour has ever seen anyone at work in their garden. The first man says to the other 'He must have worked while people slept'. The other says 'No, someone would have heard him and besides, anybody who cared about the plants would have kept down these weeds'. The first man says 'Look at the way these are arranged. There is purpose and a feeling for beauty here. I believe someone comes, someone invisible to mortal eyes. I believe that the more carefully we look the more we shall find confirmation of this.' They examine the garden ever so carefully and sometimes they come on new things suggesting that a gardener comes and sometimes they come on new things suggesting the contrary and even that a malicious person has been at work. Besides examining the garden carefully they also study what happens to gardens left without attention. Each learns all the other learns about this and about the garden. Consequently, when after all this, one says 'I still believe a gardener comes' while the other says 'I don't' their different words now reflect no difference as to what they have found in the garden, no difference as to what they would find in the garden if they looked further and no

38 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 154.

39 Ibid., p. 154.

difference about how fast untended gardens fall into disorder. At this stage, in this context, the gardener hypothesis has ceased to be experimental, the difference between one who accepts and one who rejects it is now not a matter of the one expecting something the other does not expect. What is the difference between them? The one says 'A gardener comes unseen and unheard. He is manifested only in his works with which we are all familiar', the other says 'There is no gardener' and with this difference in what they say about the gardener goes a difference in how they feel towards the garden, in spite of the fact that neither expects anything of it which the other does not expect.⁴⁰

Is belief in God, like the belief that a Gardener comes, merely a matter of attaching a name and of thereby expressing the attitude which goes along with the naming? And if it is, what point is there in pursuing the question and asking 'Which is right?' 'Which is reasonable?' "Yet, surely," replies Wisdom, "such questions are appropriate when one person says to another 'You still think the world's a garden and not a wilderness, and that the gardener has not forsaken it'."⁴¹ There are, indeed, times when one might think that religion was merely a matter of feeling, as, for example, when people are singing hymns. But when theologians and philosophers argue about belief in God they appear to be concerned with something more than choosing the appropriate exclamation to be used with reference to nature. The disputants (be they Bishop Gore or Dr. Joad) speak

⁴⁰ John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, pp. 154-155.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 155.

as if they are concerned with a matter of scientific fact, or of trans-sensual, trans-scientific and metaphysical fact, but still of fact and still a matter about which reasons for and against may be offered, although no scientific reasons in the sense of field surveys for fossils or experiments on delinquents are to the point.⁴²

The next phase of Wisdom's discussion seeks to "provide the descriptions that are really wanted", as recommended in "Metaphysics and Verification".⁴³ Various features of the expression of belief and unbelief which have been disclosed in the parable are now examined and a number of suitably qualified models are employed to bring out aspects of the experience of belief and unbelief which otherwise might be overlooked. We are recalled to a consideration of the suggestion that religious belief is a matter of manifesting an attitude which is expressed in the utterance of a word, and the question is asked, "When all the facts are known how can there still be a question of fact? How can there still be a question?"⁴⁴ We are reminded of Hume's remark in the "Appendix" to his Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, "...after every circumstance, every relation is known, the understanding has no further room to operate." Hume had sought to determine the extent to which reason or sentiment

42 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 156.

43 Ibid., pp. 100-101.

44 Ibid., p. 156.

enters into the attaching of praise or censure to our assessment of human conduct, and he has come to the conclusion that "in moral deliberations we must be acquainted beforehand with all the objects, and all their relations to each other; and from a comparison of the whole, fix our choice or approbation."⁴⁵ But if all facts and relations are known, then there is nothing further for the understanding to do, and the decision which then ensues "cannot be the work of the judgement, but of the heart; and is not a speculative proposition or affirmation, but an active feeling or sentiment."⁴⁶

Hume had argued with telling effect in both the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and in the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion that the religious hypothesis is not related to the facts in the way that a scientific hypothesis is. It will not, for instance, permit verifiable deductions. "No new fact can ever be inferred from the religious hypothesis",⁴⁷ and in an earlier paragraph he stated:

The religious hypothesis, therefore, must be considered only a particular method of accounting for the visible phenomena of the universe: but no just reasoner will ever presume to infer from it any single fact, and alter

45 David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, Hume's Enquiries, L.A. Selby-Bigge, Editor, (2nd edition) 1902), Section 240, p. 290.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section XI:113, p. 146.

or add to the phenomena, in any single particular.⁴⁸

In the Dialogues, Hume bent all his efforts towards the end of demonstrating the inability of man to prove the existence of God by reason alone. He considered that a philosophical scepticism about the possibility of such unaided attainment was the first and "most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian."⁴⁹ In other words, he sought to destroy the elaborate structures of the deists and Calvinists in order that men might give more attention to revelation.

Hume was prepared to acknowledge that the works of nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art. He admitted in the Appendix to the Treatise, volume II, that his simple epistemology had been unable to account for the depths of human personality and self-awareness. He recognized in the closing chapter of the Dialogues that it is quite impossible for man, constructed as he is, to suspend judgement where the ultimate ground of the universe is concerned. Hume was aware that there is mystery in the universe and that theology is an attempt to do justice to it, but he maintains that there never will be a system of theology

48 David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section XI:107, p. 139.

49 David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, Henry D. Aiken, Editor, 1959), Part XII, p. 94.

that can be justified by analogical reasoning alone. The findings of natural theology will be at best problematical.

But perhaps there are other ways of shedding light upon the theistic dispute. If we may not employ the methods of the scientist, nor the accountant's method of re-checking figures, perhaps it will help to study the procedure of the law courts? Here, suggests Wisdom, the process of argumentation resembles more the legs of a chair than the links of a chain of deductive reasoning. In the law court the counsel presents and re-presents those features of the case which favour calling the situation by a certain name. He approaches now from one side and now from another, and with each argument aimed at the desired decision. It sometimes happens in court cases that opposing counsel are agreed about the facts, but are endeavouring to establish responsibility and the solution which they seek is a decision of the judge. The judge's decision is given by the application of a name to the situation, but, says Wisdom, it is not merely the application of a name any more "than is the pinning on of a medal merely the pinning on of a bit of metal."⁵⁰ "With the judge's choice of a name for the facts goes an attitude, and the declaration, the ruling, is an exclamation evincing that attitude."⁵¹ Such

50 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 158.

51 Ibid.

an exclamation, he suggests, "not only has a purpose but also a logic, a logic surprisingly like that of 'futile', 'deplorable', 'graceful', 'grand', 'divine'."52

We are next invited to study the reactions of two people as they view a scene of natural beauty or a painting. One cannot find words adequate to express his appreciation of the beauty, while the other fails to be impressed. Both are viewing the scene from the same perspective and therefore both have all the facts before them. It may happen, however, that when someone has emphasized certain features of painting the other may see it in a new light and catch something of the beauty; or it may be that he must first discover beauty in other paintings before he will see what is here to be seen. And so we have another procedure for settling the differences of opinion by means of a "more literal re-setting-before with re-looking or re-listening."53 Just as we place the picture in a more advantageous setting to bring out features of its beauty, so we may bring out the features of an argument by setting it beside other arguments which will assist in comprehension.

But perhaps the most effective models, and those which come nearest to the problems involved in encouraging or dis-

52 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 158.

53 Ibid., p. 159.

couraging belief in God, are situations involving human relations. Professor Wisdom now describes the case of a young man in love with someone who, his friend feels, is not worthy of his love. In such a case there may be an element of blindness to faults in the lover because of his infatuation. We may bring to his attention things other people have done which have infuriated him, and acquaint him with factors in the situation which we feel should influence him, and others which are influencing him and should not be allowed to do so. Part of his trouble may come from mismanagement of language and we may assist him to mean what he says and to say what he means. But, frequently, such wrong-headedness will be due to what may be called 'unspoken connections', -- influences at work which are not put into language at all. In such cases, we help him by setting before him what has not been set out at all before; "we not only ask him for his reasons but also look for unconscious reasons both good and bad,"⁵⁴ which he has hitherto been unable to put into words. Through such a process, in addition to the insights which result, new facts are disclosed. Or, should we say, the situation takes on a dimension of depth?

The question is now asked "What should happen, when we inquire in this way into the reasonableness, the propriety

54 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 162.

of belief in gods?"⁵⁵ To provide an answer Wisdom surveys the record of human witness to a sense of presence, of the divine in nature. These feelings are many-sided: feelings of awe, of dread, of confidence, of unease and of guilt, much of which is carried over, Wisdom suggests, from experiences of our early childhood and contains clear traces of association with primitive animism. There is, however, a mystery which remains, which is not dispelled even with the arrival of adulthood, and finds expression in autobiographical passages in literature. We all understand these mystical utterances of the poets and writers because most of us have had similar experiences even when we are unable to speak of them. Freud declared that the ordinary man cannot imagine this Providence in any other form than that of a greatly exalted father, and concluded that belief in God was patently infantile and incongruous with reality. Wisdom would agree that superficially considered, this does appear to be the case, and yet it is just at this point, when it would seem that these new insights were going to remove our belief as a mere illusion, that a new aspect of the matter may strike us. For the study of psycho-analysis and depth-psychology which have been so successful in bringing to light the projections of infantile fantasies in the mind of

55 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 163.

the sick, has at the same time uncovered other facts about the human personality which make these systems less fantastic.

What are these facts? They are patterns in human reactions which are well described by saying that we are as if there were hidden within us powers, persons, not ourselves and stronger than ourselves.⁵⁶

We did not know until recently, through the study and application of psycho-analysis the degree in which this is so. Professor Wisdom suggests that philosophers can gain insights by study of the case histories, but that a better understanding would result from taking part in the studies oneself.

"One thing not sufficiently realized", says Professor Wisdom, "is that some of the things shut within us are not bad but good."⁵⁷

The paper is concluded with the suggestion that "the gods, good and evil are mixed, have always been mysterious powers outside us rather than within. But they have also been within."⁵⁸ Eve complained that the serpent beguiled her, and Helen of Troy blamed Cypris for her fatal alliance. Elijah found God in the still small voice when he had failed to find him in the whirlwind or in the noise of the thunder, and Jesus reminded his disciples that the Kingdom of God is within. "The artists who do most for us," Professor Wisdom

56 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 166.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

suggests, "don't tell us only of fairylands,"⁵⁹ but show us reality. The reports of those who have tried to find ways of salvation

are always incomplete and apt to mislead even when they are not in words but in music or paint. But they are by no means useless; and not the worst of them are those which speak of oneness with God. But in so far as we become one with Him He becomes one with us. St. John says he is in us as we love one another.⁶⁰

Summing up our examination of the philosophy of John Wisdom, it may be said that, by employing the new way of doing philosophy, he has reasserted the validity of metaphysics as a philosophical procedure seeking insight into the ultimate structure and meaning of facts. He has shown the Verification Principle to be the generalization of a very large class of metaphysical theories. He has disclosed the falsehood of its assumption that the sole function of indicative sentences is to state facts. And he has indicated the general pattern of argumentation by which a reasonable basis may be found for belief in gods or God. The work of Professor Wisdom would appear to have cleared the way for the resumption of conversations between philosophers and theologians in which many of the questions raised in this investigation of the concept of God may be further elucidated. Perhaps it will be well, however, prior to proceeding to

59 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 167.

60 Ibid., p. 168.

this phase of our study, to investigate what effect, if any, the new approach to philosophy was having upon the philosophical outlook of the positivists and in particular upon the work of Professor Ayer, the chief exponent of positivism in England.

CHAPTER V

The Abandonment of Positivism and the Recognition
of Metaphysics in the Philosophy of A.J.Ayer

In 1946 Professor Ayer published a second edition of Language, Truth and Logic. The earlier edition had by this time acquired something of the status of a text-book in Logical Positivism. In a twenty six page Introduction he sought to provide further explanation of a number of points which he now recognizes to have been inadequately stated. Approximately half of the Introduction is taken up with an attempt to find a more satisfactory way to state the principle of verification. He accepts the criticism that the principle is incomplete as a criterion of meaning, since it does not cover the case of sentences which do not express any proposition at all. To overcome this anomalous situation he now recommends that "every indicative sentence, whether it is literally meaningful or not, shall be regarded as expressing a statement,"¹ and that the word 'proposition' should be reserved for statements which are literally meaningful under the terms of the Verification Principle. This principle now becomes the means of distinguishing statements which belong to the class of propositions from those which

¹ A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, Second Edition, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1946), p. 8.

do not.

Professor Ayer suggests that the principle of verification should, for brevity, be applied directly to statements and that it be reformulated to read "a statement is held to be literally meaningful if and only if it is either analytic or empirically verifiable."² This still leaves the problem of clarifying the meaning of 'verifiable' in this formula. He acknowledges that the answer given to this question in the first chapter of the book is not satisfactory, and he proceeds to work out an alternative statement designed to take account of the fact that most empirical propositions are in some degree vague, and that what is required to verify them is the occurrence of one or other of the sense-contents which fall within a fairly indefinite range.

A new formula is drawn up according to which statements may be classed as either 'directly' or 'indirectly' verifiable:

A statement is directly verifiable if it is either itself an observation-statement, or is such that in conjunction with one or more observation-statements it entails at least one observation-statement which is not deducible from these other premises alone.

A statement is indirectly verifiable if it satisfies the following conditions: first, that in conjunction with certain other premises it entails one or more directly verifiable statements which are not deducible from these other premises alone; and secondly, that

2 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 9.

these other premises do not include any statement that is not either analytic, or directly verifiable, or capable of being independently established as indirectly verifiable.³

Having distinguished the two types of statement which may be verified, Professor Ayer now reformulates the principle itself as "requiring of a literally meaningful statement, which is not analytic, that it should be either directly or indirectly verifiable, in the foregoing sense."⁴ This differentiation of types of verifiability was an attempt to legitimize scientific theories (which had unwittingly been excluded by the older principle) while, he hoped, at the same time it would continue to exclude metaphysical statements. It was for this purpose that the principle was originally designed.

Professor Ayer, furthermore, believed that the new principle would effectively rule out any attempt to appeal to the facts of religious experience in support of arguments for the existence of a deity. He suggested that the propositions in which religious experiences are described by the religious person do not contain all the factual meaning of this experience.

For there may be other empirical facts that he would also consider to be relevant; and it is possible that

3 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 13.

the descriptions of these other empirical facts can more properly be regarded as containing the factual meaning of his statement than the descriptions of the religious experiences.⁵

As acknowledged on an earlier page of the Introduction, Professor Ayer is now prepared to admit that what he describes as "basic propositions" can be conclusively verified by "the occurrence of the experience to which they uniquely refer."⁶ (By "basic propositions" he means propositions which refer to a single experience). But, as he had pointed out in the text, "in describing such a situation, one is not merely 'registering' a sense-content; one is classifying it in some way or other, and this means going beyond what is immediately given."⁷ Statements describing religious experiences are, consequently, quite as liable to error of interpretation as any other sense experience. It is one thing, however, to recognize that accounts of religious experiences, being verbal interpretations of experience, are liable to error, and quite another to rule, a priori, that such experiences are nothing more than what is contained in the relevant empirical propositions, as Professor Ayer here maintains.

It is worth noting in passing that he finds it necessary

5 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 15.

6 Ibid., p. 10.

7 Ibid., p. 91.

to use such imprecise terminology as "there may be other empirical facts", and "it is possible that the description of these other [hypothetical] empirical facts" are the real source of the experiences. The argument at this point appears to be circular in the following manner: The principle of verification defines what may be allowed to be literally meaningful. It is designed to deal only with empirical and material matters of fact; therefore these alone can be meaningful. Therefore, to believe that genuine experience can result from other-than-empirical causes must be a mistake. Therefore, there must be additional empirical facts which have been withheld from the description of religious experiences and these, if they could be produced, would give a complete account of the experience. Such an argument illustrates the desperate efforts which Professor Ayer was making at this time to force all of experience into a pre-conceived mould, -- a mould which was incapable of dealing with the full complexity of religious experience.

Ayer is conscious of the fact that he has employed a too restricted meaning of "meaning" to be generally accepted. As he now admits,

I do not overlook the fact that the word "meaning" is commonly used in a variety of senses, and I do not wish to deny that in some of these senses a statement may properly be said to be meaningful even though it is neither analytic nor empirically verifiable.⁸

8 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 15.

He would, however, reserve the expression "literal meaning" as applicable only to those statements which meet the requirements of the principle of verification as re-stated, and that, only if a statement was literally meaningful in this sense could it properly be said to be either true or false. There follows another major acknowledgement: the verification principle has been described as a metaphysical theory by Professor Wisdom and was apparently regarded as an empirical hypothesis by both Dr. A.C.Ewing and Dr. T.W.Stace.⁹ Professor Ayer now states that he wishes it to be regarded as a definition, but that "it is not supposed to be entirely arbitrary,"¹⁰ and he suggests that it is open to anyone to adopt a different criterion of meaning,

And so produce an alternative definition which may very well correspond to one of the ways in which the word "meaning" is commonly used. And if a statement satisfied such a criterion, there is, no doubt, some proper use of the word "understanding" in which it would be capable of being understood.¹¹

And so, at long last it is acknowledged that the verification principle is but one of a variety of possible criteria for determining the meaning of a statement as the word "meaning" is commonly understood. Nevertheless, an attempt is made to preserve some special status for the verification

9 A.C.Ewing, "Meaninglessness", Mind, 1937, pp. 347-364; T.W.Stace, "Positivism", Mind, Vol.LIII, 1944, p. 215 ff.

10 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 16.

11 Ibid.

principle:

... I think that, unless it satisfied the principle of verification, it would not be capable of being understood in the sense in which either scientific hypotheses or common-sense statements are habitually understood.¹²

Ayer concedes that there is little likelihood that any metaphysician would admit such a claim and he acknowledges that the principle could be effective in eliminating metaphysics only when supported by detailed analyses of particular metaphysical arguments.

Professor Wisdom, in a "Note on the New Edition of Professor Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic", published in Mind, calls attention to the circularity of the argument of Ayer's Introduction, and that Professor Ayer is there saying, in effect, that "unless a statement has the sort of verification that a scientific or common-sense statement has it won't be a common-sense or scientific statement."¹³ Professor Wisdom acknowledges, however, that Ayer's statement "draws attention to how we actually do classify statements by the way they are verified so that even now the principle is still not useless."¹⁴ But the principle as now stated is very different from what it was and "is quite incapable of

12 A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 16.

13 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 245.

14 Ibid.

eliminating metaphysics or anything else."¹⁵ The verification principle, in spite of all attempts to describe it otherwise, is a metaphysical proposition -- Wisdom calls it a 'smashing' one. "After study of it", he concludes, "we come to its complementary platitude 'Every sort of statement has its own sort of meaning' which by the verification principle itself becomes 'Every sort of statement has its own sort of logic'."¹⁶

Professor Wisdom suggests that Ayer has come very close to recognizing this fact in his treatment of a priori statements. In the Introduction, Professor Ayer states that a logical proposition elucidates the use of an expression, and in this way is informative. In chapter IV of the text he affirms that analytic propositions are not to be regarded as senseless because they "enlighten us by illustrating the way in which we use certain symbols"¹⁷ and a little later, in the next paragraph he states that:

... there is a sense in which analytic propositions do give us new knowledge. They call attention to linguistic usages, of which we might otherwise not be conscious, and they reveal unsuspected implications in our assertions and beliefs.¹⁸

Wisdom suggests that when Ayer clarifies exactly what he

15 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 245.

16 Ibid., p. 246.

17 A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 79.

18 Ibid., pp. 79-80.

means by these statements, it will be found that "metaphysical statements are saved from senselessness in the very way in which Ayer says that logical ones are."¹⁹

In this Introduction to the Second Edition it becomes evident that Professor Ayer is gradually coming to recognize that there are other ways of doing philosophy than those prescribed by the Logical Positivists' principle of verification. In his inaugural lecture as Wykeham Professor of Logic in the University of Oxford, in 1960, Professor Ayer gave formal recognition to his acceptance of this changed viewpoint.

The conclusion which they [philosophers] have reached is that philosophy is, in some special sense, an inquiry into language... . They do not set out to describe, or even to explain, the world, still less to change it. Their concern is only with the way in which we speak about the world. Philosophy, it has been said, is talk about talk.²⁰

This conception of philosophy as a second-order subject concerned with the analysis of language is, he suggests, in part a legacy of Logical Positivism and owes something to G.E. Moore, but more to the later teachings of Wittgenstein. Ayer states that the aim of positivism was to merge philosophy into science and that consequently there was a concentration on methodological problems. It was assumed by

19 John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 245.

20 A.J. Ayer, Philosophy and Language, (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 5.

the early positivists that these (the methodological problems) also would soon be solved, leaving nothing for philosophy to do. G.E.Moore, on the other hand, always insisted that the practice of analysis was only one function of philosophy which, in his opinion "was concerned, not with linguistic expression, but rather with the concepts, or propositions, or facts for which they stood."²¹ But the turning point in contemporary philosophy, says Ayer,

was the shift in Wittgenstein's philosophy from the metaphor of treating words as pictures to the metaphor of treating words as tools. Linguistic signs are meaningful, but there are no such things as meanings.²²

He suggests that this "identification of meaning with use is neither so radical nor so fruitful a step as is commonly supposed,"²³ but because it is thought to turn questions of meaning into questions of language, "it completes this line of the development of the notion of linguistic philosophy."²⁴

Another difference between Moore and Wittgenstein was that Moore regarded analysis as a source of knowledge, issuing in propositions which were either true or false. To Wittgenstein this idea seemed dangerously naive. Failing to

21 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 6.

22 Ibid., p. 7.

23 Ibid., p. 7.

24 Ibid., p. 8.

understand the way in which their language worked, people became puzzled and the task of the philosopher was to assist them in resolving the dilemmas, and once this was done their problems would disappear. Ayer suggests that, in contrast to the Greeks who were concerned to discover "what there really is", the more recent philosophers have been attempting "to show that something, which there appears to be, is not."²⁵ The reason for this effort to remove certain types of entity by reductive analysis, he suggests, is that they are thought to be unreal on the ground that they are unobservable. This viewpoint is based on a radical empiricism which assumes that only sense-data are directly perceived.

It is the outcome of an a priori conception of reality. It is assumed that significant discourse must in the end refer to a limited set of objects, because these are the only objects that there can really be.²⁶

But reductive analysis is no longer popular and for a number of reasons; on the one hand, there is a hesitancy on the part of philosophers today to commit themselves to any presuppositions; and on the other, the promised analyses were not very convincing. The result was that people came to regard the process as a waste of time; and finally, he suggests, the reductionists had too little respect for language. "What we must do instead is to approach language

25 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 13.

26 Ibid., p. 15.

without preconceptions, to see how it actually does work."²⁷
In reply to the question as to why this should be of any philosophical interest, Wittgenstein asserted that it would free us from perplexities which have arisen mainly from our misuse and misinterpretation of our language. "Another positive answer," Professor Ayer suggests, "is that a careful examination of the workings of our language will give us an insight into the structure of the world which it describes."²⁸
But there will be difficulties in drawing the distinction between questions of fact and questions of analysis.

He states that the verification principle, upon which the Logical Positivists relied for their elimination of metaphysics, "suffers from a vagueness which it has not yet been found possible to eradicate", and he expresses a doubt as to whether it is "a wholly effective means of distinguishing questions of analysis and interpretation from questions of fact."²⁹ For example, says Professor Ayer, on the basis of the verification principle, the animist's statements would be verifiable -- the difference between himself and our language would be a difference in form and not in factual content. The mistake of those who promoted the theory, he

27 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 16.

28 Ibid., p. 16.

29 Ibid., p. 21.

suggests, lay in "the assumption that it is possible to supply a neutral record of facts, free from any taint of theory."³⁰ But this is generally recognized as being impossible.

It has been thought that it could first be stated and then analysed; but it would seem that in the very attempt to state it (what one perceives) one already commits oneself to some form of analysis.³¹

Immediate sense experience may be incorrigible in the sense that I know when I experience pain, and may indicate the fact with an exclamation or an utterance; but any attempt to go beyond the mere recording of the fact is fraught with possibilities of misinterpretation. And as for our perception of external objects, the statement "I see a crooked stick in the water" contains sufficient interpretation to be falsified by further investigation. And so Professor Ayer concludes.

If this is right, it appears that philosophy does after all intrude upon questions of empirical fact. Once it is established what is to count as a fact, that is, once the criteria are settled, it is an empirical and not a philosophical question whether they are satisfied. But the adoption of these criteria implies the acceptance of a given conceptual system, and the appraisal of conceptual systems does fall within the province of philosophy... . However well the system works on the whole, it is not immune from criticism. Even among its categorical features there may be some which prove on investigation to be ill adapted to their purpose. The concept of cause is a possible example.³²

30 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 21.

31 Ibid., p. 22.

32 Ibid.

Here we have a straightforward acknowledgement that philosophy is, after all, concerned to a certain extent with questions of empirical fact, since it must provide the criteria as to what is to count as a fact; that the adoption of criteria implies the acceptance of a given conceptual system; that the appraisal of conceptual systems falls within the province of philosophy; and that philosophy must appraise the adequacy of the categories of the conceptual systems. All of these functions are metaphysical in nature. In other words, it will be necessary for philosophy to bring under review from time to time the conceptual systems and categoreal features which lie behind statements put forward by a wide variety of specialists in a great many fields and in ordinary conversation. Its main aim will be to lead to a deeper understanding by removing muddles and clarify the categoreal structure of thought.

Professor Ayer examines the principle that the meaning of an expression is to be identified with its use. To determine what a given sentence states, he suggests, it is necessary to

describe the situations, states of affairs, by which the statement it expresses would be verified and in this way dispel the confusion which has grown up around the use of certain words in philosophy.³³

The method is simply to take a new look at the facts and by

33 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 23.

so doing, gain insights into the way in which the language is being used. As an example of this way of doing philosophy, he cites Professor Ryle's analysis of mental concepts in The Concept of Mind, in which "... the emphasis is not on our verbal habits themselves, but on the situations to which they are adapted."³⁴ Both Ryle and Wittgenstein, he suggests, urge us to divest ourselves of preconceptions which may lead us to distort the facts. "But", says Professor Ayer, "no record of the facts can be free from all interpretation. One's account of what actually happens is governed by one's idea of what is possible."³⁵ Wittgenstein's principles, he says, "set limits to what any use of language can achieve, and so help to decree what facts are possible; for if anything is a fact it can be stated."³⁶ This was unquestionably the theme of the Tractatus but was one of the doctrines which is denied by Wittgenstein in the Investigations. The function of words, he says, "is as diverse as the function of the objects in a carpenter's tool box;"³⁷ and later he says that

There are countless kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences'. And this multiplicity

34 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 25.

35 Ibid., p. 26.

36 Ibid., p. 26.

37 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I: section 11.

is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, ... come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten.³⁸

Professor Ayer argues that what passes for linguistic philosophy, as represented in the work of Ryle and Wittgenstein, "is concerned with language only to the extent that a study of language is inseparable from a study of the facts which it is used to describe."³⁹ He then reiterates the point questioned above, affirming that Wittgenstein's illustrations "do not so much elucidate our actual uses of words as determine what uses are possible."⁴⁰ This statement would appear to be contradicted by the above quotations from the early sections of the Philosophical Investigations.

Ayer's lecture concludes with the assertion that he considers "the current philosophical emphasis on fact, as opposed to theory, has been overdone."⁴¹ He acknowledges that the claim to dispense with theory has been all too often simply a way of masking assumptions which had better be openly recognized. He now recommends that philosophers give themselves to this wider task, stating that

The distrust which is rightly felt for speculative metaphysics is not a sufficient ground for limiting the scale of philosophical analysis: there is no

38 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I: section 23.

39 A.J. Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 28.

40 Ibid., p. 28.

41 Ibid., p. 32.

reason to suppose that the only concepts which are worth investigating are those that have a comparatively narrow range, or that all that we can usefully do is to describe how concepts of this kind are actually employed. It is equally possible, and perhaps of more importance, to examine the architectonic features of our conceptual system; to apply analytical techniques to the investigation of categories.⁴²

It becomes clear from this statement that, at the time he accepted the chair of philosophy at Oxford, Professor Ayer had left behind the narrow mould of positivism. He now recommends that philosophy, in addition to the very necessary work of analyzing concepts employed in ordinary discourse, should investigate the presuppositions of our thinking and examine the structure of our conceptual system. Implicit in this statement is a recognition of the necessity for some conceptual system by which man seeks to bring order into his experience. There are at the present time a number of cosmological interpretations held by groups of physicists by which they seek to interpret their findings. The very variety of such metaphysical schemes constitutes a call to philosophers to apply the processes of analysis to their categories. The philosopher's task will be to "examine their architectonic features."⁴³ Professor Ayer goes so far as to suggest that he sees no a priori reason why even the concept of physical object should be regarded as indispensable.

42 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, pp. 32-33.

43 Ibid., p. 33.

Might not substantially the same facts be expressed in a language reflecting a universe of discourse in which the basic particulars were momentary events? And there are other possibilities.⁴⁴

One of the great debts that we owe to Wittgenstein, Professor Ayer concludes, "is a realization of the active part which language plays in the constitution of facts."⁴⁵ If, as Wittgenstein had maintained in the Tractatus, "The world is everything that is the case", "then, what can be the case depends upon our conceptual system."⁴⁶ This latter point has, as a matter of fact, been found to be an important factor in many branches of investigation. We tend to find what we are looking for, or should it be put, 'what we are alerted to look for'. The late Dr. A.N.Whitehead, after describing the part which speculative imagination had played in the discovery of the planet Pluto, makes the following significant statement:

Our metaphysical knowledge is slight, superficial, incomplete. Thus error creeps in. But, such as it is, metaphysical understanding guides imagination and justifies purpose. Apart from metaphysical pre-suppositions there can be no civilization.⁴⁷

He later expressed the conviction that we have to

44 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 34.

45 Ibid., p. 34.

46 Ibid.

47 A.N.Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1933), p. 164.

discover a doctrine of nature which expresses the concrete relatedness of physical functionings and mental functionings, of the past with the present, and also expresses the concrete composition of physical realities which are individually diverse.⁴⁸

Professor Ayer's conclusion that our knowledge of the world will be dependent upon our conceptual system would appear to be in agreement with what Whitehead was urging in 1932 as essential to an understanding of the world. Professor Ayer, however, is not prepared to do more than suggest the importance of the conceptual system, and concludes his lecture with the reflection that "... exactly what this [i.e. our conceptual system] comes to, and how it is to be reconciled with the objectivity of fact, are problems that still need to be resolved."⁴⁹ Questions such as this, and the related question of a general theory of meaning, "tend to be suspect at the present time just because of their extreme generality,"⁵⁰ but this, he suggests, is rather a reason for pursuing them.

48 A.N.Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 201.

49 A.J.Ayer, Philosophy and Language, p. 35.

50 Ibid., p. 35.

SUMMARY OF PART I

We have studied the positivist indictment of metaphysics and have agreed that, if it can be sustained, it effectively eliminates metaphysics and theology on the logical ground that our language does not permit utterances of this nature to be meaningful.

We have investigated the principles upon which the positivist anti-metaphysical point of view rested and have discovered that the premises were not supported by rational argument but rested upon the fiat of Wittgenstein, and were later abandoned by him as mistaken.

We have examined the new way of philosophizing introduced by Wittgenstein's Cambridge lectures and publicized by the writings of John Wisdom who, by using the new method, effectively removed the indictment against metaphysics. Wisdom demonstrated the important insights which might result from employing the new way of doing philosophy in elucidating theological problems.

We have learned from a study of Professor Ayer's most recent philosophical statement that he has abandoned the position which he once held, and now concedes that the verification principle as a criterion of meaning has not won the support of philosophers generally. He now recommends that the scope of philosophical analysis be extended to

include an appraisal of the architectonic features of our conceptual system. He has suggested further that the time has come when our static concepts, such as that of a physical object, might be replaced by some more dynamic concepts such as that of momentary events which will now be regarded as the actual entities of the universe. In effect, Professor Ayer recommends to philosophers that, if they would prove adequate to the needs of the present stage of human knowledge, they must undertake the basically metaphysical tasks of investigating discourse in a wide range of fields of thought with a view to providing insight into the ultimate structure of things.

The conclusion of Part I is, therefore, that the way is now clear for philosophers and theologians to press on with their tasks; that the charge of the meaninglessness of metaphysics has been withdrawn and it is recognized as a necessary part of the philosophical undertaking; and that the indictment of theology, resting as it did upon the elimination of metaphysics, is also withdrawn.

There would appear to be no reason, therefore, why significant discussion should not be resumed between philosophers and theologians, assuming only that the theologians have something which they believe to be worth saying, that they are aware of the methods of philosophical analysis, and are prepared to apply them to the language of

theological discourse. One is reminded of Whitehead's recommendation to theologians in 1932, at a time when he was advocating a revision of the theological vocabulary:

I suggest that the development of systematic theology should be accompanied by a critical understanding of the relation of linguistic expression to our deepest and most persistent intuitions.¹

It will be the task of subsequent chapters of this study to examine some of the more important recent discussions between philosophers and theologians consequent upon the publication of John Wisdom's "Gods".

1 A.N.Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 209.

PART II

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHERS AND THE PROBLEM OF 'GOD'

An examination of some recent attempts at a meeting of minds between philosophers and theologians.

CHAPTER VI

The Breakdown of the Attempt to Meet the Demands
of the Verification Principle and
the Recommendation that Religion is the Inexpressible

Mr. David Cox, in an article entitled "The Significance of Christianity", in Mind, published in the year 1950, recommends that Christians should accept the method of the Logical Positivists and apply the verification principle to the doctrines of the faith. He recognizes that to do so will involve some change of attitude towards these, but suggests that such a change will be a return to the attitude of the early Church. As a first step in this direction, he recommends that Christian doctrines be divided into two distinct groups, consisting of

1. Formal rules: that is, statements which indicate in what ways the terms of theological jargon are to be used....
2. Empirical hypotheses: that is, significant statements which can be verified in human experience.¹

Such a division would, he suggests, involve overhauling the whole body of Christian doctrine, restating it in such terms as to bring it into line with the requirements of the verification principle, and rejecting those doctrines which could not be shown to be "significant". As a result of this over-

¹ David Cox, "The Significance of Christianity", Mind, Volume LIX, 1950, p. 211.

haul, theologians are left with a number of "empirical hypotheses", each of which may be more or less probable but cannot have the status of dogma. He suggests that this may be a valuable way of removing accretions from the core of essential Christian doctrine and restoring it to its function of safeguarding Christian experience.

Mr. Cox gives two illustrations of what he means by "restating Christian doctrine in the light of the verification principle",² by attempting to restate the doctrines "God exists" and "God created the world from nothing." It will be sufficient for our purposes to examine the first of these and also the criticisms offered by Mr. Thomas McPherson in a discussion article entitled "The Existence of God" in the same volume of Mind.³

Cox does not attempt to state the rules governing the use of the word "God", but suggests that use of the word must indicate some form of "encounter" if it is to be adequately employed. His restatement along these lines becomes: "Some men and women have had, and all may have, experiences called 'meeting God'."⁴ He suggests, furthermore, that these experiences "were so like that of meeting another human being

2 David Cox, "The Significance of Christianity", p. 215.

3 Thomas McPherson, "The Existence of God", Mind, Volume LIX, 1950, pp. 545 ff.

4 David Cox, op. cit., p. 216.

that they could most easily be described as a 'personal encounter',"⁵ but that they were not usually marked by the sense-experiences which are commonly associated with meeting another person. Nevertheless, "they must be regarded as encounters with a person having certain definite characteristics,"⁶ and he further explains that the "precise delineation of those characteristics would ... depend upon the formal rules governing the use of the word "God"."⁷

Mr. McPherson's first criticism of the procedure is that "God exists" is not adequately translated by the statement Cox proposes. Some one could exist without anyone's ever having "met" him, and, after all, according to the knowledge we do have, throughout millions of years there were no humans on the scene. McPherson therefore asks the question, "Does Mr. Cox perhaps mean that God's existence, unlike that of other things and persons, does somehow depend on at least the possibility of men and women's meeting Him?"⁸ Cox speaks of the preservation of the essential content of Christian doctrine by his formula, and so of "safeguarding Christian

5 David Cox, "The Significance of Christianity", p. 216.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Thomas McPherson, "The Existence of God", p. 545.

experiences",⁹ but he appears to put his own interpretations upon the meaning of the phrase "essential content" and to equate this with verifiable content.

The real problem which Mr. Cox does not appear to have solved, however, is the question of verification. Is the doctrine as restated verifiable? McPherson raises questions about the use of the word "meeting" in this context. We know what it is like to meet other people, but in religious experience there is considerable difficulty in locating God in such a way that the other person can recognize his presence and so 'meet' him. In ordinary usage, meeting involves seeing, shaking hands, speaking, etc., all things of which we can have sense experience, but Mr. Cox has explained that the experiences to which his religious statement refers "were not usually marked by the sense experiences which we commonly associate with meeting a person."¹⁰ McPherson concludes that

Until Mr. Cox says what the likenesses and differences are between his use of "meet" and its common use, his phrase "meeting God" is, for me at least, not meaningful, and so his restatement is not verifiable.¹¹

Mr. Cox is in a dilemma; if his statements are to be verifiable, he must use words like 'meet' and 'encounter', but when he uses these it is discovered that they are "all

9 David Cox, "The Significance of Christianity", p. 214.

10 Ibid., p. 216.

11 Thomas McPherson, "The Existence of God", p. 546.

verifiable, but only in the way Mr. Cox does not want, i.e., they are verifiable by sense experience."¹²

A third criticism is now brought against the attempt at verification, which is even more damaging to Cox's position. Cox wishes to demonstrate that "God exists" is a verifiable statement, and in order to do this he has sought to verify his restatement of the assertion. Further consideration, however, reveals that even if he were to achieve some sort of verification of this statement, it would not ensure the veracity of the original phrase. But worse is yet to come; the restatement is now subjected to analysis and the question asked, "What would it be to verify this?"¹³ Would Mr. Cox call in people who were present and could give testimony as to the veracity of the assertion that these other people -- "some men and women" -- have met God? But all appeal to normal sense experience has been ruled out, and so McPherson suggests that Cox must agree that, according to his (Cox's) terminology, the "experience of meeting God" is a private experience. This being so, there does not seem to be any adequate basis for verification, for "surely", says McPherson, "one does not verify one's own experiences."¹⁴

12 Thomas McPherson, "The Existence of God", p. 547.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., p. 548.

In explaining how he hopes to verify his restatement, Cox makes use of some points made by Professor Ayer in a broadcast discussion with Father Copleston .

(a) there are human experiences which are not sense-experiences.

(b) there may be human experiences which can only be known by those who enjoy them.¹⁵

On the strength of these two statements Cox makes the following recommendation:

For these reasons I do not see how the introduction of the word "sense-" can be an essential part of the logical positivist's method, and I recommend the verification principle to Christians in the form "an ostensible statement of fact is significant if, and only if, it can be verified, in principle, by human experience".¹⁶

Mr. Cox would seem here to have read more into Professor Ayer's admission than is justified, and seems not to be aware that in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Language, Truth and Logic, in which Ayer acknowledged the validity of "basic propositions", he pointed out that while the experiences to which these propositions refer may indeed be incorrigible, the possibility of misdescription arises as soon as any attempt is made to give expression to them. And he stated explicitly that

If one accepts the principle of verification, one must hold that his [the religious person's] statement does

¹⁵ David Cox, reporting Professor Ayer, "The Significance of Christianity", p. 212.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

not have any other factual meaning than what is contained in at least some of the relevant empirical propositions.¹⁷

It would seem, therefore, that Mr. Cox, contrary to his intentions, has produced no grounds for believing that the Verification Principle is a suitable method for demonstrating the "existence of God" and that some other way must be found if there is to be significant theological discussion.

The principle of verification is a metaphysical theory, cast in a logical form, designed to eliminate as insignificant all utterances other than those about empirical facts. That man does have experiences which he ascribes to a transcendent power or powers is recognized by such an avowed humanist as Sir Julian Huxley who, in an article in The Observer, recently stated:

... there remains the fundamental mystery of existence, notably the existence of mind . However, it remains true that many phenomena are charged with a magical quality of transcendent or even compulsive power over our minds, and introduce us to realms beyond ordinary experience. They merit a special designation: for want of a better, I use the term divine, though this quality of divinity is not supernatural but transnatural. The divine is what a man finds worthy of adoration, that which compels his awe.¹⁸

One might ask what distinction Sir Julian wishes to draw between the terms supernatural and transnatural, but it is

17 A.J.Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, 2nd Ed., p. 15.

18 Sir Julian Huxley, "Religion Without God", The Observer, March 31st 1963.

not necessary to do so at this point. The verification principle, as employed by Professor Ayer and the positivists, cannot identify what is transnatural in experience: in fact, it was designed to eliminate from meaningful discourse all references to anything transnatural. As Ayer re-affirmed in the Introduction to the 2nd edition of Language, Truth and Logic, acceptance of the verification principle as the criterion of meaning involves the elimination of significant theological discourse. McPherson quite properly concludes, "Mr. Cox's difficulties arise because he is trying to do what cannot be done."¹⁹ But the alternative method which Mr. McPherson proceeds to outline is equally unsuccessful in dealing with the problem.

In an article entitled "Religion as the Inexpressible",²⁰ Mr. McPherson provided what he believed to be the answer to the problem posed for the theologian by the verification principle. The statements which Christians make about God, says McPherson, turn out to be nonsense when the principle of verification is applied to them. This, however, should not alarm the theologian, for Rudolf Otto²¹ had already pointed

19 Thomas McPherson, "The Existence of God", p. 548.

20 Thomas McPherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible", New Essays in Philosophical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1955), pp. 131-143.

21 Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (Oxford University Press, 1931, English translation by John W. Harvey).

out that the non-rational element in religion, the numinous, which is the central core of the experience, is something which cannot be put into words.²² McPherson compares Otto's remarks about the numinous to the closing words of Wittgenstein's Tractatus where the mystical is characterized as that which cannot be said, but which, none the less, shows itself.

Wittgenstein, in the Tractatus, contrasts the questions about the world which can be asked and answered -- questions investigated by science -- to those other questions which he calls 'mystical', and about which no questions can be asked because there are no clear and certain answers ready. This position was, however, later abandoned. At the time of writing the final sections of the Tractatus he was aware of the unsatisfactory nature of his earlier view. In thesis 6.52 he wrote "We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched." Wittgenstein was too acute a thinker to believe that the problems could be made to vanish by a mere turn of logic, and his further remark that "of course there are then no questions left, and this is itself the answer,"²³ should not be taken seriously. In

22 Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp. 1-24.

23 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 149.

the Philosophical Investigations he put forward the thesis that language is a tool which we develop as a medium of expression and of communication, and that consequently, in place of arbitrary limitations upon what words and sentences may mean, we should seek their meanings in ordinary use.

Mr. McPherson appears to be prepared to accept the verification principle as the criterion of meaning, and suggests that because theological statements are not verifiable by sense experience, they are nonsense. But such a view is not, he feels, destructive of religion. On the contrary, he believes that positivistic philosophy has rendered a service to religion.

By showing, in their own way, the absurdity of what theologians try to utter, positivists have helped to suggest that religion belongs to the sphere of the unutterable.²⁴

McPherson suggests that we should put together Wittgenstein of the Tractatus and the Vienna Circle and join Rudolf Otto to them and so form what he calls "the positivistic way".²⁵ Otto believed in the reality of the numinous but that it is not capable of being conceptualized, and McPherson is prepared to accept this suggestion as final. "The way out of the worry" he says, "is retreat into silence."²⁶ This

²⁴ Thomas McPherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible", pp. 140, 141.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 141.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

positivistic way is important, he suggests, just because it helps to pin-point the worry that religion produces and also because it shows a way of avoiding it. But will an explanation such as this satisfy a religious person?

McPherson has not advanced beyond the stage that Wittgenstein was at when he wrote the Tractatus. At that time he did suggest that the solution of the problems of life was to be found in the performance of the logical conjurer's trick of making the problems vanish. But, as F.P.Ramsey was quick to point out at the time, either philosophy is of some use to clear our thoughts and prepare the way for action "or else it is a disposition we have to check."²⁷ McPherson would seem to be advising us to treat theological statements as nonsense, and yet to regard religious experience as being in some sense "meaningful".

If philosophy is nonsense, as Wittgenstein had suggested in the Tractatus, then, said Ramsey, "we must take seriously that it is nonsense, and not pretend, as Wittgenstein does, that it is important nonsense."²⁸ Only by ignoring such advice can McPherson argue that there are different grades of nonsense, some of which may be

27 F.P.Ramsey, Foundations of Mathematics, p. 263.

28 Ibid.

meaningful in a restricted sense of that word. For McPherson to write thus is, surely, to make confusion worse confounded. To say that there are different kinds of nonsense is simply to acknowledge that the word is being used improperly. Either our experience is meaningful, or it is not; if it has any significance for us we find ourselves impelled to attempt to communicate our ideas about it to some one at some time, and to do so requires the use of language. In The Idea of the Holy, Otto has managed to say many meaningful things about the experience of the numinous in spite of the difficulty of conceptualizing it. And what he had to say are things which were understood by others who had had similar experiences. It follows, therefore, that his remarks could not be rated as nonsensical in the proper dictionary sense of that word.

However, McPherson's conclusions must be rejected, in the last analysis, simply because he has avoided the problem instead of facing it. If nothing significant may be inferred from an experience, other than the physical concomitants, then it is difficult to understand how a label such as 'religious' or 'numinous' can be attached to the experience. But that men do have experiences which they describe and believe to be 'religious' is evident from the volumes that have been written on the subject, and each in his own way has believed himself to be saying something about

what is ultimately real. In the majority of cases they have believed themselves to have been in communication with a divine being, transcendentally real, incomprehensible in his essential nature, but knowable to some extent from his presence and his activities in the world of nature and in the life of man. It will be the task of the philosopher as theologian to submit such utterance to the processes of analysis with a view to disclosing insights into the experiences out of which it arises and discover, where possible, what significance may be attached to the various statements of religious men and women.

John Passmore has pointed out that McPherson's type of reasoning "saves" religion "only at the cost of leaving the door open to any sort of transcendental metaphysics -- and indeed to superstition and nonsense of the most arrant sort."²⁹ If McPherson's argument has any force, he suggests, it could be used to justify "any sort of back yard theosophy" -- it would, in fact, reduce all religious utterance to the status of nonsense. Passmore concludes: "Thus it quite fails to reconcile positivism and religion."³⁰ It is quite impossible, moreover, for McPherson to claim the support of Otto, who wrote of "the intimate interpenetration of the

²⁹ John Passmore, "Christianity and Positivism", Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Volume XXXV, 1957, p. 128.

³⁰ Ibid.

non-rational with the rational elements of the religious consciousness, like the interweaving of warp and woof in a fabric".³¹ While Otto spoke much of that in religion which is incomprehensible, he also warned that "if disregard of the numinous elements tends to impoverish religion, it is no less true that 'holiness', 'sanctity', as Christianity intends the words, cannot dispense with the rational."³²

It has been one of the contributions of philosophy to religion to call attention to the presence of these two elements in the experience. The Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa, in their arguments with the pagans in the latter part of the fourth century, were unanimous in asserting the mystery of the divine being. "We know that He exists, but of His essence (ousia) we cannot deny that we are ignorant,"³³ wrote Gregory of Nyssa, the most philosophical of the three. The Arian, Eunomius, had asserted that either man can know the essence of God or he cannot know God at all. Basil, Gregory's elder brother, and leader of the three, in a series of letters to Amphilochius of Iconium, replied to this criticism by pointing out that the word "to know" has many meanings and that

31 Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p. 47.

32 Ibid., p. 113.

33 Gregory of Nyssa, "Contra Eunomium", Bk. II:3; III:5; and VII:4, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. V.

the incompleteness of our knowledge does not deprive it of truth. "We would not say that the heavens are invisible on account of what is not known, but that they are visible on account of the partial apprehension of them."³⁴ So also is it in regard to our knowledge of God, but if the soul gives itself up to the influence of the Spirit, it will know the truth and recognize God. In the Hexaemeron, Basil develops his philosophy of nature; the universe exists to manifest the Creator, and from the evidence of beauty and order which it presents the mind is led by analogy to a conception of the Divine Wisdom and the uncreated Beauty.³⁵

Gregory of Nazianzus, in his Second Theological Oration, points out that while the creation gives ample evidence of the existence of God, yet His nature is incomprehensible to the mind of man; to define Him in words is impossible:

Our very eyes and the law of nature teach us that God exists and that he is the efficient and maintaining cause of all things: ... And thus to us also is manifested that which made and moves and preserves all created things, even though he be not comprehended by the mind.³⁶

34 Basil the Great of Caesarea, The Letters, (William Heinemann & Harvard University Press, tr. by Roy J. Deferrari), Volume III, Letter No. 233.

35 Basil, The Hexaemeron IX:6 & Epistle 234, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Volume VIII.

36 Gregory Nazianzus, Second Theological Oration, Chapter 6 Library of Christian Classics, (London: SCM Press, 1954), Volume III, pp. 139-140.

He concludes with the reflection that while reason, being implanted in all from the beginning, leads us up to God through visible things, yet "what God is in nature and essence no man ever yet has discovered or can discover."³⁷ The Cappadocians all maintained that it is especially in the human soul that we may find analogies to the Creator, for the soul is a mirror, ("because we have been made in His image") and reflects the traits of its Divine Archetype.³⁸

We may take it for granted that we are going to have some kind of talk about God, for men will not remain forever silent about that which affects them in the springs of action in their inner life. The real problem is of what sort will it be, and how shall we understand it? Can such talk be meaningfully pursued?

³⁷ Gregory Nazianzus, Second Theological Oration, Chapter 17, p. 147.

³⁸ Basil, The Hexaemeron, IX:5, 6.

CHAPTER VII

Theology and Falsification

The question whether it is possible to attach any significant meaning to religious and theological utterances was raised in its most acute form by Mr. Antony Flew. The discussion which he initiated in the winter of 1950-51, in the publication, University,¹ along with three of the replies which arose from it, is included in New Essays in Philosophical Theology. In the preface Mr. Flew mentions that the discussion arose out of the interest aroused in the subject by the publication of John Wisdom's "Gods".

The discussion, as introduced by Flew, poses the extreme positivistic challenge to religion and to Christianity in particular. The title might suggest a milder approach, for it borrows the term, "falsification", introduced into philosophy by Karl Popper who maintains that he at no time considered the falsification requirement as a condition of the meaningfulness of statements. Rather, the criterion of falsificability was introduced as a means of demarcating statements and systems of statements which might be regarded as empirical and scientific from those which must be given

¹ Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, (London: SCM Press, 1955), pp. 96-130.

some other classification. He is most emphatic in protesting that at no time has it been his intention to exclude non-scientific discourse as meaningless. According to this criterion, a system may be regarded as scientific only if it makes assertions which could conceivably clash with observations, and, as Popper explains his theory, there may be degrees of testability and so the criterion of demarcation will itself have degrees. There will be, he suggests, "well-testable theories, hardly-testable theories, and non-testable theories,"² and only those which are non-testable will be of no interest to the empirical scientist.

In the discussion introduced by Flew, while the title would lead one to expect the application of Popper's milder test, the actual problem posed is that of the application of the old verification principle. Theological utterances, Flew suggests, are either asserting empirical facts and are therefore testable by empirical methods, or they are vacuous and meaningless. And he believes the second alternative to be nearer to the truth of the situation. Theological and religious utterances usually commence as assertions of facts, but when pressed by a persistent questioner they are progressively qualified until they are reduced to emptiness.

The influence of John Wisdom's "Gods" is apparent

2 Karl R. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 258.

throughout the discussion introduced by Flew. A revised version of his story of the Invisible Gardener is presented. It is suitably tailored to portray a situation in which

what starts as an assertion that something exists or that there is an analogy between certain complex phenomena may be reduced step by step to an altogether different status, to an expression perhaps of a 'picture preference'.³

In his version of the parable, Flew calls into question the meaningfulness of the basic religious and theological utterances such as 'God has a plan', 'God created the world,' and 'God loves us as a father loves his children'. These look at first sight very much like assertions and, as used by religious people, they are intended as assertions.

In order to discover whether religious people really are making assertions in these situations, Flew suggests that we apply to their utterances the test of falsifiability -- in other words, that we attempt to discover what they would regard as counting against, or as being incompatible with, the truth of their utterances. If it should be discovered that there is nothing which they would regard as counting against their utterances then they are in reality meaningless, for "if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies then there is nothing which it asserts either: and so it is not really an assertion."⁴

³ Antony Flew, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 97.

⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

The symposiasts are now invited to apply this test to the basic Christian affirmation that 'God loves us'. How can Christians assert the love of God for man in face of the continuance of evil in the world? Earthly parents are driven frantic in their efforts to help their child afflicted with inoperable cancer, while the Heavenly Father apparently is indifferent to the situation. Flew explains that he is familiar with the usual answers given to such questions, but is not satisfied that they are adequate, and he now places before the other members of the symposium the question: "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?"⁵

Mr. R.M.Hare, of Balliol College, Oxford, concedes that, as stated, Flew's argument is completely victorious, and agrees that the assumption that religious utterances are assertions is mistaken. In order to introduce his approach to the problem, he tells another parable. If a lunatic is convinced that all dons want to murder him, there is no behaviour of dons which he will accept as counting against his theory and therefore, on Flew's test, it asserts nothing. Yet no one would suggest that there is no difference between his assessment of dons and what most others think of them;

⁵ Antony Flew, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 99.

there is, in fact, just the difference which leads us to class him insane.

Hare now recommends that we call that in which our attitude differs from that of the lunatic our respective 'bliks'; we each, he suggests, have a blik about dons, he an insane and we a sane one, and he calls attention to the importance of having the right blik. Furthermore, we have such bliks about every day matters, such as it being safe or otherwise to ride in a train, drive our car, or cross a desert; in fact, it is suggested, our whole commerce with the world depends upon our blik about the world and there is no set of observations that would constitute proofs or demonstrations of their validity or otherwise. Some people mistake this way of talking for some sort of explanation, as scientists use that word, and it is this that is being attacked by Flew. We are nevertheless reminded that bliks are necessary to enable us to arrive at explanation. To illustrate his point, Hare suggests that if we believed that absolutely everything happened by pure chance, then it would be quite impossible for us to explain or predict or plan anything. In such a situation,

... although we should not be asserting anything different from those of a more normal belief, there would be a great difference between us; and this is the sort of difference that there is between those who really believe in God and those who really disbelieve in him.⁶

6 R.M. Hare, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 102.

In conclusion, Hare calls attention to another important difference between his lunatic and Flew's explorers in that whereas the latter do not appear to mind about their garden, the lunatic is really concerned about dons because their behaviour may, according to his assessment of the situation, have unfortunate results for his own life. Our attitude in religion does make a difference in the way in which we assess our life.

Hare's arguments have been attacked at several points. Ronald Hepburn, in his essay on "Poetry and Religious Belief" in Metaphysical Beliefs, and in Christianity and Paradox, raises the very important question as to the plausibility of this whole enterprise of maintaining "that Christianity is fundamentally a slant or 'blik' upon the world, unverifiable and unfalsifiable like, for instance, our trust in nature's continued uniformity."⁷ Hepburn agrees that there is a sense in which conversion might be described as a massive re-orientation towards the world, but it also involves assenting to certain beliefs, some of which, at least in the case of Christianity, involve acceptance of historical data, and are therefore, in principle, at least, falsifiable. Hare's reply, he suggests, will fail to satisfy many Christians as well as sceptics.

⁷ Ronald Hepburn, "Poetry and Religious Belief", Metaphysical Beliefs, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1957), p. 128.

It ignores the extent to which historical Christianity has admitted that had certain events, allegedly historical, not taken place, distinctively Christian belief would be falsified. 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain.' Pain, suffering, death do count against belief in God's goodness and love. The great question is whether the impact of the person of Jesus and the witness of his Church do not tip the balance back to faith, revealing more about ultimate reality than the evils reveal.⁸

Moreover, Hepburn feels that it is virtually impossible to recognize God's transcendence in such an account as that given by Hare.

Flew objects that Hare's approach is misguided when applied to religious beliefs. Christians definitely consider that in expressing their belief in God they are stating something about the cosmos and a personal creator, whereas according to Hare's bliks there can be no basis for asserting anything whatsoever about the universe. The corollary to this is that, if Christian belief is not asserting anything about the cosmos, it renders many religious activities either fraudulent or silly.

In his essay, 'Tertullian's Paradox', Bernard Williams points out that religious observance and prayer stand for nothing, unless there are behind them some statements about God which are believed to be true.

Something must be believed, if religious activities are not just to be whistling in the dark without even the knowledge that what one is whistling is a tune;

8 Ronald Hepburn, Christianity and Paradox, (London: Watts, 1958), p. 13.

and something that connects God with the world of men.⁹

And if we are to connect God with the world of men in our thoughts and prayers, then perforce the time must come when we speak of him in terms of the life of men; at this point we discover the inadequacy of all our language, designed as it is for human situations. Our very inability to frame suitable concepts drives us to enquire whether, if there be God, He may not have made some approach to man, so that, though He be incomprehensible to us in our blindness, yet it may be that, when the eyes of our understanding have been enlightened, we may grasp something of the truth of God as revealed in Christ in a life lived out among men in Nazareth, Galilee and Jerusalem.

Basil Mitchell, of Keble College, in accepting Flew's challenge, agrees with him that theological utterances must be assertions, but calls attention to an inadequacy in Flew's presentation. The theologian would not deny the fact of pain, nor would he deny that it does count and count heavily against his assertion that God loves us; in fact it is just this which is responsible for the most intractable of theological problems, the problem of pain. The Christian does recognize the reality of evil in the world

⁹ Bernard Williams, "Tertullian's Paradox", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 210.

but it is true that "he will not allow it -- or anything -- to count decisively against"¹⁰ his faith, because he is committed by it to trust in God.

Mitchell illustrates his own answer to Flew's challenge by means of a parable. A member of the resistance movement in occupied territory during war meets one night a stranger who deeply impresses him and after a night together in conversation, informs the partisan that he is himself the leader of the resistance movement and urges him to put his full trust in him no matter what happens. The partisan is convinced of the sincerity of the Stranger and commits himself to him. These two never meet on such terms again, but from time to time the Stranger is seen, now helping a member of the resistance, but on other occasions in the uniform of the police, turning patriots over to the occupying power. In spite of the protestations of his friends, the partisan maintains "He is on our side". The ambivalent behaviour of the Stranger is a serious embarrassment for the partisan, but because of his faith in him, he will not allow it to count decisively against his trust.

The question arises as to how long one could continue to maintain his trust in the Stranger in these circumstances. This, Mitchell suggests, will depend on the nature of the

¹⁰ Basil Mitchell, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 103.

impression created by the Stranger on that first meeting, and also, to a considerable extent, on the interpretation which the partisan places upon the Stranger's behaviour. He will be considered sane and reasonable by other members of the resistance movement only "if he experiences in himself the full force of the conflict"¹¹ which results from the ambiguous behaviour of the Stranger. Herein lies the important difference between Hare's parable and Mitchell's; Hare's lunatic will not allow anything to count against his blik, in contrast to the anxiety aroused in the partisan by the behaviour of the Stranger. The partisan, moreover, has a reason for committing himself to the Stranger in the first place, whereas one cannot have any reasons for bliks -- if you have them you have them, and that is that.

Mitchell agrees with Flew that theological utterances are not only assertions, but in some sense also explanations. The partisan's belief "explains and makes sense of the Stranger's behaviour" and "helps to explain also the resistance movement in the context of which he appears."¹² And, because of his belief, the partisan's interpretation will differ in each case from that which the other members will place upon the same facts.

¹¹ Basil Mitchell, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 105.

¹² Ibid.

The parable is applied to the religious situation in a straightforward way: "'God loves men' resembles 'the Stranger is on our side' (and many other significant statements, e.g. historical ones) in not being conclusively falsifiable."¹³ Both statements may be treated in at least three different ways:

- (1) As provisional hypotheses to be discarded if experience tells against them;
- (2) As significant articles of faith;
- (3) As vacuous formulae (expressing, perhaps, a desire for reassurance) to which experience makes no difference and which makes no difference to life.¹⁴

The parable of the Gardener, as told by Flew, suggested that all theological utterances must ultimately be placed under classification (3); the first classification represents the attitude of the scientist, but as Mitchell points out, the Christian, once he has committed himself, is precluded from taking up this point of view in his relationship with God. He agrees with Flew that the Christian is in constant danger of "slipping into the third. But he need not; and, if he does, it is a failure of faith as well as in logic."¹⁵

Has Mitchell answered the problem posed by Flew? He has provided further insight into the nature of the problem

¹³ Basil Mitchell, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 105.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

raised for the Christian by the evident fact of evil, but has he solved the problem by calling the statement 'God loves us' a 'significant article of faith'? John Passmore suggests that by so doing Mitchell is telling us something about believers, but nothing about the logical status of what they believe.

The real question is whether it is in principle possible for 'God loves me' to be refuted -- and this question Mitchell does not face. He wants to say that it can be refuted and is therefore significant -- but at the same time that it cannot be refuted, and therefore is in-
trinsically an 'article of faith'.¹⁶

There would seem to be point to this criticism, and to answer it one would need to explore more thoroughly the original meeting of the partisan with the Stranger which Mitchell has been careful to point out was crucial for the continuing faith of the partisan. So also would we want to ask why the love of God has become 'intrinsically an article of faith' for Christians. Surely, the real defence of the Christian's belief in the love of God rests upon his belief in the Incarnation and the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. It was Jesus of Nazareth who proclaimed that God is love and He was rejected and crucified. If it should turn out, however, that He was God Incarnate, then in His life and death we have a demonstration in human terms which so conclusively shows

¹⁶ John Passmore, Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Volume XXXV, 1957, pp. 125 ff.

forth God's love for mankind that nothing which can happen today in the affairs of men will be allowed to shake the Christian's conviction that God loves every man. He will feel the problem of pain and of evil and of disease acutely, -- they will, as Mitchell says, count against his faith, -- and because he believes it to be God's will that evil should be overcome, he will devote his energies and resources to the alleviation of the ills of men and to show forth or mirror in his own life something of the love of God.

Flew, in his concluding remarks, accepts Mitchell's criticism of his original presentation of the theologian's reactions to the problem, but re-affirms his fear that while theologians usually begin by admitting that things look bad, they insist that there must be some explanation which will show that in spite of appearances to the contrary, there is a God who cares for and loves us. But the difficulty here is that the theologians have "given God attributes which rule out all possible saving explanations",¹⁷ and Flew once more presses the difficulty home in all its acuteness:

We cannot say that he would like to help but cannot: God is omnipotent. We cannot say that he would help if he only knew: God is omniscient. We cannot say that he is not responsible for the wickedness of others: God created those others.¹⁸

¹⁷ Antony Flew, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 107.

¹⁸ Ibid.

God, then, he suggests, must be held responsible ultimately for all the evil, moral and non-moral, in the universe. While he concedes that Mitchell was right to insist that the theologian's first move is to look for an explanation, he re-iterates his point: "I still think that in the end, if relentlessly pursued, he will have to resort to the avoiding action of qualification,"¹⁹ and will therefore inevitably end with a vacuous formula which has no real relation to the world and its problems.

¹⁹ Antony Flew, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 107.

CHAPTER VIII

The Application of Philosophical Analysis
to the Central Theological Problem

Each of the short essays on "Theology and Falsification" which have been examined has clarified aspects of the philosophical problems which arise in connection with the Christian assertion of the love of God. By the employment of stories, as suggested by Wittgenstein, Hare and Mitchell have each provided insights into some of the complexities of the problem as posed by Flew, but have failed to provide a straightforward answer to the central question, "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?"¹

Mr. Ian Crombie, of Wadham College, Oxford, in taking up the challenge posed by Flew, recognized that while this appears to be a straightforward and factual question, it is actually of the nature of a metaphysical puzzle and will call for careful logical treatment if we are properly to understand it. John Wisdom had suggested that, while those who pose metaphysical puzzles seem to be asking for analysis, what is really required is a description of the linguistic usage employed and that this becomes possible only after the

¹ Antony Flew, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 99.

statement has been broken up into the various elements of which it is composed. The confusion generated in the original statement is by this means removed and the disputants are left with a number of straightforward questions each calling for investigation and analysis.

Mr. Crombie commences with a clear statement of the problem posed by Flew:

There are utterances made from time to time by Christians and others, which are said by those who make them to be statements, but which are thought by our opponents to lack some of the properties which anything must have before it deserves to be called a statement.²

Examples of typical Christian utterances are now cited, as 'There is a God', 'God loves us as a father loves his children', and 'He shall come again with glory...' It is objected by Flew that while such utterances appear to assert the actuality of some state of affairs, they are allowed to be compatible with any and every state of affairs, and cannot therefore mark out some one state of affairs; if this is so, they cannot be genuine statements and the Christian's utterances are reduced to vacuity.

The Christian statement that 'God loves us' is now analysed into its component parts as a first step in the process. Statements about God, Crombie suggests, consist of two parts which may be called subject and predicate in order

² Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 109.

to distinguish clearly between that which is said and that which it is said about -- namely, God. This is a fundamental distinction which must be made at the outset for, as will become evident as we proceed, different problems arise and different questions must be asked if we would clarify the meaning of the different parts. The predicate of such statements "is normally composed of ordinary words, put to unordinary uses,"³ whereas the subject-word 'God' has no other use. The seemingly simple statement that 'God loves us' is found to be highly complex and one which raises a wide variety of questions.

There is one set of questions which deal with the problem of why we say, and what we mean by saying, that God loves us, rather than hates us, and there is another set of questions concerned with the problem of what it is that this statement is being made about.⁴

Before proceeding further with linguistic analysis, however, our attention is turned to a consideration of the experiences which lie behind religious statements and to which they seek to give expression, and we enter upon an examination of the epistemological status of religious beliefs.

Analysis of the logical structure of religious belief discloses that it results from the interaction of two phases of experience each of which makes its characteristic impact upon us. These are designated by Crombie as the logical

³ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 111.

⁴ Ibid.

parents of religious belief, and it also, he suggests, has a nurse.

Its logical mother is what one might call undifferentiated theism, its logical father is particular events or occasions interpreted as theophanic, and the extra-parental nurture is provided by religious activity.⁵

There are elements in our experience which lead people to a certain sort of belief which we call a belief in God. Some people prefer to call this an attitude and it is suggested that this is in order so long as we are careful not to call it an attitude to life as Professor Braithwaite of Cambridge has done. By so doing, he has reduced religion to the status of a sub-class of morality. Religious statements, according to Braithwaite, are simply "declarations of adherence to a policy of action, declarations of commitment to a way of life."⁶ In contrast to this point of view, Crombie maintains that it is of the essence of the religious attitude "to hold that nothing whatever in life may be identified with that towards which it is taken up."⁷ He suggests that among the elements which provoke belief, the most powerful is a sense of contingency. "Others are moral experience, and the beauty and order of nature. Others may be actual abnormal

5 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 111.

6 R.B. Braithwaite, An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief, (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1955), p. 15.

7 Ian Crombie, op. cit., p. 111.

experience of the type called religious or mystical."⁸

Each of these elements of experience calls for careful investigation as providing the seed-bed of religious belief, but, prior to proceeding with this undertaking, two further features of the experience are noted. First, those who interpret such experiences theistically

need not be so inexpert in logic as to suppose that there is anything of the nature of a deductive or inductive argument which leads from a premiss asserting the existence of the area of experience in question to a conclusion expressing belief in God.⁹

Naturalistic explanations may be given of all the experiences which the theist interprets religiously; -- the moral imperative may be given a psychological interpretation as reflecting jealousy of the parent or as a survival of tribal taboo, and the experiences of the mystic may be explained in terms of his liver or of alterations in the rate of respiration. If, having considered these explanations, the moralist and the mystic respectively reject them, this need not be, says Crombie, because they are "seized with a fallacious refutation of their validity."

All that is necessary is that he should be honestly convinced that, in interpreting them, as he does, theistically, he is in some sense facing them more honestly, bringing out more of what they contain or

⁸ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 111.

⁹ Ibid., p. 112.

involve than could be done by interpreting them in any other way.¹⁰

Furthermore, although the reasons for his belief may be stated by the theist in quasi-argumentative form, they are not in any ordinary sense arguments, and so the attempt to regard them as made up of either analytic propositions or empirical statements will fail to elucidate their meaning. Professor I.T.Ramsey suggests that the so-called 'traditional proofs' may be regarded rather "as techniques to evoke disclosures to commend the word 'God' diversely in relation to what is objectively disclosed, and so to approach the one concept 'God' from diverse directions."¹¹ In this regard Ramsey is in substantial agreement with the view expressed by Crombie, whose second preliminary comment is to the effect that in attempting to give expression to our theistic intuitions we will be led into "saying things which we cannot literally mean."

Thus the man of conscience uses some such concept as the juridical concept of authority, and locates his authority outside nature; the man of beauty and order speaks of an intrusion from another realm; the mystic speaks of experiencing God. In every case such language lays the user open to devastating criticism, to which he can only retort by pleading that such language, while it is not to be taken strictly, seems to him to be the natural language to use.¹²

¹⁰ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 112.

¹¹ I.T.Ramsey, Prospect for Metaphysics, pp. 172-173.

¹² Ian Crombie, op. cit., p. 113.

By way of illustrating the type of problem raised by our attempts to give theistic interpretation to these elements of experience which lie behind religious belief, Crombie now analyses the sense of contingency which, by all accounts, would seem to be the most powerful influence leading to belief. By the sense of contingency in this context is meant "the conviction ... that we, and the whole world in which we live, derive our being from outside us."¹³ This sense, it is suggested, is native to us, and it is only by argument that we could be persuaded to the contrary; but, in expressing our conviction "we turn the word 'contingent' to work which is not its normal employment, and which it cannot properly do,"¹⁴ for, whereas we are endeavouring to distinguish between different sorts of entities, the words which we are using apply rather to distinctions between different sorts of statement. Our problem is essentially a linguistic one of discovering a terminology suitable for expressing our convictions in language which will convey to our hearers or readers the meaning we intend. The words 'necessary' and 'contingent' are technical terms in logical usage according to which a "necessary statement is one whose denial involves a breach of the laws of logic, and a contingent statement is one in which this is not

¹³ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 113.

¹⁴ Ibid.

the case."¹⁵ To apply these terms to God and the world respectively, therefore, involves a misuse of language. Yet the believer can find no other language with which to describe what it is that he wishes to say and this language does in some way convey the meaning of those who employ it.

Mr. Antony Flew points out in a discussion of the problem of language and philosophy that

a self-contradictory or otherwise logically improper expression may get a piquancy precisely as such; and can thus acquire a use, a point, which depends entirely on the fact that it is a misuse, and is thus parasitical on the logico-linguistic rule to which it is an exception.¹⁶

The problem under consideration would seem to be a case in point and, if we accept Mr. Flew's analysis as an insight, it would suggest that before dismissing the matter as simply a mistake we should investigate further just what it is that the theist is striving to express when he speaks of the contingency of the world, and of God as a self-existent, necessary being. This is the task of the natural theologian, and the reader is referred to Dr. A.M. Farrer's Finite and Infinite, in which the new method of doing theology is applied in all its rigour to the problem of the contingency of the world. Dr. Farrer states that one of the presuppositions

¹⁵ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 114.

¹⁶ Antony Flew, Essays in Conceptual Analysis, p. 3.

of theism is the discovery of "an order in the world, an order other than that of accidental concomitance, and quite other than that of logical implication."¹⁷

What has been said about contingency and necessity applies equally to the other three elements of experience which lie at the base of theistic belief,

to obligation and its transcendent ground (or goodness and its transcendent goal), to design and its transcendent designer, to religious experience and its transcendent object.¹⁸

In attempting to give expression to each of these elements of his experience, the believer finds himself in difficulties with language. It is the task of the natural theologian, says Crombie, to tell us why such language is employed and how it is to be understood, and in the process, to elucidate for us a 'meaning' for the word 'God'. Without such a natural theism "we should not know whither statements concerning the word were to be referred: the subject in theological utterances would be unattached."¹⁹

So much for undifferentiated theism, the logical mother of religious belief; the soil into which the seed is planted and without which there would be no germination, but which, of itself is not belief in any active sense. For, says Crombie,

17 A.M.Farrer, Finite and Infinite, p. 19.

18 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 115.

19 Ibid., p. 116.

"without concrete events which we felt impelled to interpret as divine we could not know that the notion of divinity had any application to reality."²⁰ What he describes as the logical father of religious belief -- that which might bring us into the condition of active belief in God --

consists, in Christianity,... in the interpretation of certain objects and events as a manifestation of the divine. It is, in other words, because we find, that, in thinking of certain events in terms of the category of the divine, we can give what seems to us the most convincing account of them, that we can assure ourselves that the notion of God is not just an empty aspiration.²¹

As Christians, we find ourselves impelled to interpret the history of Israel, the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the experience of His Church as revelatory of God. Each of these constitutes an inter-related body of experience to which the student must be prepared to give careful attention and study if he would seek to understand what leads Christians to this conclusion. We may resist the impulse to believe the record, or even fail to feel it, "without thereby contravening the laws of logic, or the rules of any pragmatically accredited inductive procedure."²² Dr. Farrer points out that, while theologians may suppose that the principles of

²⁰ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 116.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 117.

rational theology are evident in themselves, it must be acknowledged that "they are not evident to every mind."²³

It is quite possible for us to study the history of Israel on the anthropological level as the history of the religious development of a people from its tribal origin. Is it something more, "something which seems to us to be a real and coherent communication from a real and coherent, though superhuman mind?"²⁴ Our answer to this question will depend to a large extent upon whether we have developed "the mental machinery for thinking the bare notion of God."²⁵ Whatever our decision, we will not break any logical rules, "for in such a unique matter there are no rules to conform to or to break."²⁶ Our decision will be a judgement upon our ability to appreciate the implications of the record. We may be afflicted with what Wittgenstein described as aspect-blindness, an inability to see what was there because of an inadequate perspective from which to view the subject. After all relevant evidence has been carefully sifted, there is always the possibility that the student may fail to detect the pattern which alone will result in disclosure of the

23 A.M.Farrer, Finite and Infinite, p. 1.

24 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 117.

25 A.M.Farrer, op. cit., p. 2.

26 Ian Crombie, op. cit., p. 117.

deeper significance of the events under consideration. Such an investigation must, if it is to be adequate to the importance of the subject, involve sifting the findings of representative linguistic, literary and historical scholarship.

We have noted that religious belief involves treating something as revelatory of God and this is tantamount to saying that it must involve an element of authority. "That what we say about God is said on authority (and, in particular, on the authority of Christ) is of the first importance in considering the significance of these statements."²⁷ Dr. Temple, in his Gifford Lectures, pointed out that while the revelation of God in Christ came in a living experience of a life lived, and can never be fully stated in Creeds or formulae, yet "consciousness of authority and submission to it is the very heart of true religion."²⁸ Such authority, he suggests, presents itself to the individual in two ways: in the religious tradition of his community, -- "the faith committed to the saints," and "in personal experience of the divine as calling, sustaining, judging,"²⁹ and he proceeds to warn that

where conformity of conduct, or even of opinion, is secured by any other means than that of persuading the person affected that such conduct is good, or

27 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 117-118.

28 William Temple, Nature, Man and God, p. 343.

29 Ibid., p. 343.

such opinion is right, the authority exercised is less than fully spiritual.³⁰

Throughout the chapter Temple is urging that the exercise of free choice is the very essence of spirituality. "The spiritual authority of God is that which he exercises by displaying not His power, but His character. Holiness, not omnipotence, is the spring of His spiritual authority."³¹ He points out that inasmuch as the revelation reaches us, not in a book written by Christ Himself, but in the records of those who were his disciples, it calls for "a large exercise of private judgement, which is the essentially spiritual principle."³² We have indeed our authority, in Scripture and Creeds and the consensus of the living Church, but in the very nature of the case there can be no infallible authority other than that of the mind of Christ, but we have no means of infallibly ascertaining His mind in application to specific circumstances. Consequently, Temple concludes:

Infallible direction for practical action is not to be had either from Bible or Church or Pope or individual communing with God; and this is not through any failure of a wise and loving God to supply it, but because in whatever degree reliance upon infallible direction comes in, spirituality goes out. Intelligent and responsible

30 William Temple, Nature, Man and God, p. 345.

31 Ibid., p. 348.

32 Ibid., p. 351.

judgement is the privilege and burden of spirit or personality.³³

The revelation of God as given to Christians "is a personal self-disclosure to persons, and has authority as such."³⁴ Our Christian utterances, then, rest upon the authority of Christ, in so far as we are able to discern His mind for us today in the light of the records; and it is this fact which gives crucial importance to all aspects of New Testament scholarship and to historical and exegetical theology.

Having identified the place and nature of authority in the Christian religion, Mr. Crombie suggests we will find "the essential clue to the interpretation of the logical nature of such utterances"³⁵ in the notion of parable as employed by Jesus in His teaching ministry and in certain dramatic moments in His life. As an example of the latter we are invited to consider Jesus entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday -- an acted parable by which He focussed attention upon the nation's historic destiny and, in a language which the crowds immediately recognized, announced Himself to be the promised Messianic deliverer. While many of the spoken parables have only a partial and particular application, they are, when duly qualified, an effective medium for communicating

33 William Temple, Nature, Man and God, p. 353.

34 Ibid., p. 354.

35 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 118.

Jesus' message about God and His Kingdom. If we examine the logic of parabolic utterances, it will be found that, in the parable, words are used in their ordinary senses and this is one reason why parable is an effective method of teaching; its truths are conveyed in concrete form in the language of the market place. But in speaking about God it is not always possible to find suitable parables, as for example, when we speak of God as 'active' the meaning of the word must be somewhat modified, and we are reminded again of Flew's criticism that when we speak about God the words which we employ in the predicate part of the utterance are not being used in their ordinary sense. To this Crombie now replies that when we speak about God the words we use are intended in their ordinary sense, with the proviso that "we do not suppose that in their ordinary interpretation they can be strictly true of Him."³⁶ What we do in essence is to think about God in parables, after the pattern of Christ, realizing that the truth is not literally that which our parables represent; and we believe that in this way we can attain such knowledge as is necessary for the maintenance of our religious life.

To this point in the discussion, however, we have been dealing only with the predicates of theological utterance -- what is said about God, where our words are used in other

³⁶ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 122.

than their customary way. When we come to discuss what we mean by 'God' the parabolic method is not available to us because the word 'God' is unique. Here we must ask ourselves how and in what sense do we know what it is that we are saying things about when we speak about God. In order to answer this question we must call upon the findings of the natural theologian. Revelation is important to the believer because it is revelation of God. "In treating it as something important, something commanding our allegiance, we are bringing to bear upon it the category of the transcendent, of the divine."³⁷ The contrast of the contingent and the necessary, and between the finite and the Infinite must already be part of the awareness of the human mind if any particular event or thing is to be for him a revelation of God. The contrast does not provide knowledge of the object to which the account of the events is to be applied, but provides instead something more like a direction.

We do not, that is, know to what to refer our parables; we know merely that we are to refer them out of experience, and out of it in which direction.³⁸

Ronald Hepburn is sceptical of the value of the position here stated, and calls attention to the need to refer the parables if they are to be more than merely theoretical symbolic

³⁷ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 123.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 124.

apparatus, unrelated to the real world. The problem raised by this need, he considers, is made much more acute by the failure of the traditional arguments to God's existence. If the classical arguments fail to relate God to the world, "in what other, more logically respectable, ways could he be related to it?"³⁹ We must, he suggests, find an answer to this question if we would know the extent to which there is a genuine relation between the religious symbols and God. The traditional arguments "failed because they did not recognize its utter irreducible uniqueness."⁴⁰ It is not possible to relate God to the world in the way in which items in the world are related to one another; and consequently,

none of the general forms of relation, like cause and effect, can do more than point vaguely and inadequately in the direction of the world's actual dependence on God, which is like nothing else in our experience, and for which there can be no general term.⁴¹

In all this, Hepburn concurs in Crombie's conclusions that we do not know to what to refer the parables except that we are to refer them out of experience, and out of it in a particular direction, but he suggests that since the traditional arguments have broken down, it is difficult if not impossible to confirm even this much.

39 Ronald Hepburn, Metaphysical Beliefs, p. 162.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 163.

It might be said in reply, however, that Crombie has faced this difficulty earlier and has partly dealt with it by pointing out that it was a mistake on the part of theologians to seek for proofs in the first place; that the function of natural theism is not to prove that God exists, but to provide a meaning for the word 'God' and that this is as much as it is capable of doing. This latent theism will not become active belief until and unless there are situations and events which are interpreted as disclosing divine activity affecting the lives of men. It is these events, interpreted as revelations of God, which relate God and the world, the finite and the Infinite.

Crombie concludes that statements about God are, "in effect, parables, which are referred, by means of the proper name 'God', out of our experience in a certain direction;"⁴² he concedes that in "one important sense, when we speak about God, we do not know what we mean, ... and do not need to know, because we accept the images, which we employ, on authority."⁴³ And he suggests, further, that because our concern is religious and not speculative, "because our need is, not to know what God is like, but to enter into relation with Him, the authorized images serve our purpose."⁴⁴

42 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 124.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

Because His revelation of Himself to us is at the same time a disclosure of His claim upon our life, it is only as we seek to enter into relationship with Him, that we shall gain an understanding of Who He is Who invites us into fellowship. The parables, because they are taken from the world of discourse with which we are familiar, will have communication value for us, "although in a sense they lack descriptive value."⁴⁵

It now becomes possible to face the question as to the verification or falsification of theological utterance. Can we say that anything will count against our assertion that God is merciful? To this Crombie replies unhesitatingly, Yes, suffering, and suffering which was utterly, eternally and irredeemably pointless would count decisively. But it is not possible to set the stage for a crucial experiment to decide the matter because "two things at least are hidden from us;" we do not know "what goes on in the inner recesses of the personality of the sufferer,"⁴⁶ and it is not possible for us to have here a preview of what shall happen hereafter. It becomes evident that the statement that God is merciful cannot be verified in our limited experience.

Yet the demand for verification, or falsification,

⁴⁵ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 124.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 124-125.

is legitimate, says Crombie, and upon analysis it is found to be a conflation of two demands: "The first point is that all statements of fact must be verifiable in the sense that there must not exist a rule of language which precludes testing the statement."⁴⁷ There is always the possibility, however, that while verifiable in principle, a statement is not actually verifiable because it is not possible to get into a position which would enable us to verify it. Such a factual ban on verification does not alter the logical structure of the statement. "The second point is that for me, fully to understand a statement, I must know what a test of it would be like."⁴⁸ In other words, if I do not know the meaning of the terms of a statement, then it will not be possible for me to test it. But this will have to do "not with the logical nature of the expression, but with its communication value for me."⁴⁹ There are, therefore, two stipulations which must be met by theological statements, if they are to prove meaningful, and they are each different. There is a logical stipulation to the effect that "nothing can be a statement of fact if it is untestable in the sense that the notion of testing it is precluded by correctly in-

47 Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 125.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

terpreting it."⁵⁰ The second stipulation has to do with the communication value of a statement, to the effect that "nobody can fully understand a statement, unless he has a fair idea how a situation about which it was true would differ from a situation about which it was false."⁵¹

Having defined the terms of the test, it is now applied with regard to religious utterances and it becomes evident that "there is no language rule implicit in a correct understanding of them which precludes putting them to the test."⁵² The question 'How can God be loving and allow pain and evil in the world?' is a proper question to ask in the face of human experience; but it cannot be decided finally here, because our experience is too limited. We cannot get into the position to decide this question any more than we can the question what Caesar had for breakfast on the morning of the day he crossed the Rubicon. Our experience of modern warfare would lead us to presume that he had breakfast prior to setting out, but as for its contents, we have no tests available simply because we are too far removed in time and place. And this also holds true for the test of the religious question. The operation of testing here is called dying and

⁵⁰ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 125-126.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵² Ibid.

in this case we have no means of returning to report our findings. The conclusion reached is, therefore, that religious utterances can be logically classified as statements of fact.

Mr. Alasdair MacIntyre has criticized this solution of the problem on two counts: In the first place, he maintains, it suggests that religious belief is a hypothesis which can never be more than provisional; and secondly, he suggests that, by appealing to the Verification Principle, Crombie has laid himself open to an objection which will be fatal to his argument. "For the essential crux that the Verification Principle raises for theistic assertions is not that they are unfalsifiable but that they are either unfalsifiable or false."⁵³ No amount of further evidence, he concludes, can make theism acceptable; it is "either false or fantastic."⁵⁴ Mr. Antony Flew, however, considered this criticism of Crombie's position unjustified, and took occasion recently to point out that it is based on a misreading of what Crombie is here attempting to do. At the commencement of his discussion Crombie reminded his readers that he is "not attempting to describe how religious belief

⁵³ Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Logical Status of Religious Belief", Metaphysical Beliefs, (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 182.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

in fact arises,"⁵⁵ but is concerned rather with the correct analysis of certain religious utterances. Flew concludes:

It is, therefore, simply irrelevant to urge that to accept his suggested analysis would commit us to saying that those who give vent to such utterances cannot have any rational warrant sufficient to justify the strength of their conviction; or even, more strongly, that the assertions expressed in these utterances are fantastic or false"⁵⁶

Crombie is here concerned with establishing the logical status of assertions about God, and he has argued that they can rate as genuine assertions in spite of the fact that it is not possible finally to test them here and now. "If once it is allowed that his position on this particular issue is tenable ... then surely the only proper conclusion is that the problem which Crombie set himself originally is now solved."⁵⁷ This much Flew seems prepared to concede, but hastens to add that this leaves wide open another question. "Whether Crombie or anyone else either has or ever could have here and now any rationally adequate grounds for confidence of the truth of any assertions of this sort is another and an entirely different question."⁵⁸ Failure to distinguish

⁵⁵ Ian Crombie, "Theology and Falsification", in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 111.

⁵⁶ Antony Flew, "Falsification and Hypothesis in Theology", in The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, December, 1962, p. 322.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 321.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

this practical question from the logical one with which Crombie is concerned to deal has, he believes, misled MacIntyre into making the two assertions mentioned above.

Turning now to the question of the communication value of religious utterances, Crombie suggests that the situation is rather complicated by virtue of the fact that there are two levels from which the investigation may be carried out, one from within the parable, and the other from outside. So long as we remain within the parable the problem of communication is straightforward; "we are supposing 'God loves us' to be a statement like 'My father loves me', 'God' to be a subject similar to 'My father'."⁵⁹ The predicate part of the sentence retains its ordinary meaning, so that the 'communication value of the statement whose subject is 'God' is derived from the communication value of the same statement with a different proper name as subject."⁶⁰

If, on the other hand, we try to step outside the parable, we find ourselves in a situation in which we simply do not know; we do not know God in the direct way in which we know our parents. We are in the presence of mystery. God as He is in His essence is hidden from us, but we do know what is meant in the parable when the father sees the Prodigal

⁵⁹ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 127.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Son coming a great way off and runs to meet him, "and we can therefore think in terms of this image. We know that we are promised that whenever we come to ourselves and return to God, He will come to meet us."⁶¹ And so our statements communicate so long as we remain within the parable, and provide us with insight sufficient for living our life in response to the revelation of God's love and purpose disclosed to us in Christ.

The Christian's position, Crombie suggests, is a sort of enlightened ignorance; he does not suppose that he knows directly what God is like -- this would be the utmost presumption -- but his agnosticism is not complete, and when his position is attacked, he falls back not in any direction, but "upon the person of Christ, and the concrete realities of the Christian life."⁶² At the centre of this message is the image of God as love and it is upon this point that Mr. Flew's original challenge to the Christian theologian was focussed, suggesting that what we actually experience in the world is more like being let down all along the line. Even in the face of such insinuations, however, the Christian does not attempt to evade the issue, but retreats to his prepared positions, which Crombie suggests are three in number:

⁶¹ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 127.

⁶² Ibid., p. 128.

First, he looks for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come;
Second, he claims that he sees in Christ the verification, and to some extent also the specification, of the divine love. . . .
Third, he claims that in the religious life, of others, if not as yet in his own, the divine love may be encountered, that the promise 'I will not fail thee nor forsake thee' is, if rightly understood, confirmed there.⁶³

In other words, that in the things which Christians have been enabled to endure for Christ's sake may be found evidence of the faithfulness of God, and that "the image and reflection of the love of God may be seen not only hereafter, not only in Christ, but also, if dimly, in the concrete process of living the Christian life."⁶⁴ The Christian knows, says Crombie, that if these three positions are taken, then he must surrender, but "he does not believe that they can be taken."⁶⁵

Mr. D.R.Duff-Forbes, in an article in the Australasian Journal of Philosophy,⁶⁶ criticized this statement and in particular the first of the three positions stated above, on the grounds that it is itself a religious claim and so begs the question. To this criticism, however, Mr. Flew replied,

⁶³ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 129.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

⁶⁶ D.R.Duff-Forbes, "Theology and Falsification Again", Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 1961, p. 154.

pointing out that Crombie has made it quite clear that he is concerned here "only with a comparatively small but logically fundamental sub-class of religious utterances -- those which are ostensibly assertions about God."⁶⁷ The key sentence in Crombie's position, he suggests, is that in which he insists that the Christian "looks for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."⁶⁸

Mr. Crombie's application of linguistic analysis to Christian utterances about God has disclosed that these are logically of the nature of assertions. When Christians say that God loves us they are making what they believe to be a statement of fact. Mr. Flew, while acknowledging that Crombie has solved the problem of the logical status of statements about God, has raised a further question as to whether Christians have or ever could have any rationally adequate grounds for confidence of the truth of such assertions. This problem will call for an investigation of the historical origins of Christianity to disclose the grounds upon which Christians have in fact been led to make such claims. It should then become possible to re-appraise Christian statements in the light of modern knowledge.

⁶⁷ Antony Flew, "Falsification and Hypothesis in Theology", Australasian Journal of Philosophy, December, 1962, p.320.

⁶⁸ Ian Crombie, New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 129.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Select Bibliography:

- Anscombe, G.E.M., An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1959.
- Ayer, Alfred Jules, Language, Truth and Logic. Second Edition. New York: Dover Publishing Co., 1946.
- Editor, Logical Positivism. New York: The Free Press, 1959.
- Philosophy and Language. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1960.
- Saint Basil the Great, The Hexaemeron, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, tr. by Blomfield Jackson. Oxford: James Parker and Company, 1895. Volume VIII.
- The Letters of Saint Basil the Great, tr. by Roy Deferrari. London: William Heinemann, 1926.
- Braithwaite, R.B., An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1955.
- Carnap, Rudolf, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis", tr. by A.Pap, in Logical Positivism, edited by A.J.Ayer. New York: The Free Press, 1959.
- Cox, David, "The Significance of Christianity", Mind, Volume LIX, 1950.
- Crombie, Ian, "Theology and Falsification - (ii) Arising from the University Discussion", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, edited by Antony Flew, pp. 109-130.
- Farrer, Austin M., Finite and Infinite. Westminster: Dacre Press, 1943. Second edition, 1959.
- Flew, Antony, Editor, Essays in Conceptual Analysis. London: Macmillan & Co., 1956.
- Editor, New Essays in Philosophical Theology. London: S C M Press, 1955.

Gregory of Nazianzus, The Second Theological Oration, English translation, Library of Christian Classics. London: S C M Press, 1954, Volume III.

Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium and other writings, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, tr. and notes by William Moore and H.A. Wilson. Oxford: Parker and Company, 1893. Volume V.

Hare, R.M., "Theology and Falsification - (i) The University Discussion B", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 99-103.

Hepburn, Ronald, Christianity and Paradox. Drury Lane: Watts & Co., 1958.

"Poetry and Religious Belief", in Metaphysical Beliefs, edited by Alasdair MacIntyre. London: S C M Press, 1957.

Hume, David, A Treatise on Human Nature. London: J.M. Dent & Sons. Everyman's Library Edition, pub. 1911, reprinted 1961, with Introduction by A.D. Lindsay.

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1959. Edited by Henry D. Aiken.

Hume's Enquiries, Edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press. Second edition, 1902, impression of 1955.

Kant, Emmanuel, The Critique of Pure Reason, tr. by Kemp Smith. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1956.

MacIntyre, Alasdair, "The Logical Status of Religious Belief", in Metaphysical Beliefs. S C M Press, 1957.

MacDonald, Margaret, Editor, Philosophy and Analysis. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954.

McPherson, Thomas, "Religion as the Inexpressible", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 131-143.

"The Existence of God", Mind, Volume LIX, 1950, pp. 545 ff.

Mitchell, Basil, "Theology and Falsification - (i) The University Discussion C", New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 103-106.

Otto, Rudolf, The Idea of the Holy, tr. by John W. Harvey. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

Paul, G.A., "Wittgenstein", in The Revolution in Philosophy.
London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960.

Popper, Karl R., Conjectures and Refutations. London:
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.

Ramsey, Frank P., The Foundations of Mathematics. London:
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931.

Ramsey, Ian T., Editor, Prospect for Metaphysics. London:
George Allen & Unwin, 1961.

Ryle, Gilbert, The Concept of Mind. London: Hutchinson's
University Library, 1949.

Schlick, Moritz, "The Turning Point in Philosophy", tr. by
David Rynn, in Logical Positivism, edited by A.J. Ayer.
New York: The Free Press, 1959.

Temple, William, Nature, Man and God. London: Macmillan &
Co., 1949.

Warnock, G.J., "Analysis and Imagination", in The Revolution
in Philosophy. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960.

Whitehead, Alfred N., Adventures of Ideas. Cambridge: at
the University Press, 1933.

Williams, Bernard, "Tertullian's Paradox", New Essays in
Philosophical Theology, pp. 187-211.

Wisdom, John, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis. Oxford: Basil
Blackwell, 1957.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigations, tr. and
edited by G.E.M. Anscombe, 1953. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Second edition, 1958.

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, New translation by Pears
and McGuinness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.

"Some Remarks on Logical Form", Proceedings of the
Aristotelian Society, 1929.

Periodicals and Philosophical Journals quoted:

Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Volume XXXV, 1957, December,
1961, and December, 1962.

Mind, Volume LIX, 1950.

The Observer, London, March 31st 1963.

General Bibliography:

Ayer, Alfred J., The Problem of Knowledge. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1956.

Braithwaite, R.B., Scientific Explanation. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1955.

Copleston, F.C., Contemporary Philosophy. London: Burns Oats, 1956.

Ewing, A.C., "Meaninglessness", Mind, 1937.

Flew, Antony, Editor, Logic and Language. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1951.

Editor, Logic and Language, Second Series. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955.

Harre, R., An Introduction to the Logic of the Sciences. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960.

Lewis, H.D., Our Experience of God. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959.

Malcolm, N., Ludwig Wittgenstein - A Memoir. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Passmore, John, A Hundred Years of Philosophy. Gerald Duckworth, 1957.

Pearson, Karl, The Grammar of Science. London: J.M.Dent & Sons, Everyman's Library, No. 939, 1937. (first pub. 1892).

Pole, D., The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein. London: University of London, 1958.

Price, H.H., "Professor Ayer and the Problem of Knowledge", Mind, Volume LXVII, 1958.

Russell, Bertrand, A History of Western Philosophy. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945.

The Problems of Philosophy. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. (originally published 1912).

My Philosophical Development. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959.

"Logical Atomism", Contemporary British Philosophy, First Series. Edited by J.H. Muirhead. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924.

Ryle, Gilbert, "Systematically Misleading Expressions", Journal of the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1931.

Stace, W.T., "Positivism", Mind, 1944.

Toulmin, Stephen, The Philosophy of Science. London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1953.

Urmson, J.O., Philosophical Analysis. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1956.

Whitehead, Alfred N., Process and Reality. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929.

Science and the Modern World. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1933. (first published in 1926).

Wisdom, John, "Logical Constructions", Mind, 1933.

"Other Minds", Mind, 1940, 1941, 1942 and 1943.