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On The World Beyond
(A Summary of Transcendent Realism)

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ABSTRACT: Transcendent realism is a theistic philosophical system which holds that reality comprises physical and metaphysical entities, including morally conscious souls and God, as the creative and sustaining explanation of the being of beings ("Being") and moral obligation. The three central theses of the philosophy are that (1) Being and the intelligibility of Being are self-same, reducible to logic, and logically necessary, (2) absolute nothingness is incoherent because it entails the absence of the rules of its own conception, and (3) human rational experience is not materially reducible and includes direct and inferential experience of metaphysical Being. Some of the ideas developed in this summary are: (A) that the presuppositions of objective reason include a self-transcendent, knowing soul and the logicality of Being; (B) humankind is a self-concerned, substantive, psychosomatic unity whose Being is *being-toward-God*, whose soul exists not in, but alongside, the external world, and whose body is the physical manifestation of the soul's relation to the external world; (C) the logicality of Being implies the existence of the one and only God as its Supreme Principle and as *Agape* (unqualified good will), the definitionally good, self-intending source of the moral obligation of self-transcending souls; and (D) humankind's fundamental obligation, as the agent of God's self-intending good will and the being who brings morality into the world, is to act with *agape* to all.

I.

Introduction. In *Being and Intelligibility*[1] I propose a metaphysical system that I call "transcendent realism," which comprises three central theses. The first is that the beingness of

[1] (Portland, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

beings (called "Being") and the intelligibility of Being are strictly self-same. The second is that, because nothingness (*i.e.*, absolute not-Being) entails the absence of the rules of its own conception, it is self-contradictory and unintelligible, and, therefore, Being is logically necessary. The third is that the fullness of human rational experience cannot be explained in materially reducible terms and requires recognition of the existence of transcendent reality, which includes the self of self-consciousness, objective knowledge, and moral obligation, all of which must occur under a self-grounding, supreme principle of Being and intelligibility (alternately referred to herein as the "Supreme Principle," "*Agape*," and the "*Logos*").[2] This paper provides a high-level summary of the main tenets of transcendent realism.

Transcendent realism follows Heidegger in defining "Being" as all that can be conceived or perceived[3] but departs from the great ontologist in a determinative way insofar as transcendent realism asserts that *Being is itself a being*. The importance of this point of disagreement is difficult to overstate—in Heidegger's ontology Being is the ground[4] of all beings but is itself ungrounded, whereas, in transcendent realism, Being is the ground of all that there is and also is also *self-grounding*.

[2] These terms describe the active rational, creative and spiritual principles under which humankind understands Being and its own, human Being. The term "Supreme Principle" is chosen to emphasize the unconditioned, self-justifying, and grounding principle of reason and Being, "*Agape*" is chosen to connote the Divine, self-intending principle of creation and moral obligation, and the term "*Logos*" is chosen to connote the agency under which the Supreme Principle and *Agape* are represented in the Being of the cosmos and by which humankind, as a morally conscious being, has the capacity to apprehend it. Notwithstanding the heavily religious connotation of these terms, it should be emphasized that transcendent realism is a strictly theistic philosophy and not a theology or apologetics.

[3] In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger says: "Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is Being; what we are is Being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in [r]eality; in presence-at-hand (*i.e.*, being as it naturally occurs outside of the context of having any meaning for humankind); in subsistence; in validity; in [humankind]; in the 'there is'." (Parenthetical added.) Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, reprint ed. 2008), H6-H7. All page references are to the later German editions as indicated in the cited edition.

[4] The term "ground" is used herein in a variety of related ways which are intended to be understood in context, including "basis of belief, action, or argument," "substratum," "cause," "reason," "that which accounts for something," and "an entity to which predicates attach."

II.

Critique of Modern Philosophy. In developing transcendent realism, my motivation is to address the undeniable failure of metaphysics that has been widely lamented ever since the modern exposition of radical skepticism by David Hume in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739. In my understanding, the failure of metaphysics does not reflect any vacuity of the subject but is instead the inevitable end of the misguided path taken by modern philosophy from its very initiation with the philosophy of the subject by René Descartes. Specifically, I claim that the failure of modern and post-modern philosophy has occurred under the operation of three stifling errors which were made in the working out of the otherwise valid Cartesian idea that reality is to be understood not merely in the mind-independent terms of radical empiricism but also (if not exclusively) in terms of its meaning for a subjective consciousness.[5] By his famous *Cogito,*[6] Descartes sought to prove his substantial existence as the agent who doubts everything that is susceptible to question and concluded that, because he cannot doubt himself, he must exist. However, Descartes methodology, called "universal doubt," is question-begging because it *presupposes* the existence of an undoubtable agent of doubt in asserting its potential universality, which is to say that the fact that existential self-doubt is incoherently self-referential does not imply substantial self-existence. Moreover, the Cartesian methodology glosses over the intentional nature of thought—because thought is always about something, one may not doubt the objects of all thought without also doubting their thinker.[7]

[5] This notion is fully developed in Pacelli, Albert Peter, "The Three Grand Errors of Modern and Post-Modern Philosophy," n.p. (2018).

[6] The *Cogito* is the sobriquet for "*Cogito Ergo Sum*," which means "I think therefore I am."

[7] See, William Temple, "Part I, Lecture III: The Cartesian *Faux-Pas*," *Nature, Man and God*, 3rd ed., (Edinburgh: R. & B. Clark, Limited, 1940), 64.

Descartes's mistakes placed at least two persistently troublesome obstacles in the way of modern philosophical progress. Pierre Gassendi, Descartes's contemporary, immediately objected that because the *Cogito* presupposes the thinker, Descartes has merely shown the existence of thought. Even though Gassendi's argument entails its own incoherent premise that thought may think about itself, it had a profound influence on subsequent philosophy all the way through German idealism, if not beyond. Additionally, Descartes's ill-fated legitimization of systematic skepticism foreshadowed Hume and continues to confound contemporary proponents of what Thomas Nagel appropriately calls "modern irrationalism."

A handful of major philosophers, including Hume, followed Descartes in the years before Immanuel Kant, the greatest of the modern philosophers, stood philosophy on its head with his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. Kant's work represents an urgent response to Humean skepticism. Kant hoped to justify objective empirical knowledge by distinguishing cognition of sensible objects from the traditional objects of metaphysics, which Kant understood to include God, the soul, free will, and substance. Kant's foundational premises are twofold. The first is that objective empirical knowledge is possible because in the process of empirical cognition the mind brings to bear upon appearances given to it by the senses certain *a priori* intuitions and concepts (including space, time, and Aristotelean-based categories of understanding). The second is that although all metaphysical assertions are dogmatic because such intuitions and concepts are inapplicable to non-sensible data, metaphysical knowledge is nevertheless valuable and is justifiable as rationally-compelled faith. In order to effectively separate the two branches of philosophy, Kant had to face two profound difficulties. One is how to explain objective empirical knowledge without recourse to a substantive self and the substance of empirical objects (that is,

the things-in-themselves before they become mental representations). The other is how to deny logic any scope beyond empirical objectivity and the critique of reason itself.

With respect to self-consciousness, Kant attempts to replace Cartesian "I-substance" with Kant's own "I-think" (also known as the "transcendental ego"), which he asserts is the "unity of apperception" and mere "form of the representation of thought." The transcendental ego both assembles sensible appearances into unified manifolds that are related in space and organized under the intuition of causality and also perceives its internal representations temporally. However, by Kant's admission, reducing the soul to a mere aspect of cognition renders it circularly dependent upon cognition of the objects that presupposes it. Concerning "general" logic (as Kant calls it), Kant asserts that it represents a contentless abstraction from the intuitions and concepts of empirical cognition and is therefore inapplicable to metaphysical deductions. Finally, regarding things-in-themselves, Kant argues that they may be understood only as limits to cognition and, because they are beyond even the scope of logic, may merely be dogmatically presumed to subsist under the appearances that give rise to objects as represented to reason.

It is simple to see that under Kant's philosophy, both the "I-think" and the empirical objects are ungrounded, the former because it is circularly dependent upon the latter, and the latter because sensation is uncaused. The ungrounding of the agent of cognition and its objects is a direct result of Kant's privileging of the intuitions and concepts over the general logic that is embedded in them, which represents the second stifling error of modern philosophy. That the subordination of logic is a mistake is clear from the fact that logic is embedded not just in the concepts but throughout Kant's cognitive structure, including Kant's "I-think." The argument that space and time are wholly *a priori* means that they are, in and of themselves, devoid of empirical content and, insofar as they are reducible to logic, it is the latter that must wear the

ontological crown. One might argue that space, as a precondition to empirical cognition, is strictly limited in applicability to sensation, and, therefore, that the *logicality* of extension is limited in applicability to empirical cognition in which it is embedded. However, time is, in Kant's system, both the form of *internal* intuition of consciousness and, under Kant's schemata, the rational element which connects the *a priori* concepts with individual empirical objectivities. Finally, because the "I-think" is a mere unity of apperception, it is impossible to justify its having the self-transcendent power of abstraction necessary to formulate general logic or apply it to the critique of reason.

Fatal as these defects are to Kant's transcendental idealism, they cannot diminish the brilliance of Kant's self-described "Copernican revolution" in positing the transcendental ego as the presupposition of empirical cognition. Kant's transcendental concept was taken up by Edmund Husserl, the inventor of phenomenology and, more importantly, by Martin Heidegger, his pupil. Heidegger based his critique of Husserl's work upon Heidegger's foundational claim that the achievement of a presuppositionless philosophy requires concrete clarification of the meaning of Being, which, according to Heidegger, remained unaccomplished and overlooked in metaphysics from and after Plato. Heidegger begins with an interrogation of human being as to its own being, calling humankind "*Dasein*" ("being-there") because Heidegger understands the human being to exist at an ontological point at which the world discloses itself in its Being. For Heidegger, it is *Dasein* who brings Being to reality and, in *Dasein's* absence, reality neither is nor is not.[8] Heidegger characterizes *Dasein* as "the being for whom its own existence is an issue," and asserts that it is neither Cartesian "I-substance" nor Kantian "I-think" but merely

[8] We will sometimes refer to pure reality, as conceived by Heidegger in the absence of *Dasein*, as non-Being (as distinguished from Nothingness).

subsists as part of the unified structure in which its consciousness relates to the world of its experience.

However, almost immediately upon completion of his depiction of *Dasein*, Heidegger became concerned that his analysis of Being, like the rest of metaphysics, was too entangled in post-Socratic concepts that falsely rigidify what is in its Being always emerging. To address the problem, Heidegger turned to a hermeneutic and etymological analysis of the philosophy of the pre-Socratics who seem to have grasped this most fundamental ontological point. However, in so doing, Heidegger committed the third stifling philosophical error, which is to privilege Being over logic (which under transcendent realism we understand to be co-determinate with it), thereby ungrounding Being altogether and rendering nothingness ("Nothingness") and non-Being (both of which are illogical and incoherent) meaningful and possible.

Although the sequence of the Cartesian failure to establish the "I-substance" of the *Cogito*, Kant's vaporizing of the self and the ungrounding of physical objectivities, and Heidegger's ungrounding of Being overwhelmed modern and post-modern philosophy, the post-modern mainstream abandonment of metaphysics is unwarranted. To the contrary, metaphysics is far from dead, and these errors make it clear that its restoration lies in the re-establishment of a substantive self and the self-grounding of Being, both of which emerge from an understanding of the presuppositions of objective knowledge.

III.

Objective Knowledge. The exposition of transcendent realism therefore appropriately begins with a discussion of the possibility of objective knowledge. By objective knowledge, we accept the domain articulated by Kant, namely, logic, mathematics, science, considered not in its propositions or objects (which are subject to doubt) but in its generality as a possible field of

truth, and moral obligation, and we distinguish objectivity from subjectivity by the former's apparent independence from individual consciousness. The importance of the question of the possibility of objective knowledge is especially acute because, in the current era, material reductionism and moral relativism, neither of which is compatible with objectivity, are predominant.

Only a minority of thinkers dispute the apriority of our knowledge of logic and mathematics. Although some, most notably the German idealists and post-modern Continental philosophers, have been prominent among the skeptics, the fact that they employ objective reason to make their arguments in favor of subjectivity belies the incoherence of their claims. In contrast, the challenge to scientific knowledge, which in the modern era dates back to Hume and continues to be maintained by various philosophical schools, including especially modern positivism, is more formidable. Positivists argue that empirical cognition, including space and time in which empirical extension occurs, is external to consciousness, and that causality is an illusion that arises as an invalid inference from inductive experience. Positivists also treat the mind as a *tabula rasa* and restrict all knowledge to that which is sensible, which rules out the possibility of the substantial transcendence of the knower.

Positivist claims generally fail on several thematic grounds. One is that, as Kant first proposed and modern psychology confirms, self-consciousness cannot grow out of sensory data received and processed by a cognitive agent who does not possess *ab initio* a transcendentally cognitive category system. A second ground is that, because the experience of repetition that is asserted under inductive reasoning to be merely probable is entirely consistent with the strict repetition of causality, the occasional occurrence of apparently anomalous events may demonstrate the invalidity of particular causal theories but never the intuition of causality, itself.

The third ground is that the assertion that all knowledge is inductive entails the disassociation of empirical experience from the objective logic embedded in it and, contradictorily, denies the very logic upon which the positivists base their argument against science.

The inductive argument arises from Hume's foundational pronouncement that, without prior observation, reason cannot anticipate the effect of one object upon another because the effect is "different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it." Hume gives the example of the effect of a moving billiard ball upon a stationary one with which it collides, arguing that the transfer of motion from one ball to the other upon impact is unforeseeable to a novitiate observer. However, Hume's analysis misplaces attention on the causal and affected objects *as species*, instead of on the characteristics of matter at rest and in motion that they exemplify. In this case, the effect of the collision is not to be found in either billiard ball as such but in their material nature and the fact that one object is in motion relative to the other. The momentum of the first ball imparts an impulse on, and transfers some or all of the energy of its motion to, the second ball, not because they are billiard balls but because they are physical objects. Momentum is a characteristic of all physical objects when in motion and impulse is a function of the change in momentum upon collision. These are highly scientific statements about specific causal relations between material objects. Because we experience our intuition of causality necessarily and universally across all, not just some, material objects, we understand causality as an organizing principle which governs our cognition of reality.[9]

The second ground described above means that for the inductive argument to prevail, it must demonstrate the actual possibility of the anomalous occurrence of uncaused, extended events. Although the limited scope of human existence means that sample size of human

[9] This Kantian notion of causality will be further explained below.

experience is also limited, our experience is undoubtedly sufficiently large to infer from the absence of any demonstrably uncaused, extended events that none will ever be forthcoming.[10] Where outcomes surprise us under a given scientific theory, the inescapable conclusion is that, instead of militating against causality as an *a priori* intuition, the explanation under that theory may be subject to doubt. Indeed, human reason is such that the occurrence of an unexpected event *cannot* be understood as being uncaused but only as calling into question the accepted causal explanation. Moreover, because we often distinguish between that which we reasonably understand to be causality and that which we may only reasonably regard as probable, the radical argument that only our understanding of probability is valid requires more than mere assertion. Positivists face the insurmountable difficulty that they are arguing not against mental representations of reality but against the intuitions under which our representations arise. In the face of the profundity of our intuition of causality and the ever-growing body of scientific successes, the idea that empirical cognition as a whole is merely inductive is a weak one.

Proceeding, then, upon the presupposition that we possess objective knowledge that includes logic, mathematics, and the possibility of scientific explanation, the question arises as to its presuppositions. The exposition of transcendent realism begins provisionally[11] with three. First, for reason to be objective, its "rules" must be objective, which is to say that the rules of thought must be necessary and universal. Second, the objects of thought, whether they are the physical objects of empirical cognition or the conceptual objects of mathematics or metaphysics, must themselves be such as to be intelligible under the rules of thought. We cannot think the

[10] I refer here to Bayesian inference.

[11] I will claim presently that the rules of thought are in actuality predicates of Being and therefore the first two are really the same thing.

unthinkable, neither can we think the unintelligible. Third, objective reason requires a persistent cognizing agent who self-consciously exists in relation to its thoughts.

That the rules of thought are objective is beyond dispute—indeed, they represent the embodiment of objectivity. We know the rules of thought well as the fundamental principles of logic: an object is identical with itself; an object cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same way; an object either is or it is not; and nothing is without reason. What is most interesting about the rules of thought, however, is that they are not what we normally think of as "rules" at all but are instead necessary and universal statements about all objects. *The rules of thought, therefore, are statements about Being, itself.* This becomes clear upon consideration of the fact that, under modern logic, the rules of thought are understood as predicates that apply to all objects and, moreover, they are the only such predicates. The implication is utterly foundational to cognition—it means that reason can reduce any object of thought to logical predication while still retaining its intelligibility *as a mere object*, but that any attempt to prescind logical predication results in the extinguishment of the object's thinkability. Accordingly, the rules of thought are grounded in all objectivity, and all objects may be described essentially as grounded logical predication. In transcendent realism, such objects, to the extent of such predication, are called "logical objects" and are distinguished from objects that are additionally predicable, which are called "substantive objects."[12]

Logical objects may be considered individually as such or in various logical relations to other logical objects, including orderability, countability, measurability, and commensurability. The rules of logical inference comprise these relationships. As will be elucidated below, in

[12] Each object that is before a mind, whether in theoretical reasoning or empirical cognition, must have a unique reference so that reason can *keep track* of it as an object and of its relations to other objects. In transcendent realism, this referential quality is referred to as an object's *handle* and all objects of thought or cognition are referred to as being *enhandled*.

transcendent realism, the rules of thought and inference support the pure logicism of mathematics and are embedded in, and determine our intuitions of, space, time, and causality. In other words, under transcendent realism, the structure of the world insofar as it is cognizable *and can be said to exist at all* is essentially logical, and cognition entails apprehension of the logicality of its objects and their relations.

The first two criteria of the possibility of objective knowledge identified above (objective rules of thought and objects that are susceptible to logical cognition) are thusly satisfied together by the inherent logicality of Being. It follows that, from the standpoint of cognition, sentience entails the ability to perceive the world logically. However, that is not the same as apprehending Being and its inherently logical nature. Objective reason, which entails the capacity not only to know but to know that one knows, requires the self-transcendence[13] of a persistent, cognitive agent. In modern and post-modern philosophy, such an entity is most often referred to as a "self," and the question is framed in terms of whether the self is "substantial." In transcendent realism, the cognitive agent is referred to both as a "self" and a "soul" (in the religious sense), and objective reason is said to be "ensouled reason" because one of the philosophy's fundamental tenets is that human knowledge entails moral knowledge.

The demonstration of the substantive self must be had by recourse to the structure of thought itself. We think and speak in subject-predicate form. The subject, which we will call "*s*," is the being that bears its predicates, which we will call "P." Thus, we may represent a sentence logically as (P)*s*. As predicate bearer, *s* is the ground of P, which is to say that *s* is the object that has P properties or qualities. (P)*s* is a conception or thought in its own right, which we will call

[13] See, Duane Armitage, "Anti-Reductionism and Self-Reference: From Plato to Gödel," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 57, no. 4. (December 2017): 401 ("Anti-Reductionism"). Armitage makes a convincing argument that the self-transcendence presupposed by rationality is inconsistent with reductionism.

"T." The ground of T is always the mind that thinks it, which we will call "g." We can represent the relationship between thinker g and its thought as follows: (T)g_t, meaning that g_t is the thinker of T. Gassendi's argument that thoughts can be said to exist independently of the self who thinks them, is manifestly incorrect on two grounds. First, unlike our common empirical experience, we do not independently observe or think all thoughts and, to the contrary, we apprehend our own thoughts as being internally privileged to our individual minds. Second, Gassendi's characterization is patently illogical because it violates the principle of sufficient reason, which requires each thought to be a grounded cognition.

Hume's argument regarding the impermissibility of inferring the existence of a self from an apparent stream of consciousness is similarly incoherent. We can represent Hume's characterization of a consciousness as a mere series of seemingly related thoughts thusly: (T_a)g_a, (T_b)g_b, (T_c)g_c …. However, for a series of thoughts to be a perceptible stream of consciousness it must appear to a unified consciousness which grounds each thought (that is, the ground of the stream of thought), which we may represent as follows: (T_a, T_b, T_c)g. It follows that the consciousness of a stream of thoughts can no more doubt itself as a consciousness than can a thinker of an individual thought doubt *itself* as a thinker.

We might state the case for self-consciousness in this way: $\exists g \ \wedge \ \exists T$ (T)g, which may be translated into "there exists a self, g, and a thought, T, which is about its thinker, and g is the thinker (that is, the "cognizing-I") of T." Here we are asserting that the thought is about the self who thinks it (that is, its ground), not about the thought itself as its own subject. I justify this claim upon two grounds. The first is that a thought cannot be about itself, which is to say that a thought cannot be both its own subject and object. If it were otherwise, the thought would be endlessly and hopelessly self-referentially circular. The second is that if thought could think

about itself, reason would be subjective, not objective, and there would be no objective knowledge. Arguments such as those advanced by Gassendi, Hume, and Georg Hegel that the presence of thought does not require a substantive thinker are thusly easily disposed of. And arguments such as that advanced by Kant that the soul knows itself only through the empirical objects of its cognition (which requires the presence of the soul in the first place) entail an unacceptable circularity.

IV.

Truth. The question of the constitution of "truth" is closely related to the question of Being. In the modern discussions of the question of what we mean when we say that something is true, much attention is paid to the accompanying (express or implicit) ontological and epistemological commitments, which sometimes pose theoretical difficulties.[14] Because under transcendent realism we assert the foundational identification of Being with intelligibility, truth and ontological commitment go hand in hand. Accordingly, under transcendent realism, the discussion of the truth question is had, in the first instance, not in terms of what makes something true but rather in terms of what is *knowable*. It is therefore not necessary to inquire into the nature of truth as such because the philosophy accepts the *Being* of internal and external facts and statements and propositions regarding them. Thus, the question of truth equates to the question of what we can say *as a matter of fact* about intelligible beings, and truth, like Being, is itself a being which signifies the existence or non-existence of its objects *in the way that they are*.

In identifying knowable beings, the starting point is internal cognition. Given that the fundamental presupposition of transcendent realism is that knowledge is objective, truth must

[14] See, Bricker, Phillip, "Ontological Commitment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ontological-commitment/.

comprehend logic, not axiomatically or by reference to anything that is higher (for whatever we would assert to be higher would itself have to be essentially logical) but as self-justified in its Being. Logically valid statements are therefore true and, because their truth is necessary and universal, it falls under what is commonly understood as direct intuition.

There is another category of internal knowledge that we may describe as direct perception. Under this category, there is perception of self as percipient not, as Aristotle and his successors (including Kant) held of the objects of its empirical cognition (which do not include the self), but of its own thoughts, including all of its internal representations and especially its own thoughts about itself as a morally obligated being.

Logic and soul and other directly perceived objects have in common that both their grounds and their essential predicates are wholly internal. However, there is another type of internal intuition, which connects human Being with empirical reality, namely, the internal *intuition of externality*. Here, we include our intuitions of space and time, which we understand as the internally grounded condition of the possibility of the existence of a world of mind-independent objects. Reason represents the external world (as opposed to the intuition of externality) as an internally perceived unity among its constituent external objects and their spatiotemporal relations. The intuition of space is wholly *a priori*;[15] knowledge of individual empirical objects is *a posteriori*. Importantly, we know that empirical reality exists precisely because of the apriority of our intuition of externality and our manifestation of self in relation to it,[16] even if we can never say with certainty that any particular empirical object exists.[17]

[15] Transcendent realism generally accepts Kant's expositions of the apriority of space and time. See, *Being and Intelligibility*, 80–87 and 150–164.

[16] The concept of the human body as the physical manifestation of its relation to externality is explained below at 43–45.

[17] In the act of cognition of extended objects, we bring them under our internal intuition of space, which is the cause of the confused conclusions of the subjective idealists that *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived) and of the solipsists that only the cognizing "I" exists.

Cognition of the individual objects that the external world comprises is on an entirely different footing than the intuition of externality. Reason represents each external object as a unity among a manifold of extended predication, which is to say that the collection of predicates of an object must have a common ground and that reason represents both the ground and the predicates of each external object as being mind-independent. Although all mental representations, including mental representations of external objects, are internal, because the mind represents each empirical object under the intuition of externality, if an external object exists at all, it must exist as a mind-independent instance of externally grounded predication. The predicates of every cognized empirical object must include the spatiotemporal predicates that determine the object's relation to the cognizing "I" and other extended objects, together with the qualities of the object that correspond to the senses by which reason perceives them. The mind represents each such object under the organizing principle of causality, which is understood as the law of implication operating in space and time, and categorizes it as contingent. It is important to emphasize that we may never have absolute knowledge of any particular empirical object and our knowledge of such objects can only be pragmatic.

Science may be defined as objective knowledge about external objects, events, and relations and is distinguishable from any particular scientific theory. Under transcendent realism, we can say that the possibility of science arises because of the logical nature of cognition. Scientific propositions are general propositions about the nature of empirical reality that may be tested and verified. Such propositions are directed toward the identification of the causes of empirical events and entail the derivative logicality of causality, and, therefore, their ground is always internal to reason. The mind apprehends empirical objects and events through sensation, but reason infers their causes and the scientific laws governing them internally under logical

principles. Because scientific propositions relate to mind-independent reality, no particular consensus scientific proposition may be said to constitute absolute knowledge. Nevertheless, transcendent realism insists that every empirical event (other than action taken under the intuition of freedom) must be explicable on a scientific basis, regardless of whether we know what it is.

Having surveyed and categorized our knowledge,[18] we are now in a position to make a few remarks about the nature of "truth" itself. There are several theories of the meaning of "truth" that lay claim to the mainstream. These include the correspondence theory, the coherence theory, the pragmatic theory, various deflationist theories, and the phenomenological theory of truth. All of these have their merits, but none of them is compelling in all circumstances. Accordingly, transcendent realism does not adopt any of them. Under transcendent realism, when we state that a proposition (which is a being every bit as much as is a physical or theoretical object) is true, we are not asserting the existence of the proposition (which undoubtedly exists in the moment that we think or articulate it) as such but our knowledge of the Being of the intentional object of the proposition. As a result, transcendent realism is satisfied with a definition of truth that directly relates to what it asserts is knowable about intentional objects. As we have just detailed, under transcendent realism, the knowability of a being depends upon whether it is internally grounded, regardless of whether the predication of such objects is internal or external. This classification comprehends logic, soul, internal representation as such, states of mind, externality (but not external objects in themselves), and the possibility of science. Each object that the mind represents as any of these may be said to be true *in the way that that*

[18] Other than the reference to our knowledge of self as soul, to avoid muddying the discussion of truth which is traditionally limited to the theoretical and empirical domains, I have deliberately postponed discussion of the truth of practical reason.

the mind represents it. To the extent that we assert the truth of the existence of an external object, we do so solely on a pragmatic basis.

V.

Logicism. The assertion of the co-determinacy of Being and intelligibility enables (if it does not require) transcendent realism to embrace logicism, which is the theory that mathematics is unaxiomatically reducible to logic. The exposition of logicism in transcendent realism builds upon the works of Giuseppe Peano and Bertrand Russell, each of which is aimed at the logical deduction of the natural numbers and the logical explication of addition, subtraction, and multiplication. Although Peano's system is consistent and valid, to complete the deduction, it relies upon three "primitive" (undefined) terms and five postulates.[19] In his system, Peano defines the natural numbers as sequential successors of 0, and addition, subtraction, and multiplication are operations that entail counting along the series. However, because of Peano's dependence upon his primitive terms and postulates, Peano's system applies to all progressions of which the natural numbers are only a special case. Accordingly, although Peano's system yields that all progressions that satisfy his postulates are logical, it is neither unaxiomatic nor does it possess the required specificity for unqualified success.

To address the shortcomings of Peano's system, Russell utilized rapidly developing set theory (of which he was a vital progenitor) to attempt two different deductions of the natural numbers, each of which eliminates Peano's primitives and postulates. In his first attempt, Russell defines "number" as the defining property of the set of all similar sets and automates Peano's induction postulate by starting with the null set (which represents "0") and repeatedly adding a

[19] Peano's primitive terms are "0," "number," and "successor" and his five postulates are : (1) 0 is a number; (2) the successor of any number is a number; (3) no two numbers have the same successor; (4) 0 is not the successor of any number; and (5) if P is a property such that (a) 0 has the property P, and (b) whenever a number n has the property P, then the successor of n also has the property P, then every number has the property P.

new member consisting of the last member plus a new element not already included such last member. However, the self-referential nature of Russell's automatic induction operation yields a paradox which bears Russell's name, namely, that it must ultimately lead to the inclusion in its membership of the set of all sets that do not include itself as a member. The paradox is this: if a set "*R*" is not a member of the set of all sets that are not members of themselves, then, by definition, *R* must not be a member of itself; however, if *R* is not a member of itself, then by definition *R* must be a member of itself.

Russell's second attempted deduction of the natural numbers avoids Russell's paradox by supplanting the problematic automated induction with a definition of "induction" and deducing the natural numbers as "as the posterity of 0 with respect to the relation immediate predecessor."[20] However, this formulation, too, is deficient because its validity depends upon the assumption that there is an infinite number of individuals in the world, which required Russell to offer what is known as the axiom of infinity, thereby defeating his purpose of providing an unaxiomatic deduction.

In any event, Russell's set-theoretic logicist project was brought to a halt with the development by Kurt Gödel of his incompleteness theorem, which purports to prove that any robust axiomatic system such as modern set-theoretic mathematics must be either incomplete or inconsistent. At the risk of oversimplification, Gödel showed that given any such system, one can always identify a statement within it that is unprovable within the system but that can be known to be true outside of it. Gödel's theorem is of interest to us in the exposition of transcendent realism not because it disposes of Russell's line but because it supports both our

[20] The "posterity" of a given natural number with respect to the relation immediate predecessor is all those terms that belong to every hereditary class to which the given number belongs and a property is "hereditary" in the natural number series if, whenever it belongs to a number n, it also belongs to n+1, the successor of n.

understanding that objective knowledge requires a self-transcendent knower and that truth cannot be formalized but instead must reside in Being itself. Because, in transcendent realism, the presence of the self-transcendent knower and the identity of Being and logic are conditions to the possibility of objective knowledge, no truth can be known but not proved, and the very idea of such is incoherent. Thus, Gödel does not impede the logicism of transcendent realism, but his theorem demands that we demonstrate how mathematics is an expression of the logicality of Being.

From the standpoint of transcendent realism, the difficulty with set-theoretic approaches is that they presuppose not merely the Being of both the set and its members but the logicality of that Being. To see why this is so, consider that Russell defines "natural number" as the defining characteristic of similar sets. Because the term "set" means a "collection of distinct objects, considered as an object in its own right," it is a logical object that defines the logical relations among its members, and the conjunctive membership relation among set members and the similarity of sets depend not upon the empirical reality of set members but upon their fundamental logicality. That many sets, such as the set of natural numbers, contain no empirical members and that the inclusion in a set of empirical set members depends not upon their characteristics as such but upon the *identity* of those characteristics demonstrates the logicality of the set concept. Concerning set similarity, that a set of a trio of cats is similar to a set of a trio of dogs depends not upon the empirical predication of cats and dogs but the fact that, upon the reduction of the members of each to their logical objectivity, the two sets are identical, namely, a set of a trio of logical objects. Thus, Russell's fundamental premise, that "number" is the defining characteristic of all similar sets, goes the way of the similarity that characterizes it and

yields that "number" must relate to the logical relations among the logical objects to which such sets are reduced.

In transcendent realism, the natural numbers "**N**" are a *prioritized series* of logical objects and the priority of logical objects in the **N**-series is determined solely by reference to the logical relations of *antecedence* and *subsequence*. The definitions of the nature of this priority are as follows:

(1) A logical object *a* in a series is an antecedent of another logical object *b* in the series if *b* cannot be posited in the series without *a* having been posited in the series but *a* can be posited in the series without *b* having been posited in the series.

(2) A logical object *a* in a series is the immediate antecedent of another logical object *b* in the series if the only antecedent of *b* in the series that is not also an antecedent of *a* in the series is *a* itself.

(3) A logical object *b* in a series is a subsequent of another logical object *a* in the series if *a* is an antecedent of *b* in the series.

(4) A logical object *b* in a series is the immediate subsequent of another logical object *a* in the series if *a* is the immediate antecedent of *b* in the series.

The definitions of priority allow for the placement of logical objects in a *serial* relation to one another. A "series" is a sequence that meets certain generally accepted logical criteria which are utilized here with a few changes to accommodate our terminology. These criteria are *asymmetry*, *transitivity*, and *connectedness* and are employed as follows:

(1) The priority relation between two objects, *a* and *b*, in a series is "asymmetrical" if it is the case that if an object *a* is an antecedent of *b* then *b* cannot also be an antecedent of *a*.

(2) The priority relation between three objects, *a*, *b*, and *c*, in a series is "transitive" if it is the case that if *a* is an antecedent of *b* and *b* is an antecedent of *c*, then *a* must be an antecedent of *c*.

(3) The priority relation between objects in a series is "connected" if it is the case that for all pairs of objects, *a* and *b*, in the series it must be the case that either *a* is an antecedent of *b* and *b* is a subsequent of *a* or vice versa.

The serial criteria determine its linear nature so that the logical objects in the series will follow a progression that corresponds to the one in the Peano system. If we are, however, to progress, as Russell does, beyond the generality of the Peano system, definitions of the concepts of "induction," "natural number," and "zero" must be provided unaxiomatically.

(1) A "logically inductive" series is a series comprising logical objects posited by reference to a logical object which does not have any antecedents (the "referent object") and in which each of the referent object and each other logical object is the immediate antecedent of another logical object (i.e., for every logical object *n* in the series, including the referent object, there is another logical object *n#*, that is its immediate subsequent).

(2) The **N**-series is the logically inductive series whose referent logical object is 0. Alternatively, the **N**-series is the logically inductive series comprising 0 and its subsequent logical objects in the series.

(3) "Zero (0)" is the logical object that is posited as being antecedent to all other logical objects in the **N**-series (that is, 0 is not subsequent to any other logical objects in the **N**-series and therefore has no antecedents).

(4) Each natural number is a logical object in the **N**-series the defining characteristic of which is the number of logical objects that are antecedent to it in the N-series.

Alternatively, each natural number is a logical object the defining characteristic of which is its position in the **N**-series, determined by reference to its antecedent logical objects in the **N**-series.

We can formalize the process of the deduction of the natural numbers by stating that the deduction of the natural numbers proceeds by positing (without end) 0, as the immediate antecedent of the number 1, and each immediate subsequent natural number in accordance with the definitions thereof. The unaxiomatic deduction of the natural numbers exclusively from logical objects and logical relations demonstrates the pure logicism of the natural numbers and the homogeneity of mathematics and general logic. The uniquely important feature of this deduction is that it is implemented by positing logical objects in accordance with definitions which are wholly logical and which do not in any way refer to empirical reality.[21]

VI.

Empirical Judgment. We have already noted that the empiricist notion that the mind is a *tabula rasa* and that all knowledge comes from the senses is not feasible under any post-Kantian or modern psychological understanding, and that empirical cognition requires that the cognitive agent must bring to cognition an *a priori* category system. Following Kant, transcendent realism adopts a transcendental view of human empirical cognition and regards space and time as the form and condition of the possibility of the representation of external objects. However, even that lofty cognitive status does not imply that either space or time is an ultimate ontological intuition and, indeed, under transcendent realism, both space and time are further reducible to logical objects and their relations, possible and actual, to the cognizing self and each other. To

[21] For the exposition of the operations of addition, subtraction, and multiplication, which are omitted here for brevity's sake and generally follow Peano's methodology, see *Being and Intelligibility*, 136–137.

see that this is so, one need only consider the entirely logical encapsulation of virtual reality within the correspondingly logically structured binary symbol manipulation of the computer.

It follows that even though our intuitions of space and time are *a priori*, we cannot regard them as the only possible forms of intuition under which non-human, rational creatures may understand extension. Instead, only a suitable logical framework is necessary and universal under all possible cognitive systems. Human reason represents empirical objects as extended in three-dimensional, Euclidean space, and apprehends them in each instance to be separable unities among manifolds that are in a constant state of temporal flux operating under the law of causality. Each of these intuitions is essentially logical—space is geometric, time is sequential and therefore arithmetical, and causality represents the logic of implication in space and time. It is important to note that, in an attempt to refute the apriority of Kantian transcendentalism, positivist philosophies sometimes confound scientific conceptions of space and time with our cognitive intuitions of them, arguing, for example, that space is non-Euclidean or that space-time is a continuum which contains all at once everything that ever existed, now exists, or will exist. However, the point is that, regardless of the scientific truth of these theories, they could not be farther from our cognitive intuitions, and we can only understand them through the correlative mediation of Euclidean space, temporal change, and causality.

The identity of Being with intelligibility that is foundational to transcendent realism represents a profoundly significant departure from Kantian and post-Kantian transcendentalism. Under transcendent realism, the question of empirical judgment may be restated this way: How does reason start with purely logical objects and relations and apply its rules to the appearances given to the senses? The transcendent view is similar to the transcendental one insofar as both regard empirical cognition as entailing logical judgments under spatiotemporal categories, but,

placing logic first as the transcendent philosophy does, such categories are wholly derivative of logic and not *vice versa*. We may amply illustrate this distinction by comparing the following tables with Kant's famous categorical ones. Table 1, below, contains the core constitutional concepts of logical and empirical objects considered solely as such.

TABLE 1 – CONSTITUTIONAL CONCEPTS OF LOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL OBJECTS AND RELATIONS

		Logical Objects and Relations	Empirical Objects and Relations
	(A)	(B)	(C)
(1)	Identity	Uniquely enhandled logical object (under laws of identity and identity of indiscernibles)	Uniquely enhandled, synthetically unified object extended in space and time
(2)	Predication	Logical predication	Logical and substantive predication
(3)	Relation to thinker	Internal object of reason	External object given to reason as sensible under an intuition of externality
(4)	Relation to self	Logical object grounded under principle of reason	Extended object grounded under principle of reason
(5)	Relation to other objects	Logically related	Logically and spatiotemporally related under rule of causation in time
(6)	Non-Contradiction	Logical consistency under the law of non-contradiction	Consistency of predication at each instant
(7)	Modality	Necessary and universal	Contingent

Table 1 shows the essential difference between a logical object and an empirical (substantive) one (which may be said to be the "descendant" of the logical object to which it is reducible (sometimes called its "progenitor")). In (1), both logical and empirical objects (when apprehended by reason) are uniquely enhandled, but the former are strictly self-identical, and the latter are synthetically unified in empirical experience. In (2), logical objects by definition possess only logical predication, whereas their descendant empirical objects include sensible characteristics. In (3), both logical and empirical objects are given to reason representationally,

internally (by direct intuition), in the case of the former, and under the intuition of externality, in the case of the latter. In (4), the unity of logical objects is given exclusively in their unique enhandlement (which grounds their predication), whereas the unity of empirical objects is given in their external grounding, which, when apprehended by reason, is represented as uniquely enhandled, synthesized objectivity. It is important to note that the cognition of each type of being is governed by the principle of reason which states (in this context) that all such cognition must be grounded. In (5), the relations among logical objects are, by definition, solely logical, whereas the relations among empirical objects include spatiotemporality and are ordered under the law of causality. In (6), logical objects are strictly non-self-contradictory, whereas empirical objects may possess contradictory predication but not simultaneously, which is the presupposition of alteration and apprehended by reason temporally. Finally, in (7), logical objects are thought contingently but their predication is necessary and universal in the Being of logical objectivity, whereas all empirical objects are contingent.

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Based upon this understanding, we are able to present in Table 2, below, a list of each logical judgment and describe how it operates under the intuition of externality:

TABLE 2 –LOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL JUDGMENTS			
	(A)	**(B)**	**(C)**
	Logical Concept	**Logical Formulation**	**Empirical Judgments**
Quantity			
(1)	Universality	(∀x)	Totality
(2)	Particularity	(∃x) [22]	Singularity or Plurality
(3)	Negation	¬(∃x)	Negation
Quality			
(4)	Predicated	(P)x	Existence of substantive predicate
(5)	Unpredicated	¬(P)x	Absence of substantive predicate
Relation			
(6)	Categorical	(∀x) (P)x or (∃x) (P)x	Substance or inherence
(7)	Conditionality	x → y	Causality and dependence
(8)	Disjunctive	(P)x ∨ (Q)x	Community (reciprocity)
(9)	Conjunctive	(P)x ∧ (Q)x	Community (complementation)
(10)	Arithmetical	x < y; x > y; x = y	Temporal (before, after, contemporaneously)
(11)	Geometric	x < y; x > y; x = y	Spatial (location, magnitude, proportion)
Modality			
(12)	Necessity	□x (directly or analytically intuited)	Permanent in Being
(13)	Contingency	◊x ∧ Ax ∨ ¬Ax	Temporary in Being

Table 2 is similar in purpose to Kant's tabular categories of understanding and judgments insofar as Table 2 contains a taxonomy of logical judgments (in nominative (Column A) and logical (Column B) form) and the related empirical judgments (Column C). In Table 2, such judgments are broken down into the same four groupings that appear in Kant's categories of understanding namely, Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Modality. Concerning the judgments of

[22] Singularity requires the uniqueness qualifier.

Quantity, the quantification alternatives of predicate calculus, namely, all, some, and none, are sufficient to yield the full scope of the corresponding empirical judgments. The first two such judgments listed in Table 2, namely, universality and plurality correspond with Kant's categories. The third logical judgment in Table 2, that of negation, requires a judgment as to the non-existence of an object. Its treatment in the table as a quantity, which is consistent with the not uncontested notion that zero is a number, departs from Kant's twofold treatment of negation as a quality, apparently on the theory that it describes gradation, and as a modality, which is in furtherance of Kant's famous assertion that existence (and non-existence) are not predicates at all.

In predicate calculus, all predication under consideration in any particular case either attaches to all, some, or no objects. An object may be said to be predicated or unpredicated of any particular quality. Thus, under the grouping of Quality, Table 2 includes only the ideas of *predicated* and *unpredicated*, which are correlated to the existence or non-existence of the predicate of its object. Under Kant's categorization, qualitative concepts are reality, negation, and their supposed combinatory, limitation. Because these concepts can be treated under the logic of qualitative predication (as just described) and any comparison between two qualities seems addressable either under arithmetic or geometric relations or by treating gradation of similar qualities as distinct predicates, negation is not included as a qualitative concept. The omission of Kant's concept of limitation from qualitative concepts in Table 2 is intended to express judgments that objects which possess a certain quality may sometimes be understood as objects that do not possess another one. The denial of qualitative status to "non-P's" in Table 2 is based upon the idea that to say that something is a "non-P" implies the existence of at least one other related predicate. For example, if the universe of political party membership consists of

democrats, republicans and unaffiliates, then to say that John is affiliated with a party (that is a "non-unaffiliate") means that either John is a democrat or a republican, which can be adequately dealt with under the logic of disjunction.

Table 2 includes the substance of Kant's relational triad plus three additional categories, namely, conjunctive, arithmetical, and geometric. The conjunctive category of general logic correlates with the empirical judgment that two objects belong together, not as alternatives, but as complements, and also provides the underlying logic of set membership. We have already amply described the treatment of the arithmetical and geometric relations in logic and under the intuitions of space and time.

Finally, with respect to Modality, Kant's three categories of possibility-impossibility, existence-non-existence, and necessity-contingency, have been reduced in Table 2 to the two categories of necessity and contingency, to reflect that all possible objects of thought are either necessary, in which case, they must obtain and be self-justifying, or contingent, in which they might or might not obtain, and are conditional. Logically impossible objects would neither be necessary nor contingent and are therefore considered under transcendent realism to be incoherent by virtue of the identity of Being and intelligibility. Necessity correlates with self-instantiating permanence and contingency correlates with conditionally instantiated impermanence in the empirical world. Although whether any necessary empirical object exists is not free from doubt, under transcendent realism only the transcendent *Logos* necessarily exists.

There remains for Kant, and for transcendent realism, the question of how the categories are applied to the manifold of sensuous intuitions. Kant assigns, reasonably enough, the function of mediating between the two to the rational imagination. In what is arguably the most obscure of Kant's epistemology, Kant asserts that the imagination associates sensible appearances with

categorically intelligible objects by applying rules, called schemata, each of which is related to a categorical concept. Because the schemata operate on particulars, the produced image must conform to the concept associated with the schema, and because the one commonality among all appearances (theoretical as well as empirical) is their situation in time, the schemata are temporal determinations.

Because transcendent realism privileges general logic over the form of empirical cognition and the empirical concepts under which cognition takes place, it averts any need to explain, on a philosophical basis, the process by which the mind associates the rules of thought with the objects of cognition. Under transcendent realism, all objects are logical objects or their descendants, space and time are logical structures, and cognition under the categories entails only connecting logical judgments with logical sensibility. For example, contrary to transcendental idealism, the *a priori* geometric idea of a circle under which we understand a plate as such lies in the circularity of the plate itself (in an unknowably direct or correlate form). A plate on the table before me is understood as an enhandled object that (1) is uniquely grounded and therefore singular (Quantity), (2) is predicated of those necessary and contingent properties of a plate, including, for example, circularity and flatness, and unpredicated of those properties which would preclude it from being understood as a plate, such as sphericality (Quality), (3) comprises (in light of its qualities) the essential and incidental plate-properties given in their appearances and is spatiotemporally located in relation to the rest of the world, in this case, on the table (Relation), and (4) exists contingently (Modality). The organic and imaginative processes by which I come to judge that the plate is before me, the accuracy of the representations upon which my judgment is based, and the meaning that I attach to the presence

of the plate are all physical and/or psychological and are, from the strict standpoint of objective epistemology, unimportant.

VII.

Being and Being Human. Transcendent realism, in commencing with an analysis of objective knowledge, emphasizes the self-transcendence of the cognizing agent and asserts that Being and intelligibility are self-same. However, that all objects are reducible to logical objects merely explains the structure of reality and its knowability. It tells us nothing about the content of reality or the way the cognizing agent relates to it. Neither does it imply that all self-transcendent species (if there are more than one) must rationally represent the intelligibility of the world in the same manner, and, indeed, one may expect that the nature of the sensory apparatus possessed by a species has a significant effect upon the qualia of such representation. In other words, the transcendent structure of reality asserted under transcendent realism does not override or obviate the transcendental nature of cognition or dictate its content. However, for reasons to which we will now turn, the identity of Being and intelligibility does tell us that there is a way of Being in relation to the world that is morally required of self-conscious creatures and, with sufficient precision, what that way of Being is.

The most practical point of departure in addressing these issues is the one so brilliantly identified by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, namely, the interrogation of the human Being as to its own Being. Because we have privileged access to ourselves and our ways of Being, we may permissibly act as both interrogator and witness. Not surprisingly, there is a high degree of compatibility between the conception of human Being in transcendent realism and Heidegger's *Dasein*. In transcendent realism, we understand human Being to be not only self-conscious but also self-concerned and, in particular, to be anxious about its own, limited existence. We also

understand that humankind relates to reality across different cognitive domains, for example, the domain of the known and available, which it synthesizes from the infinite sensory data it receives and filters to a manageable number of objects and relations in accordance with its perceived ends, and the domain of social relations, which it comprehends as a learned set of customs and practices that facilitate understanding and cooperation. We also agree that human self-consciousness always occurs from the spatiotemporal horizon of the here and now, and that, as a result, humankind always acts from the perspective of its thrown[23] world and its potential way of Being which it temporalizes.

However, we also have a fundamental disagreement with Heidegger about the Being of the human being. Heidegger holds that the self merely subsists as part of the unified structure in which its consciousness brings Being to its experience and anxiously and resolutely determines itself without any ontologically significant morality.[24] Under transcendent realism, we hold that the self-transcendent human entity is a substantial, morally-obligated soul who exists in relation to a world that has a mind-independent, logical structure.

In our earlier critique of modern philosophy, we charged Heidegger with having committed the third stifling error, which is to privilege Being over the logic that co-determines it. Heidegger makes this error in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, where, in addressing the *Why* question, he asserts that Being is a precondition to logic. Presumably, Heidegger is basing this assertion upon the notion that to make logical assertions about objects the objects must first exist. Of course, in the case of substantive objects, to assert essential (non-logical) and accidental qualities about them one must presuppose their existence. However, the case is not the same

[23] Heidegger employs the term "thrown" (*werfen*) to describe the factual, social, and historical circumstances which determine *Dasein's* existential possibilities at any given moment.

[24] The concept of conscience figures largely in Heidegger's philosophy as a phenomenon that calls *Dasein* to take responsibility for its own Being but which does so without requiring any particular moral commitment.

regarding logical objects because the four "rules of thought" apply to every thinkable object and no object may be presupposed to exist without already bearing them as predicates. To assert that we have a pre-ontological understanding of "something like" an object (as Heidegger asserts of Being and the world of *Dasein's* experience) before logically predicating it is literally nonsensical. Logical predication uniquely is *ontological* predication, and Being cannot be prior to logic but only co-determinate with it.

One might expect that, given our dependence upon logic in thought, any philosopher who would assert that Being is prior to logic would have little more to say about ontology. However, Heidegger's further elucidation of Being is as brilliant as it is wrong, and we can demonstrate the co-determiacy of Being and logic by showing that Heidegger's non-logical understanding of Being is susceptible of an utterly logical reinterpretation which supports and enhances it.

The pre-Socratics to whom Heidegger turned to avoid the rigidifcation of Being he asserts characterizes Post-Classical Western philosophy described Being as "*phusis,*" which means "emerging abiding sway." Heidegger develops the ontological priority of *phusis* by describing the way in which *phusis* appears as *meaningful presence* to *Dasein.* Heidegger then identifies four ways in which Being, as a concept, is commonly considered restricted by the scope of other related concepts, namely, becoming, seeming, thinking, and the "Ought." In each case, Heidegger shows that Being incorporates and subsumes its antagonist concept. Being is perdurance in the face of change. Being is unconcealment and truth. Being is *logos* in its original pre-Socratic meaning of "gathering gatheredness". And Being is not subordinate to the Ought but is presupposed by it as either that which ought to be and which either has been actualized or

remains unactualized. Finally, Heidegger concludes that Being is *ousia* (substance) and the ground of all beings but itself is ungrounded.[25]

The logical reinterpretation of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology under transcendent realism consists in identifying the unity among orderable manifolds inherent in *Dasein* and its experience of the world. All of the various ways that Heidegger characterizes *Dasein* reflect an essential understanding of it as a unity that is always in the figurative motion of becoming itself and never in the stasis of having achieved its potentiality for Being. Heidegger tells us early on in *Being and Time* that his purpose is to show that *Dasein* is temporality itself. However, as we have already noted in critiquing Kant's intuition of time, temporality depends upon the ontological priority of logic for its unified sequentiality. Similarly, Being as *phusis* is identity through change, and change, as perceived by *Dasein*, occurs under the same sequential logic of temporality.

Heidegger's position on the primacy of Being allows him to depict *Dasein* as the Being whose "moral" commitment is merely to pay attention to its Being, to posit reality as non-Being, and to assert the possibility of Nothingness and the corresponding contingency of Being. However, if as we assert under transcendent realism that Being and logic are co-determinate, then humankind brings neither Being nor logic to cognition but instead apprehends Being and its logicality both transcendently in its direct intuition and transcendentally in its intuitions of space, time, and causality. The implication is everything—humankind can understand that Nothingness and non-Being are incoherent and that Being is not mere *ousia* but also the necessary and self-

[25] Heidegger's conclusion that Being is ungrounded is worked out in *The Principle of Reason*.

justifying sufficient reason for all that may exist,[26] and, upon these claims, confidently assert both the existence of God and moral obligation.

The notion that we share with Heidegger that humankind exists within its own limitations as a self-determining potential for Being contains within it the idea that humankind acts teleologically. Heidegger asserts that *Dasein's* mortality reflects a special limit on its potentiality for Being that *Dasein* must take into account, and Heidegger characterizes *Dasein* in its authentic Being as Being-toward-the-end or Being-toward-death. However, under transcendent realism, we consider of primary significance that, as a self-conscious agent, humankind possesses not only the knowledge of its limitations but also of the idea of perfect Being and therefore can and does *consciously* strive for a *telos* that it can never possess. The motivation for such striving is not one of mere desire but of directly perceived obligation. The facts of human morality and guilt amply evidence this essential orientation of humankind. Whereas for Heidegger Being-toward-the-end and Being-toward-death reflect the limits of *Dasein's* lived experience, under transcendent realism, human Being is Being-toward-perfection, which is to say that it is Being-toward-God, and humankind's Being-toward-the-end is not understood as necessarily entailing absolute Being-toward-death but as Being-toward-transcendence, at least as a possibility.

VIII.

Moral Obligation. That human Being is the being for whom its being is an issue means nothing less than human Being is essentially concerned with determining *how to be*. It is fair to say that in order to be healthily functioning, human beings must understand that they are required

[26] In *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger argues that although Leibniz's *nihil est sine ratione* (nothing is without reason) is the "Principle of Principles" which applies to the other rules of thought, it cannot apply to itself because that would entail a circularity. To avoid this purported difficulty, Heidegger concludes that the Principle of Principles speaks only to Being as the fundamental principle of cognition. However, Heidegger's ability to pursue this line is predicated upon his mistaken separation and privileging of Being from and over logic. If, as we assert based upon the co-determinacy of Being and logic, that Being is necessary, then Being is not ungrounded but self-grounding, which is precisely what the Principle of Principles, in speaking to itself, tells us.

to comport themselves morally. In the Western world, beginning with the dispersion of the Jewish people from Israel by the Romans and the spread of Christianity more than two millennia ago, moral conduct has centered around the Ten Commandments. Because the *Book of Exodus* recites that the Ten Commandments were physically engraved in tablets and given by God to Moses, the Judeo-Christian understanding is that the source of moral obligation is Divine.

Until the Age of Enlightenment in late 17th century Europe, most people lived religious lives. However, many cultural developments from the commencement of that era to the present day have undercut the force of perceived moral obligation and its association with the Divine. In the philosophical world, the key events were the ascendency of British empiricism, Hume's radical skepticism, and the development logical positivism and post-modern existentialism, all of which (in their mature forms) deny the provability, if not the actuality, of the existence of God. Indeed, the decline of Christianity as a rigorously practiced religion was so philosophically crucial that, in the late 19th century, Frederick Nietzsche metaphorically declared that God was dead and correctly predicted that nihilism and totalitarianism would replace Christianity in the 20th century as major belief systems. On the economic front, the vast increases in wealth attending the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th and 19th centuries provided increasingly large numbers of people with the means and time to indulge themselves. In the scientific arena, far-ranging advances also fostered the decline of faith and the liberalization of sexual mores. These include Charles Darwin's development of materialist evolutionary theory, which challenged the intelligent design argument for the existence of God, the discovery of penicillin, a significant use of which was the treatment of venereal disease, and the invention of the birth control pill, which disassociated sexual activity from its natural consequences. By the mid-20th century, most

Western legal systems had responded to these developments by repealing laws prohibiting homosexuality, cohabitation, and abortion.

Because not even these events could fully quash humankind's moral consciousness, they leave secular mainstream philosophy with a conundrum. If one denies that God is the source of morality, then one is left with only three choices. The first is to face up to the nihilist conclusion that moral obligation is illusory. The second is to justify moral obligation upon a deontological, rationalist system which argues that pure reason alone requires moral conduct. The last is to base morality upon a naturalist system such as those which hold that moral obligation is a materially reducible, social or psychological phenomenon. However, none of these lines works. Nihilism fails because it flies in the face of both the fact and the dominant human intuition of morality and justifies beastly and pathological behavior. Neither deontological nor naturalist systems can overcome the naturalist fallacy, first articulated by Hume in the modern philosophical era as reflecting the impossibility of deriving "ought from is," and neither can explain the necessity to treat others as ends rather than means that is an essential feature of our Western moral intuition. Additionally, particular lines of secular mainstream moral philosophy face difficulties that are more or less specific to them, including justifying morality within systems that deny the substantiality of the soul or the freedom of will necessary for moral action.

Concerning the treatment of others as ends, Kant's deontological moral philosophy is illuminating because of its deep consideration of the issue. Kant's goal is to demonstrate the *a priori* basis for the empirically undeniable fact of morality, which means that he needs to articulate a necessary and universal rule of morality which adequately depicts everyday moral conduct. Kant's rule, known as the categorical imperative contains the twofold obligation to act "only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal

law" and "to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only." On its face, the categorical imperative is universal, and its necessity, according to Kant, is implicit from the notion that reason must be its own end. Kant further argues that, as its own end, reason also requires treating all rational creatures as ends. However, Kant's moral theory fails for at least three reasons. The first is that it is not rational *per se* (that is, without an independent source of moral obligation) to engage in universalized moral conduct in a world in which immoral conduct is also pervasive. The second is that regardless of whether reason is its own end, reason cannot *morally* require that one act rationally. The third is that there are numerous rational systems, such as utilitarianism, in which individual rights are subordinate to a purportedly greater good.

The only one way to avoid the deficiencies of nihilism and deontological moral systems is to adopt theism and theistic morality. Under transcendent realism, we adopt this understanding on a purely philosophical basis and claim that moral obligation reflects the intentionality of a transcendent will, called "*Agape*" (which for our purposes means "unqualified good will"). For *Agape* to be such, it must exist independently of, and be ontologically prior to, morally obligated beings, it must be *good-in-itself* by definition, and it must intend itself as its own object or end. Under transcendent realism, for philosophical reasons, moral obligation may be stated as the requirement that humankind, as morally conscious beings, act in all things with *agape*, which means nothing more than the Golden Rule.[27]

Kant was on the right track in asserting that reason is its own end, but the point he missed was a crucial one. *Practical* reason is its own end *only* because it reflects Divine intentionality. Rational agents may not satisfy themselves with mere knowledge of the good because the good

[27] The Golden Rule, famously articulated by Jesus but first appearing in the *Book of Leviticus* of the Old Testament, which was written approximately 1300 B.C., requires love of God, other human beings, and self.

is not a passive idea but is instead, as Kant asserted, *good will*. Only when morally conscious entities harmonize their will with *Agape*, do they actualize it and, in doing so, act morally. Kant was also on the right track in asserting that reason, as its own end, requires treatment of all rational creatures as ends instead of means. However, *Agape* provides for the natural rights of all moral creatures not because they are rational but because they are the *agents* by which *Agape* instantiates itself in the world.

Moral skeptics often take cover under the notion that human moral sensibility has varied both cross-culturally and historically. The argument that moral differences belie that morality is subjective misses the more significant and relevant lessons. These include that all cultures have in common a sense of moral obligation (even when owed to a tribe or an emperor) and often, if not always, a core set of values (such as honesty, courage in battle, and duty to family or its equivalent). As an example of historical changes in morality, a common line of skeptical argument is that, even within the Bible, morality evolves from Old Testament tolerance of slavery and polygamy to the emphasis placed by Jesus on the love of neighbor. However, upon careful analysis, one would expect precisely that. Moral knowledge requires morally conscious action and, in the absence of a comprehensive code of conduct, reflection on that action and its consequences. As much as anything, the stories of the Old and New Testaments reflect the development of progressively deepening moral knowledge as civilization emerged from the union of Adam and Eve and advanced from tribes to great cities and empires. For Christians, Jesus represents the archetypically moral human being—a man who, in the ultimate demonstration of *agape*, took upon his shoulders moral responsibility for the sins of all humanity past, present, and future and, in so, doing transcended mortality. To be clear, we are not arguing

here for religious faith as such, but merely to make the point that biblical moral evolution is not a valid argument against either the fact of morality or the moral argument for the existence of God.

To include objective moral knowledge within our understanding of objective reason, we need to restate its preconditions as follows: (1) the identity of Being and intelligibility, which we understand to inhere in the reducibility of all beings to logical objects, (2) consciousness of self as (morally obligated) *soul*, and (3) mind-independent, self-justifying divine *Agape*.

IX.

Moral Freedom. Our omission of freedom from the preconditions of objective reason is glaring, all the more so because the manner in which Kant employs freedom to bridge the divide between empirical knowledge and metaphysical dogma. Kant argues that *a priori* moral obligation presupposes the freedom to obey it and, because the world is causally determined, the source of liberty must be transcendent. However, under transcendent realism, we hold that objective practical reason *creates* the freedom to behave morally.

The traditional determinist arguments suffer from broader difficulties associated with material reductionism including, especially, that to maintain them, they require materialist explanations of self, mind, and the intuition of freedom. Modern versions of determinism, such as compatibilism and dispositionalism, seek to minimize or avoid these difficulties by defining "free will" as the ability of humankind to exercise sufficient control over its conduct for moral responsibility, and then tautologically arguing that our willingness to hold people to account for their actions means that such actions are morally free. Rationalists generally assert that freedom is incidental to reason but those who are mind-body dualists, including Plato, Descartes, and Leibniz, are unable to connect the willing soul with the material agent of moral action. Mainstream phenomenologists, such as Husserl and Heidegger, avoid the difficulties that attend

determinism and mind-body dualism by asserting freedom exists as a conscious phenomenon, however, under their philosophies, moral obligation, if it exists at all, is not objectively sourced.

Transcendent realism distinguishes between subjective choice and moral freedom based on their objects. Subjective choosing entails a determination among various subjective desires. The decision whether to have chocolate or vanilla ice cream for dessert is an example because it involves ordering the two alternatives on a personal scale. Moral freedom entails the determination of whether to indulge a subjective desire or fulfill an objective moral obligation. The decision by a witness whether to testify truthfully is an example of the latter because the obligation to tell the truth is objective and, although it may be wrongfully disregarded, it may not be evaluated against any subjective desires without destroying its obligatory character.

The argument for moral freedom may be summarized as follows:

(1) If moral obligation exists, then it must be either subjective or objective in nature.

(2) If moral obligation is subjective in nature, it is indistinguishable from any other subjective desire and may be ordered on a scale that includes subjective desires that are inconsistent with it.

(3) If moral obligation may be ordered on a scale that includes subjective desires that are inconsistent with it, then some subjective desires may whimsically be placed above it on such a scale. (This is because if moral obligation were required to be ranked first on any list of subjective desires moral obligation could not be said to be subjective).

(4) If some subjective desires may be placed above moral obligation on a scale of subjective desires, then moral obligation can be disregarded in favor of those subjective desires.

(5) If moral obligation can be disregarded in favor of a subjective desire, then it is not a moral obligation, which, by its very nature, mandates action in spite of all subjective desires.

(6) Therefore, if moral obligation exists, it must be objective in nature.

(7) Humankind sometimes satisfies its objective moral obligation in spite of a contrary subjective desire and sometimes fails to do so.

(8) If humankind sometimes satisfies its moral obligation in spite of a contradictory subjective desire, it must have the freedom to satisfy its moral obligation without regard for any mechanistically determined subjective values.

(9) Therefore, freedom exists.

X.

Transcendence. We have set forth the threefold presuppositions of humankind's objective knowledge as the identity of Being and intelligibility, consciousness of self as *soul*, and Divine and self-justifying *Agape*. We have described self-knowledge, moral obligation, and moral freedom as a kind of internal perception, human Being as being-toward-God, and moral obligation as requiring that humankind act in all things with *agape*. Together, these reflect our understanding of the *Logos*. Although the preceding is quite a lot, we can still say much more about our experience of transcendent reality.

Concerning self-knowledge, many prominent thinkers, including Aristotle and Kant, have argued that the soul, as the possessor of the power of abstraction, knows itself by abstraction from its acts of cognition. For Aristotle, the soul is substance, but it perishes with the body. For Kant, the soul is a mere unity of apperception and not knowable on a non-dogmatic basis to be substance. However, as we noted regarding Kant, there is a circularity in the argument that to

have self-knowledge one must first have the power of abstraction and that to have the power of abstraction one must first have self-knowledge. Although Aquinas adopted this line as well, he saved himself from the circularity by also accepting the Platonic notion that the mere presence of the mind is sufficient for it to understand its existence. Descartes's *Cogito* reflects a similar view.

Although we have asserted that we know ourselves to be souls by direct perception, we have not addressed a more fundamental question, which is, why do we feel the need even to ask how we have such knowledge? There are two possible answers. One presupposes that a non-persistent, non-substantive being might mistakenly attribute persistence and substance to itself. However, we have already shown that no such being can possess the self-transcendence to attain to objective knowledge. The other has hidden within it the empirical premise that all knowledge comes from the senses, in which case the question the empiricists are asking is a different one, namely, if all knowledge is sensible, then how can we have metaphysical knowledge? Although the answer to that question is, on its stated empirical premise, that metaphysical knowledge is impossible, we have already seen that objective knowledge presupposes a transcendent agent of cognition and that even Kant's mighty efforts to limit knowledge to the empirical were a failure. Therefore, the empirical argument is sound but not valid, and it appears that our self-doubt reflects a misplaced humility. In asking how we know ourselves to be souls, we have already answered our question, for, to paraphrase Heidegger on the existence of mind-independent reality, who but a self-transcendent soul would ask it?

Another question that we have not heretofore addressed is that of the relationship of the soul to the world of its experience. Except for Leibniz, who held that each human being is a windowless monad that contains self and world, and Hegel, who held that the world is thought thinking about itself, from Aristotle onward, the mainstream philosophical conception of

humankind has generally included its containment within a Cartesian world of space and time—at least until Heidegger came along. Heidegger follows Kant in adopting a transcendental view of cognition, but Heidegger replaces Kant's transcendental category system with a more Hegelian ontological conception in which *Dasein* subsists as part of the unified structure in which its consciousness relates to the world selectively under its own ends. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is not contained in the world but exists *alongside* it as a point at which the world discloses itself in its Being. Transcendent realism follows Heidegger in asserting that the soul is not contained in the external world but instead exists in relationship to it but departs from him in asserting that the soul *exists* as a transcendent reality and does not merely *subsist* as part of that relation.

The understanding that space and time do not contain the soul follows directly from the premise that space and time are the forms of an *internal* intuition of externality. It is, of course, impossible for the soul to exist externally under its own internal intuition. In order for there to be a known object in the external world, the soul must exist apart from, but still in relation to, the object, and that relation must both allow for the persistence of the soul and temporal change in the object and the external world in which it exists. The former seems straightforward enough—in order to possess an intuition of spatiotemporal change, the soul must be persistent. However, explaining the latter is far more difficult, because it entails reconceiving the human physical corpus not as an entity contained in the world but as the physical manifestation of the *relationship* between the soul and the world. The soul provides the persistence necessary for the internal intuition of externality and the cognition of change, and the body, as the vehicle through which we obtain sensory information and as the expression of the relation of the soul to the external world, changes along with it. To be clear, under transcendent realism, for so long as the

human Being exists in relation to the external world, it does so as a psychosomatic unity, and the soul does not subsist within the structure of consciousness of the world but exists as the ground of that relation.

The understanding of the soul as existing alongside but not in the world of its intuition of externality also leaves room for direct cognition of transcendent Being such as *Agape*, the soul itself, and the relation between the two. It also allows us to connect our understanding of moral obligation as requiring *agape* in our relationships with other human beings to their human Being, because we can now recognize that they are not mere objects of our external cognition but physical manifestations of other souls who are themselves the object of Divine *agape*. The soul expresses itself in its worldly relating to other human beings and in so doing changes its relation to them and *Agape*, but the soul as the persistent morally obligated substance of a human being does not itself change.

Earlier on in this summary, we demonstrated the identity and logical necessity of Being and intelligibility, and we asserted without demonstration that Being occurs under a supreme principle (which we are calling the "Supreme Principle"). We also asserted that we directly intuit *Agape*, as the unconditioned ground of moral obligation. To complete our monotheistic metaphysics, we need to show that the Supreme Principle and *Agape* are the same ontologically supreme being—the one and only God of all Being and morality. Not surprisingly, an excellent place to start is with our critique of Heidegger.

Although transcendent realism adopts Heidegger's definition of "Being" as the being of beings and therefore all that is thinkable, we have claimed that Heidegger makes a grave error in prioritizing Being over logic. Under our understanding of Being as logical objectivity, Heidegger's error means that Being is not itself a being, and this is precisely the position that

Heidegger takes in concluding that Being is the ground of all beings but is itself ungrounded. Heidegger staked this claim in the first few pages of *Being and Time* and subsequently devoted an entire lecture series to it which is enshrined in *The Principle of Reason*.[28] At its core, Heidegger's argument is that, notwithstanding that Leibniz's principle of reason, *nihil est sine ratione* (nothing is without reason), is the Principle of Principles, it cannot apply to itself without being circular. Concerning Leibniz's proof of the existence of God, Heidegger claims that the principle of reason depends upon God for its authority and therefore cannot be used to demonstrate the existence of God.

Transcendent realism takes Heidegger head-on in this most fundamental of propositions. Our position is that the principle of reason applies to itself without any circularity *precisely* because Being and intelligibility are self-same. Because the most fundamental objects of thought are logical objects, Being justifies itself in its co-determinacy with logic. The laws of thought are not mere axioms, which are taken to be improvably true, but statements of facts of Being, which as the mode of all thought, contain within themselves their own credentials. Heidegger appears to accept, as do we, that the principle of reason applies to the other rules of thought as beings, but since in our understanding the rules of thought are the articulation Being, we make the further claims that the principle of reason applies to Being, and Being is therefore self-grounding.[29]

To justify our claim that Being is a being, we must demonstrate that Being itself can be understood in terms of its logical objectivity. Aristotle and Aquinas distinguished between (y) that which is cognizable under the categories (extended objects) and (z) that (that is, everything else) about which an affirmative proposition can be formulated. Heidegger follows in

[28] Indiana University Press (1991).

[29] Heidegger argues incoherently that the inconceivable may still be thought: "The Principle of Principles without reason—for us this is inconceivable. But what is inconceivable is by no means unthinkable, given that thinking does not exhaust itself in conceiving." *The Principle of Reason*, 18.

this regard, although perhaps less clearly so,[30] and, as noted at the outset of this summary, so do we. In stating that Being is the defining characteristic of all beings whose essential predicates are the four rules of thought, we formulate an affirmative proposition about Being. Being, it appears, is therefore a being under clause (z) of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition. So far, so good, but to demonstrate that Being is self-grounding, we must further show that reason represents Being to itself under the laws of thought.

In ordinary grammar, a simple sentence connects a subject, as ground or bearer, with a predicate. When, for example, we say that "the pen is red," we assert that the pen, as an object in Being, is the *ground* for the color red that we see when we look at the pen. Similarly, when we assert that "there exists an *x* such that *x* is a pen and *x* is red," we are asserting that there exists a being the categorical substance of which is a pen and which bears the color red as an accidental quality. In this case, although *x* is the subject of the sentence, it is a placeholder for the pen which expresses the quiddity of *x* as well as the ground of its *qualia*. In asserting the predication of the placeholder, we are expressing our understanding of the existence of a being that grounds all of the red pen predicates. Here, we get a glimpse of what we mean by the "ground" of an object, namely, that which gathers together and holds the object's predication so that it is intelligible in its objectivity. Ground, as subject, is always *of* something, which is to say that the relationship in Being always is ground-predicate and never mere ground. Only because of the ground-predicate unity are we able to ask the originary question, "what is the meaning of Being?" by which we mean to ask, "what predicates are essential to all beings such that they are intelligible in their objectivity?" We have already answered this question by asserting that Being

[30] *See* note 3, above.

(is) grounded logical predication and that the essential predicates of being are identity, non-contradiction, existence or non-existence, and groundedness.

Accordingly, under the definition of Being, we can assert of all beings that "for all *x*, *x* is self-same, non-contradictory, in or not in Being, and grounded in its Being, and there is no other property P such that for all *x*, (P)*x*." In this statement, the universal predicates of *x* represent the rules of thought. The last such predicate expresses that the Being of an object depends upon its intelligibility as such., which is to say that, unless we can grasp and associate predication together in a logical way, the conditions of Being will not be satisfied. We can also assert without tautology that "there is one and only one *x*, such that *x* is self-same, non-contradictory, *necessarily in Being*, and self-grounded, and there is no other essential property E such that (E)*x*." In this statement, *x* is the one and only being that is Being and the conditions of its intelligibility as a being are satisfied in its own right, which is to say that, there are no conditions which are not contained in Being that must be satisfied for its intelligibility. Finally, we can combine the two statements as follows: for all *x*, *x* is self-same, non-contradictory, either necessarily existing or contingently in Being or not in Being, and either self-grounded or grounded in its Being, and, if and only if *x* is necessary and self-grounding, then *x* is Being. Being is not, as Heidegger incoherently asserts, the ungrounded ground of everything, but is instead the necessary ground of everything, including itself, because it contains within itself the logical conditions of Being which it satisfies in its own right. Being speaks to itself in its own terms. As the logically necessary being, Being is the being whose essence is its existence, and, therefore, the being we call the "Supreme Being."

If, as Kant asserts, metaphysics represents reason's pursuit of the unconditioned explanation of human experience of reality, then metaphysics reaches its end in the *Logos*. The

denial of the possibility of metaphysics, or the conclusion that the world is what it is, or the conclusion that there is a multiplicity of gods, all leave reason with the unanswered question: Why? Modern philosophy, in asserting that reason does not require a First Cause, treats logic as a set of rules and treats the physical cosmos as if it were metaphysical Being, and, in so doing, sets up an irrelevant strawman (which it may or may not succeed in defeating). When one understands that Being is in its essence grounded logical predication and, therefore, that Being and intelligibility are identical, the necessity of a Supreme Being becomes manifest, not as a first temporal cause, but as the atemporal and infinite creative and sustaining explanation of Being itself.

The necessary existence of the Supreme Being is reflected in the following argument:

(1) For something to be possible, it must be conceivable.

(2) For something to be conceivable the rules of its conception (i.e., theoretical reason) must exist and apply to it.

(3) Therefore, for something to be possible it must be conceivable in accordance with the rules of conception of objects of thought (i.e., logically possible).

(4) The concept of Nothingness is unintelligible because it entails the absence of all that may possibly be, including the rules of its own conception.

(5) Therefore, Nothingness is logically impossible.

(6) Therefore, the rules of conception of objects must exist and the world must contain at least one conceivable object.

(7) Under the rules of conception of objects, conceivable objects must either be necessary or contingent.

(8) A contingent object, a limited set of contingent objects, and an infinite set of contingent objects all might not exist.

(9) Therefore, for the world to exist necessarily, it must contain at least one object that is not contingent.

(10) Therefore, for the world to exist necessarily, there must exist at least one object that is necessary.

(11) A necessary object is one that does not depend for its existence upon the existence of any other object.

(12) Under the rules of conception of objects, conceivable objects must have an intelligible reason for their necessary or possible existence.

(13) Because existence is not a predicate, the fact of the existence of something cannot be an intelligible reason for its existence.

(14) Therefore, a necessary object must contain within itself the explanation of its own existence other than the fact of its existence.

(15) Therefore, for the world to necessarily exist there must be a necessary object that contains within itself the explanation of its existence (other than the fact that it exists) and the rules of its own intelligibility.

(16) Such an object must intend itself as its own end in accordance with its own rules of conception.

(17) Such an object must be understood to exist as the Supreme Principle of Being and Intelligibility.

(18) We call the Supreme Principle of Being and Intelligibility “God.”

The last step in our path to monotheism is to demonstrate the identity of the Supreme Principle and *Agape* as the one Supreme Being. There are two reasons for this conclusion. The first corresponds to the logical necessity of the Supreme Being as the creative and sustaining explanation of Being. Reason seeks a single uncaused entity because more than one such entity is not logically necessary and reason's demands are fully met by the Being who both contains satisfies within itself all of the conditions of Being. A second reason lies in the heart of moral obligation. It will be recalled that for moral obligation to exist there must be a self-intending *Agape* of which morally conscious beings have knowledge. If *Agape* behaved in what we understand (in our current circumstances) to be evil ways, we would not recognize them as such because we would have no other referent by which to judge them. Neither reason nor our experience can include a multiplicity of morally good absolutes. The statements that "the essence of the Supreme Being is existence" and "the Supreme Being is self-intending good" are therefore equivalent.

XI.

Agape *and Ethics.* The core ethical principle of transcendent realism is that all morally rational agents are required to act at all times with *agape*, by which we mean unqualified good will. Acting with *agape*, as transcendent realism understands it, requires taking into account its three elements, which are that the source of moral obligation is Divine, that all morally conscious beings must be treated as ends and not means, and that giving effect to *agape* in real-world circumstances is both fact and agent dependent. As a result of the last, under transcendent realism, only a small number of particulars may be offered as ethical rules. Six of them are summarized below.

(1) *The fundamental ethical principle is to act in good will at all times.* Divine will is a fact of humankind's experience. Although no code of conduct could possibly encapsulate the duty to act with *agape*, its tenets are as set forth in the Bible, including both the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments.

(2) *Acting with* agape *is a call to reciprocate* Agape. Humankind must embrace God's good will not because God so demands (as an emperor might demand the loyalty of his subjects) but because it is absolute, unconditional, and, by definition, *good-in-itself*. Although human beings are free to reject *Agape*, they may not do so morally. The duty to love God is set forth in the first three Commandments and the first prong of Christ's articulation of the Greatest Commandment.

(3) *Because each soul is an object of* Agape, *each soul must be treated with* agape. If the Divine will extends to all humankind, then each person must act with good will to all others regardless of personal feelings. The status of each morally conscious human being as an agent of *Agape* capable of bringing morality into the world requires that he or she be treated an *end-in-itself*. Here the departure from Kant is profound—only Divine will (not theoretical reason) can morally obligate equal treatment of each.

(4) *Human existence is essentially moral existence.* Humankind brings morality into the sensible world by acting freely under its intuition of *Agape*. If humankind were absent from the world, it would be precisely as naïve realists understand it. Without humankind, there would be no meaning or purpose, not because humankind is meaningful in itself, but because of humankind's connection with *Agape*. In a world of scarcity, every decision made by a morally conscious agent has a moral component.

(5) *Human Being is above all else a moral process.* Each person must decide how to comport itself with personal good will that mirrors the good will of God. As a soul who exists alongside the material world, each person defines his or her relation to *Agape* and other morally conscious people by his or her own will. Love of neighbor means that each person has a vested interest in the moral success of his or her fellows. By acting with *agape*, a person lightens the burden of harsh reality upon others. By acting with malice, a person has the opposite effect. Disregard for the Divine call must have consequences—otherwise, it would be an empty whisper, and human free will would be meaningless. The failure to act morally cannot harm a human being *qua* animal; it can only degrade his or her relationship to God and other souls. Each person is therefore essentially a moral process.

(6) *The unfettered freedom of all souls to develop morally is paramount.* The two preconditions of morality are being the object of *Agape* and the *freedom* to act under the Divine will. If a person is a moral process, *it must be the gravest immorality to impede that process*.

Attempts to legislate thought, speech, or morality that extend beyond the maintenance of order and security deprive human beings of their moral freedom and interfere with their essential relationship to God. If there were categories of offense attached to sinfulness, the deprivation of moral freedom would be the most heinous. Although religious fascism in all of its forms is a manifestly an abominable oxymoron, deprivation of moral freedom is not limited to compelling people to bow down to a god at the point of a gun. Societies that inhibit or discourage private charity, including those who foster permanent government dependency, are fundamentally immoral.

Killing is morally wrong, except, perhaps, in self-defense. Because every person is an agent of *Agape* and a moral process, terminating that agency and process is an affront to God. Capital punishment, abortion, and suicide and assisted suicide are not exceptions. Abortion is by definition the premature termination of a *thing,* but the thing in the case of human abortion is a *living moral process*, and that process is a *transcendent unity.* When a person commits suicide, with or without assistance, he or she rejects the Divine good will. In the case of elderly or terminal human beings, the only moral answer is palliative care.

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