

WILLIAM HASKER

## INTRODUCTION—SKETCHES FROM AN ALBUM

My thanks to the editors of *Roczniki Filozoficzne* for their kind invitation. It is encouraging, but also a bit humbling, to realize that philosophers I have never met, and whose country I have never visited, are sufficiently interested in my work to make this special issue a viable project. The aim of this introduction is to provide a broader perspective in which the specific essays and my responses to them can be viewed. The aim of philosophy overall is to arrive at an accurate and insightful understanding of all the main areas of human life and endeavor. This cannot be done by a single individual, at this stage of history, except at the most superficial level. In view of this a selection of topics, as presented in this issue, may well have the appearance of being random, merely a listing of subjects on which a particular thinker has happened to bestow his interest. Such a response, however, would not be entirely accurate. A comparison might perhaps be drawn with an artist's sketchbook. It may appear that the artist has simply wandered here and there, making pictures of whatever scenes seemed pleasing and interesting. On closer examination, however, certain views, or types of views, seem to recur throughout the book, showing that there is, in fact, a single, consistent landscape that is being depicted in the different illustrations. There will also be certain stylistic similarities, indicating that it is the hand of a single artist that is revealed in each of the pictures. Similarly, the topics engaged by a philosopher can reveal certain underlying themes that are characteristic of the worldview that is being developed. Here also, there will be stylistic similarities in the method of treatment, marks of the individual approach of the philosopher whose work is being considered. Readers, then, are invited to consider, and hopefully to enjoy, these sketches from my album.

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For a philosopher who is a theist, establishing the existence of God is the first stage in building a worldview. But how is this step to be warranted? In my view, it is best to pursue a cumulative case strategy, with a number of arguments combining to make the case that theism provides the best explanation for the world and for our lives taken as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Individual arguments are unlikely to be decisive, since they will have premises which, though they may be plausible, can be denied without obvious irrationality. But an array of such arguments, skillfully deployed, can constitute an impressive case. I also believe that, for many persons, theism enjoys a significant degree of non-inferential warrant in view of their experience of God. (This of course is the hallmark of Reformed epistemology, but is also supported by philosophers not associated with that movement, including for example Richard Swinburne and Philip Quinn.)

The one essay in this issue that touches on this topic, albeit indirectly, is the one by Graham Oppy. This is because, in the article he is commenting on, I had ventured the affirmation that “naturalism and theism are each initially more plausible than any other of the worldview options available to us” (HASKER 2013, 128).<sup>2</sup> In that article I deployed the “argument from reason” (AFR), which claims to show that the most widely accepted versions of naturalism cannot account for the human capacity for reasoning and should not be accepted. Given the assumption mentioned above, an argument against naturalism is also an argument for theism. It is not, of course, a conclusive argument, since there undoubtedly remain other worldview options that have not been eliminated. In particular, there is the option recommended by Oppy: a philosopher who is inclined towards naturalism may reject the typical naturalist assumption of physical causal closure (the view that any physical situation that has a cause has a physical cause), thus avoiding the argument from reason. This move, however, is not without cost. A philosopher who seriously embraces this option must then provide some other grounding for the various forms of teleology (rational and ethical, among others) that reappear once the appealing simplicity of causal closure has been abandoned. An example of this difficulty is found in Thomas Nagel, who finds himself needing to postulate a “sympathy between the deepest truths of nature and the deepest layers of the human mind” (NAGEL 1997, 130), certainly not a naturalism-friendly assumption.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I exclude here the ontological argument, which I view as unsound.

<sup>2</sup> Sources referenced in this introduction will be found in References at the end of my Replies.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Nagel finds himself needing to assure his readers that “it is possible to accept a world view that does not explain everything in terms of quantum field theory without necessarily believing in God” (NAGEL 1997, 131).

The existence of God having been put firmly in place, questions naturally arise about God's nature and God's relation to the created world. Paul Helm addresses the doubts raised by Quentin Smith as to whether God can be said to be the cause of the world. Jacek Wojtysiak pursues the question as to whether and how we can understand the purposes of God in creating a world. Several essays raise the issue of God's nature as temporal or timeless. And there are the perennial questions about divine providence, and about the relationship between God and evil.

Questions in this group, however, typically involve the relationship between God and human beings, and so the nature of human persons comes to the fore as an issue. One significant topic in my philosophical work that is not addressed here<sup>4</sup> is my particular answer to the mind-body problem, a view known as *emergent dualism*. According to this view, set out at length in my book, *The Emergent Self* (HASKER 1999), the mind is indeed an immaterial substance, as postulated by standard forms of dualism (e.g., Cartesian and Thomistic). This substance, however, is neither pre-existent, as postulated by some Eastern views, nor individually created by God, as in most traditional Christian views. Instead, it is an *emergent substance*, one that is caused to come into existence when the brain and nervous system of a growing person are sufficiently developed.<sup>5</sup> A significant merit of emergent dualism is that it provides a much better fit with biological evolution than is allowed either by creationist dualism or by standard varieties of materialism (HASKER 1999, 75–80).

Another important topic concerning human nature is the question of free will. My revered teacher at Wheaton College, Arthur Holmes, said of me years later that I was, in his words, “the most anti-Calvinist Arminian vocally I think I ever had in class!”<sup>6</sup> I am in no position to challenge Holmes' historical recollection! I hope that I have not, however, overlooked the many reasons why, in some of our decisions, we are less free than we take ourselves to be, because of unacknowledged biases and other factors that never rise to the level of conscious awareness. But I have maintained, and continue to maintain, that there is a sharp and decisive line between views according to which we have, on some occasions, the genuine ability to act in a way different than the way we do in fact act, and those which deny such “alterna-

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<sup>4</sup> Some philosophers who might have addressed this were unable to participate due to personal reasons.

<sup>5</sup> This will also be true for all other animals that have some sort of conscious experiences.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Richard Nye for this reference.

tive possibilities". It seems to me that this difference is enormously important, and makes a huge difference to many central questions, among them those concerning divine providence and the problem of evil. It would not be going too far to assert that this conviction is a driving force in leading me to take the positions I do on many crucial topics.

At this point, the previously discussed argument from reason makes a reappearance, because this argument has an important bearing on the issue of determinism vs. free will. The argument does not, to be sure, refute determinism as such. But in refuting the doctrine of physical causal closure, it thereby eliminates physical determinism as a possibility; it guarantees that physical states of the system do not in all cases succeed one another according to the laws of physics. It is noteworthy, furthermore, that physical determinism is the *only* kind of determinism that shows any promise of being confirmed empirically. The extremely accurate predictions obtained by physics in many situations show that many, at least, of the world's physical processes are governed by deterministic laws. And it does not seem unreasonable to hope that these predictions may in principle be able to be extended also to the more complicated situations where predictions are at present not possible. But the AFR, assuming it is sound, eliminates this possibility. No other form of determinism shows any promise of achieving this level of precise predictions. (Nothing of the sort is in view for psychological determinism, for instance.) So in eliminating physical determinism as an option, the AFR in effect *eliminates the possibility of empirical support for determinism*. That being the case, arguments for determinism will have to proceed on the same basis as other philosophical arguments: they will be arguments based on assumptions which may seem plausible but cannot be empirically demonstrated. This fact weighs against the strategy of some philosophers (John Martin Fischer, for example), who think we should prefer compatibilism to libertarianism on the ground that strong empirical evidence for determinism may emerge in the future.

Without doubt, the most dramatic effect of my libertarian convictions on my own philosophical work has been that it led me to affirm *open theism*, the view that human free will is incompatible with comprehensive divine foreknowledge, and that God has only probabilistic knowledge of some aspects of the future. This is not a view I have always held; I came to accept it as a result of reading an important article by Nelson Pike (1965). Prior to this I had reassured myself that there is no incompatibility, making use of the consideration that divine foreknowledge cannot *cause* a human choice to

be made in the way that it is made. Later I learned that the answer to this evasion had been discovered several centuries earlier, by none other than Jonathan Edwards! Foreknowledge, he pointed out, can *show* that the action is necessary, even if it is not what *makes* it necessary (see HASKER 1989, 72). (Edwards, a deep-dyed Calvinist, had no need or desire to preserve libertarian free will.) Arguments over this incompatibility have become extremely complex, as a result of the intense desire on the part of many philosophers to maintain both libertarian free will and comprehensive divine foreknowledge. But the point is relatively easy to grasp, if we reflect as follows: A free choice to perform an action A is something that *may or may not happen*; this is precisely what is meant by saying that the agent has “alternative possibilities”. But divine knowledge of a future event must be *absolutely certain*; God’s knowing that A will occur entails that it is *certain* that A will occur. So God’s knowledge that A will be chosen, if such knowledge existed, would entail that A has a status which, by hypothesis, it cannot have: the status of being such that its occurrence is certain. This, however, is contradictory and impossible.

Mere recognition of the incompatibility between foreknowledge and free will does not in itself constitute a full-fledged open theist position. My thinking about these matters has developed further as a result of interactions with theologians such as Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, and Richard Rice.<sup>7</sup> This has led to my developing a broader view of divine providence, and a distinctive response to the problem of evil (HASKER 2004, 2008). It has also led to my opposing other views concerning the relation between God’s knowledge and human actions; in particular, the view that God is timelessly eternal. Proponents of divine timelessness often claim that this view, by denying that God exists and knows what he knows in our temporal past, overcomes the conflict between foreknowledge and free will. They also claim that God’s eternal knowledge of the entirety of the temporal order puts God in a uniquely favorable situation with regard to his providential governance of the world. I believe neither of these claims is correct, as is argued in my responses to Rogers and Stump.

Another view I have opposed at some length is divine middle knowledge, also known as Molinism, for the 17th-century theologian Luis de Molina. According to Molinism, God knows the future in virtue of his knowing cer-

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<sup>7</sup> The view first came to the attention of a broader public as a result of the publication of *The Openness of God* (PINNOCK et al., 1994). The best existing theological statement of the open theist view of providence is Sanders’ *The God Who Risks* (SANDERS 2007).

tain propositions that have come to be termed “counterfactuals of freedom”. These propositions inform God, concerning all actual and possible free creatures, what these creatures would freely choose to do in any situation in which they might find themselves—and this, without in any way infringing upon their libertarian freedom. This view is not one I have ever thought to be possible: long before I became aware of the incompatibility between foreknowledge and free will, it seemed apparent to me that there could be no answer to the question of how a libertarian choice would be made apart from that choice actually being made, which of course most of the choices covered by counterfactuals of freedom are not. Nevertheless, the position is found attractive by many philosophers, because it enables what Thomas Flint has termed “libertarian traditionalism”: it combines the traditional insistence on detailed divine control over all the events that occur, with libertarian free will. Robert Koons, who agrees with me (and, I believe, with a definite majority of other philosophers, both theists and others) in rejecting the possibility of Molinism, raises some interesting questions about the topic in his paper in this issue.

Philosophically, the acid test for a theory of providence is its ability to deal with the problem of evil: that is with the assertion that the existence of God is either impossible or highly implausible in view of the prevalence of evil in the world. Dariusz Łukasiewicz, in his paper here, gives an excellent summary of my main views on the topic, centering on the Natural Order Theodicy and the Free Will Theodicy. He then goes on to raise a question concerning the consistency of these views with the traditional theistic doctrine of “continuous creation”. He presents his answer to this suggested incompatibility, and I in my response give a slightly different answer.

In the discussions concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, we arrive at last at topics that are distinctively Christian! All of the topics discussed earlier arise naturally within Christian philosophy and theology, and they have been discussed extensively by Christian philosophers among others. Nevertheless, these questions can also arise for other versions of theism—Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu. Only with the assertion that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,” do we come to what is uniquely Christian. The doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation were absent from my professional writings for many years, yet it could also be said that these topics serve to “bookend” my philosophical production. My very first professional publication was an article, “Tri-Unity”, based in part on my doctoral dissertation at New College, Edinburgh (HASKER 1970). And my most recent book, *Metaphys-*

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*ics and the Tri-Personal God* (HASKER 2013b), returns to the subject, with follow-up discussions occupying a good bit of my efforts since its publication. My trinitarian views mark me as an advocate of “social” trinitarianism. This is the view that the three Persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are indeed *persons* in a sense that is close to the way persons are understood in speaking of human beings: centers of consciousness with the capacity to perform mental acts of cognition, appetition, and action. Social trinitarianism so understood is, I believe, well supported by the biblical witness to Jesus Christ in his relationship with God the Father. It is also, less importantly, congenial to open theism: open theism emphasizes the personal relationship that exists between God and human beings, and is thus favorably disposed towards recognizing such relationships between the Persons of the Trinity. In this issue Joseph Jedwab presents a trinitarian metaphysic of his own devising, one that he puts forward for our consideration even though he himself refrains from endorsing it.