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I.

REV. DR. JAMES RICHARDS AND HIS THEOLOGY.

OF the one, I shall give only a sketch ; of the other, only some outlines.

Dr. Richards' life of seventy-six years (1767-1843) covered an eventful period in the history of the Church and of the State.

In early boyhood, he heard the mutterings of discontent with English misrule, and the notes of armed resistance to British injustice. In the ninth year of his age, the Declaration of American Independence was published. In his own neighborhood, and everywhere, the people took up arms ; and for seven long years—long for the veteran soldiers, long indeed for such a boy—he heard of the terrors, and trials, and vicissitudes of the strife, which seemed to his boyish impatience as if it would never end. Not until his sixteenth year, came the news of the final victory—too good, almost, to be true ; and, then, the better news of peace, and, still better, of American Independence.

Already he was older in experience than many a man could be after fourscore years of national quiet. But Richards had just begun his great life-experience. Now he witnessed the formative process of constitutional government for a young independent nation—a process slow, difficult, delicate ; the formative process of his own State government, and of other States—sometimes appearing more troublesome, and certainly more intricate and delicate than the difficulties of war.

II.

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR THE DIVINE EXISTENCE.

THE ontological argument for the Divine Existence, has fallen into disrepute for the last century or more. It is now very commonly regarded as involving a sophism. Kant declares it to be sophistical, as also he declares all the *a posteriori* arguments to be. Historians of philosophy like Ueberweg analyze it not merely to give an account of it, but to refute it. In the current treatises in Apologetics, it is rare to find an appeal to it as a conclusive demonstration.

This is a different view from that entertained in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and by the most powerful reasoners among the fathers and schoolmen. While, owing to the subtlety and geometrical nicety of the form of the argument, its cogency was not always acknowledged, and there was some dispute concerning its logical force, yet on the whole both the philosophers and theologians of those centuries regarded it as a valid argument, and fit to be employed in the defence of theism. The English theologians made much use of it—especially those who were deeply versed in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Cudworth, Stillingfleet, Howe, Bates, John Smith, and Henry More depend greatly upon it in their contest with the atheism of Hobbes and others. Des Cartes restated it in a modified form, and considered it to be a demonstration; and Des Cartes is the father of all modern philosophy that is founded in consciousness. Such facts suggest the query whether it is not possible that the present judgment may be erroneous. May it not be that the present absorption in the study of visible and material objects has unfitted the mind for the study of ideas, by blunting the keenness of metaphysical conception, so that the needle's point of the *a priori* argument is missed, and it is pronounced to be inconclusive? Be this as it may, it will certainly do no harm to the cause of truth, to consider the form and force of this old argument for the being of God.

The germ of the argument is found in the remark of Augustine, that "God is more truly *thought* than he is described, and *exists* more

truly than he is thought."* This is one of those pregnant propositions, so characteristic of the Latin Father, which compress a theory into a nut-shell. The meaning of it is, that while man's idea of God is truer to the reality than his description of him is, yet his idea is less true and credible than the reality itself. God's existence is more real than even our conception of him is for our own mind; and our conception, confessedly, is a reality in our consciousness. The subjective idea of God, instead of being more real than God, is less real. The "thing," in this instance, has more of existence than the "thought" of it has. This is exactly contrary to the postulate that underlies all the reasoning against the ontological argument—namely, that in *no* case is the object so real as the idea of it, and that therefore the existence of no object whatever can be inferred from the mere idea. Every subjective conception, it is contended, more certainly *is*, than its objective correspondent. Consequently, no mere thought can demonstrate the existence of a thing; the idea of God cannot prove the existence of God.

This position, we may remark in passing, that the objective can never be so certainly real as the subjective, is fatal not only to the ontological argument for the Divine Existence, but to the argument for all existence. It conducts to idealism immediately. If, for example, from the subjective sensation we cannot infallibly infer the objective existence of matter, the certainty of the material world is gone. The sensation is the only reality, and the "thing" is at best only a contingency. Possibly it exists, but there is no absolute certainty that it does. The assertion that because we have the mere idea of God there is no certainty of a correspondent Being, has the same validity, no more and no less, with the assertion that because we have the mere sensation of matter there is no certainty of a correspondent substance. If the subjective cannot irrefragably prove the objective in the former case, it cannot in the latter.

The acute and powerful intellect of Anselm was the first to construct the ontological argument in a syllogistical form. And it will appear, we think, that its first form is its best. All the subsequent modifications have weakened rather than strengthened it. The metaphysical intuition that saw the heart of the doctrine of the Atonement saw also the heart of the doctrine of the Divine Existence.†

The argument is derived, as the etymology (τοῦ ὀντος λόγος) denotes, from the idea of *absolute* in distinction from relative being. It

* "Verius cogitatur deus quam dicitur, et verius est quam cogitatur." Trinity, Bk. VII., ch. iv.

† It is contained in the Proslogium. This is translated by Macginnis, in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1851.

runs as follows: The human mind possesses the idea of an absolutely perfect being—that is, of a being than whom a more perfect cannot be conceived. But such perfection as this implies necessary existence; and necessary existence implies actual existence: because if a thing must be, of course it is. If the absolutely perfect being of whom we have the idea does not exist of necessity, we can conceive of a being who does so exist, and he would be more perfect than the former. For a contingent being who may or may not exist, is not the most perfect conceivable—is not the absolutely perfect. In having, therefore, as the human mind unquestionably has, the idea of an absolutely perfect in distinction from a relatively perfect being, it has the idea of a being who exists of necessity—precisely as, in having the idea of a triangle, the mind has the idea of a figure with three sides. Necessity of being, therefore, belongs to perfection of being.

The strength of Anselm's argument lies in two facts. 1. That necessity of existence is an attribute of being, and a perfection in it. 2. That necessity of existence is an attribute and perfection that belongs only to absolute and infinite being, and not to relative and finite being.

I. It is clear, in the first place, that necessity of existence is an *attribute*. It can be affirmed of one being, and denied of another. God has this characteristic quality, and angels and men have it not. Both necessity and contingency are attributes of being. And necessity is a higher characteristic than contingency of existence. That which must be, is superior to that which may or may not be. That which cannot without logical contradiction be conceived not to be, is more perfect than that which can be so conceived. Hence there are grades of being. One species of being may be nearer to nonentity than another. The infinite and absolutely perfect is at an infinite remove from non-existence; the finite and relatively perfect is at only a finite distance from nonentity. We can conceive of the annihilation of the finite; but the annihilation of the infinite is an absurdity. "It is truly said," remarks Howe, "of all created things, that their *non esse* is more than their *esse*; that is, they have more 'no-being' than being. It is only some limited portion [degree] of being that they have; but there is an infinitude [infinite degree] of being which they have not. And so coming infinitely nearer to nothingness than to fulness of being, they may well enough wear the name of 'nothing.' 'All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing' (Isa. xl. 17). Wherefore the First and Fountain-Being justly appropriates to himself the name I Am, yea tells us, He is, and

there is none besides Him ; thereby leaving no other name than that of ' nothing ' unto creatures." *

II. And, in the second place, necessity of existence is an attribute and perfection that is *unique* and *solitary*. It cannot be ascribed to any finite created thing, any more than eternity of existence, or immensity of existence, or immutability of existence can be. The idea of the absolutely perfect differs from that of the relatively perfect or imperfect, in implying necessity and excluding contingency. The two ideas are totally diverse in this particular, so that the analysis of the one will give a result wholly different from that of the other. Because the idea of a stone, or a man, or of any finite thing, will not yield real entity or existence as the logical outcome, it does not follow that the idea of the infinite God will not.

The nature of the ontological argument will be seen still more clearly, by examining the objections that have been urged against it, and also the modifications of it since the time of Anselm.

I. A contemporary of Anselm, the monk Gaunilo, in his tract entitled *Liber pro insipiente*, or Plea for the Fool, raised the objection which has been repeated over and over again, that the idea of an object does not involve its existence. We have the idea of a tree, but it does not follow that there is an actual tree. We have the idea of a winged lion, but it does not follow that such a creature actually exists.

The reply is, that the instances compared are not analogous, but wholly diverse, because one is that of absolute and perfect being, and the other that of relative and imperfect being. What is true of the latter is untrue of the former. The idea of a tree implies that it may or may not exist; that of the absolutely perfect being that he must exist. From the idea of the tree, we cannot prove actual objective reality, because it contains the element of contingent existence; but we can from the idea of God, because this contains the element of necessary existence. The idea of a tree is not the idea of the most perfect being conceivable, nor of something that exists of necessity. The conception in the mind, in this instance, is of contingent being. This objection, therefore, to the ontological argument breaks down, because the analogy brought in to support it is a spurious one. It is an example of the Aristotelian *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*. Analogical reasoning is valid between things of the same species; but invalid if carried across into another species. Gaunilo arguing against Anselm urged that the idea of the "lost island" does not imply that there is

* Howe: "Vanity of Man as Mortal."

such a thing. Anselm replies, that if Gaunilo will show that the idea of the "lost island" implies its *necessary existence*, he will find the island for him, and will guarantee that it shall never be a "lost island" again.*

Gaunilo's objection overlooks the difference in *kind* between infinite, absolute, and perfect being, and finite, relative, and imperfect being; between primary and secondary substance; between uncreated and created being, or between God and the universe. We are so accustomed in the case of all finite beings and things to separate necessity of existence from their constitutional substance, that we erroneously transfer this to God. Because we can logically conceive of the non-existence of the Finite, we suppose that we can of the Infinite. But the two species of being differ *toto genere*. Respecting all finite beings or things, nothing more can be inferred from their nature and constitutional substance than the *possibility* and *probability* of their existence. Necessity of existence cannot be inferred. But respecting infinite being, mere possibility and probability of existence are actually excluded by the very nature and constitutional substance of it. Possibility and contingency of existence are directly contradictory to the idea of absolute and infinite being. In this instance, we cannot, as we can in the other, conceptually separate necessity of existence from existence. Infinite being, *ex vi termini*, is necessary being.

Necessity, as a logical term, denotes so firm a connection between the subject and predicate, that it is impossible that they should be separated. If therefore essence and necessity of existence cannot be separated from each other, even in thought or logical conception, in the instance of "the most perfect Being conceivable," it follows that the denial that such a Being exists is not only moral but logical "folly." The atheist is guilty not only of sin, but of unreason. For it is a contradiction to suppose that the most perfect Being conceivable was non-existent a million of years ago, because this would make him a finite, imperfect being. It is equally contradictory, for the same reason, to suppose that the most perfect Being conceivable will cease to exist at some future time. But there is no contradiction in supposing that the angel Gabriel had no existence a million years ago, or that he will have none a million years hence, because he is not the most perfect being conceivable. And there is no contradiction in supposing that the entire material universe was a nonentity a million

* Another flaw in Gaunilo's counter-argument is, that he starts from the conception of a Being "greater than all things else that *exist*," but Anselm starts from the conception of a Being "greater than all things else that can be *conceived*." The latter implies a greater perfection than the former. From the former conception, Anselm would not attempt to prove actual existence.

years ago, unless it can be shown that it is the most perfect being conceivable.

The impossibility of separating necessity of being from perfect being in the case of the Divine Essence, may be illustrated by the necessary connection between extension and matter. The idea of extension is inseparable from that of matter. To ask me to think of matter without extension is absurd. In like manner, to ask me to think of absolute perfection of being without necessity of being is absurd—as absurd as to ask me to think of absolute perfection of being without eternity of being, or infinity of being. The being is not absolutely perfect, if it may be non-existent; just as a substance is not material, if it is unextended. To conceive of the most perfect being conceivable as a contingent being, or a non-existent being, is impossible. Says Anselm: "That which begins from non-existence, and can be conceived of as non-existing, and which unless it subsist through something else must return to non-existence, does not exist in the highest and absolute sense." *

Kant commits the same error with Gaunilo, in employing a spurious analogy. Objecting to the ontological argument, he remarks that "it is indeed necessary that a triangle have three angles if it exist, but there is nothing in the idea of a triangle that necessitates its existence." † Very true; and therefore the example is not pertinent. The idea of a triangle *lacks* the very element and attribute, contained in the idea of the most perfect being conceivable, upon which the whole force of the ontological argument depends—namely, necessity of existence. The predicate, "if it exist," connected with the subject, "a triangle," implies contingent existence. Kant's objection is in fact even weaker than that of Gaunilo. To attempt to invalidate the ontological argument by employing the idea of a purely *mental construction* like the idea of a triangle, is even more illegitimate than to employ the idea of a real, though non-absolute object, like a tree or a man. The idea of a triangle, like that of a mathematical point or line, is purely imaginary. There is no objective substance in any mathematical figure whatever. Angles, lines, surfaces, and points are not things. The idea of a triangle does not imply that it is being of any kind, and still less that it is necessary being. A triangle is not an entity. It cannot be brought under the category of substance; consequently it is a nonentity. It is a purely ideal construction, to which there is and can be no objective correspondent. It cannot be said to outwardly *exist*, either contingently or necessarily. Kant's analogy, consequently, is even more spurious than that of

* "Proslogium," Ch. XXII.

† "Reine Vernunft," s. 463, Ed. Rosenkranz.

Gaunilo—for a tree or a man, though not having necessarily-real, yet has contingently-real existence.

Kant endeavors to prove that the ontological argument is a synthetic and not an analytical judgment—that the conclusion is not deduced from the premise, but imported into it. There is no better expositor of Kant than Kuno Fischer, and he gives the following account of Kant's refutation, as he regards it, of the ontological argument :

"Kant affirms that the propositions asserting existence are synthetical judgments ; in other words, that existence is no logical attribute which we can find by analyzing a concept. This position completely destroys all ontology; for it removes the possibility of concluding from the concept of a thing, its existence. If existence belongs to the attributes of a concept, the ontological proof is quite valid. If it be a logical attribute, it follows immediately from the concept by mere dissection, and the ontological proof is an analytical judgment—an immediate syllogism of the understanding. If existence be a logical attribute, it must stand in the same relation to the concept that other logical attributes do. The content of the concept must be diminished if I subtract existence, increased if I add it. The concept of a triangle, for example, is not changed, whether I merely represent it to myself, or whether it exist without me. The attributes which make a triangle to be such are entirely the same in both cases. It is the same with any other concept—that of the Deity."*

Saying nothing of this repetition of the most spurious of all the analogies—that of an ideal mathematical figure—we place the finger upon the last assertion in this extract, and deny that what is said of the concept of the triangle is true of the concept of the deity—assuming it to be conceded that the deity is the equivalent of Anselm's "most perfect Being conceivable." For if from the concept of the deity, or the absolutely perfect Being, the attribute of existence be subtracted, the concept *is* changed. It is no longer the concept of the most perfect being conceivable. Take the characteristic of real actual existence out of the concept of the deity, and it becomes the concept of an *unreal* or *imaginary* being; and an unreal or imaginary being is not the most perfect being conceivable. The content of the concept is changed in respect to both quantity and quality. It loses the attribute of real objective existence, which diminishes the quantity of the content. And the same loss injures the quality; for imaginary being is no being, instead of perfect being. If one should say, "I have the conception of a triangle, but it does not include tri-laterality," the contradiction is plain. Or should he assert that the attribute of tri-laterality can be subtracted from the concept of a triangle without altering the content, the error is patent. But it is the same contradiction and error to affirm that the idea of God as absolute perfection of being does not include real objective

* Mahaffy : "Translation of Kuno Fischer on Kant," pp. 125, 258, 259.

being, or that this characteristic can be subtracted from it without diminishing its contents. The rejecter of the ontological argument in reality affirms such propositions as the following: "I have the idea of the most perfect Being conceivable; but it is the idea of a nonentity—in other words, it is only an idea." "I have the idea of the most perfect Being conceivable; but it is the idea of an imaginary being—that is, it is merely a figment of my mind." This contradiction is well described by a French writer: *

"He who rejects the belief of the Divine Existence conceives, nevertheless, of a Being to whom a superior cannot be conceived. Only he affirms that this Being does not exist. But by this affirmation he contradicts himself, inasmuch as that Being to whom he attributes all these perfections, yet to whom he at the same time denies existence, is found to be inferior to another being, who, to all his other perfections, joins that of existence. He is thus forced by his very conception of the most perfect Being to admit that such a Being exists, inasmuch as existence makes a necessary part of that perfection which he conceives of."

It is overlooked by Kant and Fischer, and by all who reason upon this line of analogy, that the idea of God, or the absolutely Perfect, is unique and solitary. God is not only *unus* but *unicus*. There is no parallel to him. No true analogue can be found. "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isa. xl. 18). To employ analogical reasoning in a case where all analogies fail, was the error of Gaunilo, and has been repeated from his day to this.†

2. A second objection to the argument of Anselm is that it amounts only to this: "If there be an absolutely perfect Being, he is a necessarily existent Being. One *idea* implies the other *idea*. It is only a matter of subjective notions, and not of objective existence. The absolutely perfect Being may not exist at all; but if he exist, he exists necessarily."

This objection, likewise, is self-contradictory, as is shown by the analysis of the proposition, "If the absolutely Perfect exist, he exists necessarily." There is inconsistency between the protasis and apodosis. The word "if" in the former denotes contingency, and the word "necessarily" in the latter excludes contingency. The absolutely perfect Being is described in the protasis as one respecting whose existence it is proper to use a hypothetical term, and in the apodosis as one respecting whose existence it is improper to use it. This conditional proposition implies that the most perfect being conceivable is both contingent and necessary.

* Article Anselme: Franck's "Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques."

† In this criticism we have assumed, as Kant and Fischer do, that "existence" may be regarded as an attribute, and have argued from their point of view. As will be seen further on, existence is not strictly an attribute.

3. A third objection to Anselm's argument is that made by Leibnitz—namely, that the argument supposes the *possibility* of the existence of the most perfect Being. This he thinks needs first to be demonstrated. And yet he adds, that "any and every being should be regarded as possible until its impossibility is proved." Leibnitz remarks that he "stands midway between those who think Anselm's argument to be a sophism, and those who think it to be a demonstration," and that if the possibility of the existence of the most perfect Being were demonstrated, he should regard Anselm's argument as "geometrically *a priori*." *

The reply to this half-way objection of Leibnitz is, that there is no greater necessity of proving that the most perfect Being is possible, than of proving that any being whatever is possible. That being of some kind is possible is indisputable. That something exists is self-evident. To assert that there is nothing is absurd. The premise with which Clarke begins his construction of the *a priori* argument—namely, "something exists"—is axiomatic, and must be granted by atheist and theist alike. The idea of "being" is certainly one that implies an objective correspondent. If I say, "I have the idea of being, but it is only an idea, there really is no being," I perceive the absurdity immediately. "The very words"—says Coleridge—"there is nothing, or, there was a time when there was nothing, are self-contradictory. There is that within us which repels the proposition with as full and instantaneous a light as if it bore evidence against it in the right of its own eternity." †

But if the mind does not perceive any necessity of proving the possibility of being in the abstract, even of relative and contingent being, still less does it perceive a necessity of demonstrating the possibility of the most perfect being conceivable. On the contrary, there is more need of proving the possibility of a contingent than of a necessary being. That which may or may not exist is less likely to exist than that which must exist and cannot be conceived of as non-existent.‡

* Leibnitz: "De la demonstration Cartesienne." Opera, p. 177. Ed. Erdmann.

† Coleridge, Works, vol. ii., p. 464. Ed. Harper.

‡ Edwards shows a hesitation concerning the ontological argument similar to that of Leibnitz. He asserts (Will, Pt. II., Sect. 3) that "if man had sufficient strength and extent of mind, he would intuitively see the absurdity of supposing God not to be"; and then he adds that "we have not that strength and extent of mind to know this certainly, in this intuitive, independent manner." But this is to say that the human mind is not strong enough to perceive an absurdity. Again, Edwards remarks that he "will not affirm that there is in the nature of things no foundation for the knowledge of the being of God without any evidence of it from his works," and that he thinks that "there is a great absurdity in the nature of things, simply considered, in supposing that there should be no God, or in denying Being in general." But surely the human mind has sufficient "strength and extent" to perceive what is "absurd in the nature of things."

4. A fourth objection to the ontological argument is, that it makes existence an attribute of a Being, when in fact it is being itself. The subject is converted into its own predicate. To assert that a Being possesses being is tautology.

This is a valid objection against Des Cartes' form of the ontological argument, but not against Anselm's. Des Cartes shortened the argument, by deriving actual being directly from the idea of absolute perfection of being, instead of first deriving, as Anselm did, *necessity* of being from absolute perfection of being, and then deriving actuality from necessity. The spread of Cartesianism gave currency to this form of the argument; and it is this form of it which most commonly appears in modern speculation. The English divines of the seventeenth century very generally employ this mode. In Kant's polemic the argument is stated in the Cartesian manner, and not in the Anselmic. The following is an example: "Having formed an *a priori* conception of a thing, the content of which was made to embrace existence, we believed ourselves safe in concluding that reality belongs to the object of the conception merely because existence has been cogitated in the conception."* If in this extract "necessity of existence" be substituted for "existence," the "illusion" which Kant charges upon the *a priori* reasoner disappears.

Necessity of existence, as we have before remarked, is a true predicate, like eternity of existence, and immensity of existence, and all the other attributes that describe absolute being, and differentiate it from relative and finite being. And from *this* predicate, the objective actual existence of that to which it belongs can be inferred. In omitting it, and attempting to make a predicate out of "existence" instead of "necessity of existence," Des Cartes lost an indispensable term of the syllogism, and jumped directly from the premise to the conclusion.

But while Des Cartes' form of the argument is vicious reasoning, it suggests a profound truth. It directs attention to the difference in kind between *primary* and *secondary* being, and to the important fact already alluded to, that existence cannot even conceptually be separated from substance in the instance of the absolute and perfect,

* Reine Vernunft, S. 463. Ed. Rosenkranz. Ueberweg (Vol. II., 50) notices the difference between the two forms of the argument in the following remark: "The Cartesian form of the ontological proof has a defect from which the Anselmic is free—namely, that the premise, 'being is a perfection,' involves a very questionable conception of 'being' as a predicate among other predicates, while Anselm has indicated a definite kind of being, namely, being not merely in our minds but also outside of them, as that in which superior perfection is involved." But this misses the true point of difference. Anselm's "definite kind of being" is, *necessity* of being, and not "being outside of our minds." This latter is objective being, and is the same as Des Cartes' "existence." If this is all the difference between Anselm and Des Cartes, there is none at all.

as it can in that of the relative and imperfect. The finite may exist only in thought and imagination; the infinite cannot. There may be no imperfect and contingent being; there must be perfect and necessary being. The universe may be non-existent, but God cannot be. And this, because absolute perfection of being excludes *unreality* of every kind. Consequently, it excludes imaginary being, which is no being at all. And it excludes contingent and temporary being, because these are relative and imperfect grades. None of these are "the most perfect being conceivable." The absolute being, therefore, is the only strictly real. All else, in comparison, is a shadow. Existence cannot be abstracted from substance of this kind without changing its grade. To predicate non-existence of the infinite is to convert it into the finite. But existence can be abstracted conceptually from secondary and contingent substance without changing the species. In fact, it is substance of a secondary species for the very reason that it can be conceived of as non-existent.

The truth that absolutely perfect being is necessary being is taught in the revealed name of God. The ontological argument has the endorsement of inspiration. The Hebrew Jehovah, in Ex. iii. 13, denotes necessity of existence. "This term, as applied to God, intimates that *to be* is his peculiar characteristic; that he *is*, in a sense in which no other being is; that he is self-existent, and cannot but be. In the opinion that in this lies the significance of the name, the ancient Jews and most scholars of eminence have concurred."* To give a name, in both the Hebrew and the Greek intuition, is to describe the inmost and real nature of the thing. Plato, in the *Cratylus* (390), represents Socrates as saying that "the right imposition of names is no easy matter, and belongs not to any and everybody, but to him only who has an insight into the nature of things." The nomenclature given by the unfallen man to the objects of nature (Gen. ii. 19, 20) implies a deep knowledge of nature. And when the deity chooses before all others the name I Am, or Jehovah, for himself, the reference is to his absoluteness and perfection of being. The ethnic names in distinction from the revealed name of the deity, imply attributes, not essence. The Teutonic "God" indicates that the deity is good. The Greek and Latin world employed a term (*θεός*, *deus*) that lays emphasis upon that attribute whereby he orders and governs the universe. But the Hebrew, divinely taught upon this point, chose a term which does not refer to a particular attribute, but to the very being and essence of God, and teaches that the deity must be, and cannot be conceived of as a nonentity.

* Alexander, W. L. : *Kitto's Encyclopædia*, Art. Jehovah.

The ontological argument is intimately connected with the constitution of the human mind, and with human consciousness. These are both of them theistic. It has been found impossible to convince any nation or generation of mankind that the Infinite Being is a nonentity. Atheism is not an intuitive and common belief of the human race. "I am conscious," says La Bruyère, "that God exists, but I am never conscious that he does not exist." The strenuous endeavor of atheism to prove that there is no God, proves that there is one. For if the deity were really a nonentity like a griffin—if the idea of God, like that of "a gorgon or chimæra dire," really has no objective correspondent—there would be no effort to invalidate it, but the same utter indifference respecting the idea of God would prevail among mankind as respecting the idea of a griffin. No one would attempt either to prove or disprove its validity.

Upon appealing to human consciousness, it is found that the idea of God is as self-verifying as that of *matter*. Like the idea of matter, it is attended with the ineradicable conviction that it represents entity and not nonentity. There is the same reason for believing that the deity is real, as that matter is real. Human consciousness, when scrutinized, yields the characteristic of objectivity in one case as much as in the other. It is impossible, notwithstanding all the reasoning of Berkeley and Fichte, to convince ourselves that a subjective sensation is merely a sensation, and that there is no external substance antithetic to it. No man can be made to believe that he has the sensation of a nonentity—that he feels, though there is nothing to be felt. In precisely the same manner, it is impossible, notwithstanding all the reasoning of the atheist, to convince the human reason that its idea of an absolutely perfect Being is one to which there is no corresponding object. This idea is a kind of internal sensation, or consciousness in the reason, and requires a real object to account for it as much as an external sensation, or consciousness in the sense, does. How can man have a God-consciousness if there is no God, any more than he can have a sense-consciousness if there is no material substance? The subjective requires the antithetic objective in each case alike, in order to escape the absurd supposition that something comes from nothing, or that there is an effect in consciousness without any cause of it. To suppose that mankind for sixty centuries have been retaining the idea of God, and believing that there is one, when there is none, is as improbable as the supposition that they have all this time been retaining the idea of a material universe, and believing that there is one, when there is none. No idea and belief could stand thus perpetually, with nothing to

stand upon. That man's idea of a Supreme Being is a mere illusion of his mind, is no more likely than that man's idea of an outward world is.

For it must be remembered that the idea of the absolutely perfect Being is not an idea of the imagination, but of the *reason*. Any one who will examine it, as he finds it in his consciousness, will immediately perceive that it is not a construction of his fancy, like the idea of a winged lion; or of his imagination, like the abstract conception of a house. These latter are attended with the conviction of their *unreality*, not of their reality. We know that there is nothing objectively correspondent to them. No man is influenced in the least by such ideas. A winged lion, like the heathen idol, "is nothing in the world." Such purely subjective notions inspire no fear. But not so with the idea of God. "I thought of God, and was troubled," is true of every man. There has never been a human being old enough to fear, but what has feared the Supreme Being in some way or other. The idea of the deity causes terror sometimes in the atheist himself. But if it were not the representation of a tremendous reality, it would produce no such effects the world over.

Again, the same certainty that the idea of God has objective validity is reached, if we compare it with the idea of *self*. If I say, "I have the idea of myself, but there is no self," I cannot say a more foolish thing. The idea of the ego indubitably proves that there is an ego. Beyond all controversy the subjective proves the objective in this case. Self-consciousness is as certain as anything possibly can be. Says Locke, "The real existence of things without us can be evidenced to us only by our senses; but our own existence is known to us by a certainty yet higher than our senses can give us of the existence of outward things; and that is, internal conception or self-consciousness." * But the idea of God is inextricably entangled with that of self, and philosophic reflection finds that the one is as valid as the other. No man can think of himself as a person, without thinking of God as another person. No man can believe that he is an ego, without believing that God is another ego—the I Am. The attributes of finite personality, namely, freedom and accountability, imply and necessitate the attributes of infinite personality, namely, sovereignty, justice, and omnipotence. Whoever, then, asserts that the idea of God has no correspondent, should assert that the idea of self has none.

While the deity is, in one sense, the most obscure and mysterious

* King: "Life and Letters of Locke," p. 316. Ed. Bohn.

of all objects of knowledge, in another sense he is the most luminous and real. No idea so impresses universal man as the idea of God. Neither space nor time, neither matter nor mind, neither life nor death, not sun, moon, or stars, so influence the immediate consciousness of man in every clime, and in all his generations, as does that "Presence" which, in Wordsworth's phrase, "is not to be put by." This idea overhangs human existence like the firmament, and though clouds and darkness obscure it in many zones, while in others it is crystalline and clear, all human beings must live beneath it, and cannot possibly get from under its all-embracing arch. In this reference, the striking remark of Cudworth applies: "It is indeed true, that the deity is more incomprehensible to us than anything else whatever; which proceeds from the fulness of his being and perfection, and from the transcendency of his brightness. But for this very same reason may it be said also, in some sense, that he is more knowable and conceivable than anything else; as the sun, though by reason of its excessive splendor it dazzle our weak sight, yet is notwithstanding far more visible, also, than any of the *nebulosæ stellæ*, the small, misty stars. Where there is more of light there is more of visibility; so where there is more of entity, reality, and perfection, there is more of conceptibility and cognoscibility—such an object filling up the mind more, and acting more strongly upon it. Nevertheless, because our weak and imperfect minds are lost in the vast immensity and redundancy of the deity, and overcome with its transcendent light and dazzling brightness, therefore hath it to us an appearance of darkness and incomprehensibility." *

The *a priori* argument is of uncommon importance in an age inclined to materialism. For it turns the human mind in upon itself, and thereby contributes to convince it of the reality of mind, as a different substance from matter. The neglect of *a priori* methods, and overvaluation of *a posteriori*, is one of the reasons why matter has so much more reality for many men than mind has. If an object is not considered, it gradually ceases to be regarded as an object at all. When theorists cease to reflect upon purely mental and moral phenomena, they cease to believe that there are any. The gaze of the materialist is intent upon the physical solely. Consequently, the metaphysical and spiritual becomes a nonentity. Out of sight, it is out of mind, and out of existence for him. Observing and analyzing matter alone, he converts everything into matter. What is needed is, the cultivation of philosophy in connection with physics; of a

* Cudworth: "Intellectual System," vol. ii., 519. Ed. Tegg.

priori methods along with the *a posteriori*. He who studies and reflects upon mind as closely and steadily as he does upon matter, will have as clear and vivid consciousness of mind as he has of matter. Consciousness is consciousness, however it originate. If it be the result of a purely intellectual process it is as truly consciousness, as if it resulted from a purely sensuous process. When I am conscious of the agencies of my mind by introspection, this mode or form of immediate consciousness is as real and trustworthy, as when I am conscious of the agencies of my body by sensation. It is of no consequence how human consciousness arises, provided it does arise.

Those *a priori* methods, consequently, which dispense with physical sensation and outward sensuous observation, and depend upon purely intellectual operations, are best adapted to convince of the reality of an invisible and immaterial entity like the human spirit, and its infinite antithesis and corresponding object, the Eternal Spirit.

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