

Logic and Theism

Arguments For and Against Beliefs in God

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I

‘God’, ‘god’, and God

If we have no idea *what* God [would be], then what sense is there in asking whether God *exists* or not?

(Peterson et al. 1991, p. 49)

1. EXISTENCE AND ESSENCE QUESTIONS

This book would be about God, that is, it is about God, supposing This One exists. But since this book would be about God, it is appropriate to begin by saying something about what this book would be about. For, to say it would be about God is not so much to say as to advert or point. ‘God’, after all, is a proper name. And it is for proper names to name, not to describe. Generally we have descriptions in mind when we use names, but people can, when they converse, have in mind different descriptions. And although this need not make trouble for the identifying functions of names, since different descriptions can pick out the same things, it does mean that communication is uncertain when the existence of things that people would speak of with a name is at issue.

People, when they use names, generally intend to name things, but they do not always succeed, and when it is a question whether a name does name, it becomes important to discussion that there be a shared understanding of the character of what it would name. That I know Anne Marie personally, or not knowing her personally, know her only as the librarian while you, not knowing her personally, know her only as the short-stop, makes no difference when we are talking about where she was born and whether she wears glasses. But when I say that this book would be about God, mainly whether God exists, and whether in any case we should believe that God exists – you can wonder exactly how I would identify This One, and what sort of being I have in mind. It would be much worse if I said that this book would be about the existence of Medlo, for then you would have no idea of the sort of entity I had in mind, not even whether it would be a ‘being’ (for example, a tenth-century

English magician) or a thing but not a being (for example, a park in eastern Connecticut). When there is a question of the existence of a name's referent, one should be as explicit as possible concerning what would be its referent's character.

2. NAMES IN QUESTIONS OF EXISTENCE AND BELIEF

2.1. Suppose the question, Did Atlantis really exist? One would want to know what Atlantis is supposed to have been. Learning that it would have been a city located west of Gibraltar that sank into the ocean, one could begin to look. One would know what one was looking for – a city – and where to look – west of Gibraltar, under the sea. Learning, instead, that Atlantis is the name of “a **mythical** island in the Atlantic Ocean, first mentioned by Plato, **supposedly** west of Gibraltar, **said** to have finally sunk into the sea” (*American College Dictionary*, New York: Random House, 1953; bold emphasis added), one would know not to look. *This* answer to the description question would entail without further investigation a negative answer to the existence-question. The question, Did Atlantis exist?, presupposes some answer to the question what sort of thing would Atlantis have been. Similarly for the questions, Does Santa Claus exist? and Are there unicorns? These presuppose answers to the questions, What sort of thing would Santa Claus be, that is, would ‘Santa Claus’ name?, and, What sort of thing would a unicorn be, that is, to what sort of thing would the common name ‘unicorn’ apply?

2.2. Similarly for, Does God exist? and, Are there good reasons for believing that God exists? These questions presuppose at least a sketchy answer to the nature question, What sort of thing would God be if This One did exist? I do not say that our main questions about God take us back to the question, What does ‘God’ mean? For ‘God’ is a ‘proper’ name, and these, in contrast with ‘common’ names, generally do not have meanings. Perhaps, however, ‘God’ is, near enough, an exception to this rule. For even if best semantical theories say that, since it is a name, it does not have a meaning; it does plainly have in use an ‘expressive function’ or ‘expressive force’ fixed by convention in the way in which meanings are fixed. ‘**God**’ (**uppercase**) does, by a natural and compelling convention of language – explicable in terms of its etymology – purport to name what would be *the one and only true god* (*lowercase*). This is its intended referent when used by believers, and the common name ‘god’ has a meaning. Saying what that meaning is all but settles what ‘the one and only true god’ means. In other times, it may have been fixed by convention for those who spoke of God, that He would be not the god, but only the main god, ‘the god of gods’ (*Deuteronomy* 10:17). To explain the main thing at those times was still to say what the common name ‘god’, or whatever name stood in its place in the language and culture, meant.

2.3. Many names come from words that have meanings. Avrum Stroll informs that “dictionaries tell us that ‘Sarah’ in Hebrew means ‘princess’” (Stroll 1998, p. 528). Of course ‘Sarah’ does not mean, or nowadays ‘connote,’ that royal position, or even the condition of being metaphorically ‘a princess’ (being special and precious, young, and unmarried). It has no such suggestions in English or in Hebrew. The truth Stroll finds in dictionaries is that ‘Sarah’ comes from ‘sarah,’ which in Hebrew meant, and means, what ‘princess’ means in English: ‘Sarah’ only ‘Pickwickian’ means princess in Hebrew. Perhaps most names are without infeasible connotations or suggestions, even of sex. ‘Mary’ was, I understand, the private name of J. Edgar Hoover.

‘God’ is not like most names, if, as I think, that it would name in common use One who would be the true god is settled by linguistic convention and is not defeasible. Suppose believers became convinced that what they had been meaning to refer to with the name ‘God’ – the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – was in fact no god at all, but an ancient all-too-human practical joker named David who burnt bushes and the rest. These believers would not say, “That joker David, what a come-down for God.” They would say that they had been mistaken in thinking that they, and those before them, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been referring to *God* (cf., Gellman 1995, p. 541), for David was no god, and That One would need to have been one.

2.4. *Notes on another divine name.* Hasker says that, “‘Yahweh’, which was used by the ancient Hebrews to refer to their God,” was used by them “simply as a non-connotative proper name referring to that individual who in fact was, and is, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Hasker 1989, pp. 170–1). ‘Yahweh’, Hasker reports, did not express or suggest any concept. It was, in this, like the general run of proper names, and different from the English name ‘God’. I wonder. ‘George’ is a name that can without linguistic impropriety be given to, or taken by, female as well as male persons, weak as well as strong persons, and so on. Was ‘Yahweh’ similarly unconstrained linguistically? Did ‘Yahweh’ come from a common name or description with which it was still semantically connected? Did it come from a common name or description with which it was no longer semantically connected (as ‘George’, though it comes from the Greek for worker of the soil, no longer has that connotation). Was it made up out of whole cloth? According to *The Columbia Encyclopaedia*, (i) the “tetragrammaton . . . is of unknown origin,” and “the reconstruction . . . *Jahweh* is not now regarded as reliable.” Perhaps, however, as some have speculated, it, the tetragrammaton, came from the Hebrew verb *hawah*’ (which means to become), whose consonants are those of the tetragrammaton minus the first one (*yodh*). If so, it is plausible that, for the ancient Hebrews, the tetragrammaton, however they pronounced it, was in the beginning and perhaps always was a ‘connotative proper name’ that expressed a status somehow related to becoming and/or being. Might ‘Jahweh’ have recommended itself as the name of one who *is*, from whom everything else *comes*?¹

2.5. St. Thomas Aquinas held that ‘God’, since it is an ‘appellative name’ that signifies ‘the divine nature’ in the thing that possesses it, is not a proper name. (*Summa Theologica* I,q13,a9). The opposition is, I think, unnecessary. A name can be a proper name, and signifying or expressive. ‘God’ is such a name. Hasker agrees: “‘God’,” he writes, while a proper name, “expresses our concept of God” (Hasker 1989, p. 170). I come back, in Section 6.2.3, to differences between Hasker and me concerning the character of the concept expressed.

3. ETYMOLOGY AND SEMANTICS

3.1. To speculate amateurishly regarding ancient counterparts of ‘God,’ first there were gods, then ‘our’ god, and finally ‘the’ one god, the one true god of all:² First came the common name ‘god’, or, more accurately, first came counterparts of this common name in ancient languages including Hebrew; then came to the Hebrews the idea that their descriptive word applied to a being to whom they stood in a special relation; close on this conceit came the name ‘God’ (or, more accurately again, its counterpart in ancient Hebrew) for that being for whom they had other names and titles; finally came the idea that the descriptive word ‘god’ applied properly to only one being to whom no one is special and for whom the already in play name ‘God’ was naturally adopted. Relevant to the second stage of this story are these lines from *Exodus* 19:25–20:6, King James Version unrevised:

So Moses went down unto the
people, and spake unto them.
And God, spake all these words, saying.
I am the Lord thy God, which
have brought thee out of the land of
Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
Thou shalt have no other gods
before me.
Thou shalt not make unto thee any
graven image, or any likeness of any
thing that is in heaven above, or that
is in the earth beneath, or that is in
the water under the earth:
Thou shalt not bow down thyself
to them: for I the Lord thy God am
a jealous God. . . .

Moses used a proper name for God (*Elohim*) to tell Hebrews assembled that God had identified Himself in the phrase ‘the Lord thy God’. The phrase ‘the Lord thy God’ in Hebrew consists of the personal name of God (*‘Yahweh’*) and a title-term, *‘eloheyka’*, a cognate of *‘Elohim’*, meaning god-of-you, standing,

I assume, in apposition. A better translation would be 'the Lord, thy god' or, better still, 'Yahweh, thy god'.³

Moses did not report that God identified Himself as simply 'the god' or as 'everyone's god'.⁴ Moses has God identifying Himself to Moses (and through him, to them) as either specifically, or at least especially, his and their god. He is represented as having spoken in a manner that allows, that perhaps implies, that there are other gods whom they might be tempted to take before Him and of whom they might be tempted to carve images to which to bow. He is reported to have described Himself as a jealous god ('*el*', of which '*Elohim*' is a cognate), suggesting that perhaps other gods ('*elohim*') are not jealous. I consider the name '*Elohim*', not the personal name 'Yahweh', to be a 'counterpart' in Hebrew of the English name 'God'.⁵

I have speculated with *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament* (ed. J. R. Kohlenberger III, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987) open before me, and the following in mind: "In the Old Testament various names for God are used. YHWH [first occurrence at *Genesis* 2:4, report of first use by humans at *Genesis* 4:26] is the most celebrated of these; the Hebrews considered the name ineffable and, in reading, substituted the name *Adonai*.⁶ The ineffable name, or tetragrammaton [Gr.,=four-letter form], is of unknown origin; the reconstruction *Jehovah* was based on a mistake, the form *Jahweh* is not now regarded as reliable. . . . The most common name for God in the Old Testament is *Elohim*, a plural form, but used as a singular when speaking of God. . . . The name *Shaddai* . . . appears rarely. Of these names only *Adonai* has a satisfactory etymology. It is generally not possible to tell from English translations of the Bible what was the exact form of the name of God in the original" (*The Columbia Encyclopaedia*, Fifth Edition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.) I have had in mind also the incantation (here inexpertly transliterated), *Smie Yisra-ale, Adonoi eloheynu, Adonoi echod*. In some English translations: Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.⁷ (Amen.)

3.2. My semantic proposal is that the name 'God' today expresses our concept of a unique god. It expresses our concept of what would be the one and only true god, even if this concept is not strictly speaking, the sense or meaning of this name. And so, even if, according to the best semantic theories, 'God', since a proper name is necessarily meaningless, there is a pertinent meaning near-to-hand into which we can inquire, specifically, the meaning of the common name 'god' and connectedly that of 'what would be the one and only true god'.

Philosopher-linguists sometimes say that 'God' is not a proper name but a title-term analogous to 'The President', a kind of compressed-in-one-word definite description. At least they sometimes say that they shall use 'God' in this way in their 'scientific' discussions of its would-be referent's nature and existence. Witness: "Following Pike's presentation . . . , I assume that the term 'God' is a descriptive expression used to mark a certain *role*, rather than

a proper name” (Fischer 1989, p. 87). I regard as hardly controversial, and as not calling for argument, that ‘God’ in religious discourse and literature is a proper name, not a title-term. So does *The Oxford English Dictionary*. So does Jerome Gellman.: “In the day to day religious life of the West, in prayer and ‘religious language,’ typically the word ‘God’ functions as a proper name . . . the typical believer, when speaking . . . of God, does not intend to be speaking . . . of ‘whatever it is’ that satisfies a certain description, or cluster of them” (Gellman 1995, p. 536). In my view this is true as well of the play of ‘God’ in philosophy and theology that is, regarding the semantics of ‘God’, naive. It seems preferable, therefore, to continue this practice in semantically sophisticated discussions, and to use for related title and role-functions elevated (uppercase) definite descriptions such as ‘The One God’ and ‘The True God’ or, perhaps best, the already established title ‘The Lord’. In this way ‘God’ can be retained for the subject-position in answers to such questions as, Who is The Lord? While the name ‘God’ and these definite descriptions and titles would be necessarily co-referential, they would ‘reach out’ to their objects in different ways, the name by way of a “referential chain leading back to initial baptisms” (op. cit., p. 542) and the descriptions and titles by their meanings.

My primary object in this chapter is, however, to establish a perspective for discussions of subsequent chapters. For this purpose, little if anything depends on whether I am right and title-theorists are wrong on the semantic points and/or practices that divide us. To this observation may be added that it is certain that nothing turns on my reluctance, since I consider ‘God’ to be a name, to follow Gellman, and refer to it also as a word.

3.3. ‘This book would be about God.’ “‘*Would be* about God?’” Yes, ‘would be.’ Talk of God in this book in which the issue is often whether God exists does not, of course, take for granted that God exists. Subjunctive forms are often used as explicit reminders that existence is not presupposed. “But do not best semantic-theories say that proper names necessarily denote, and that denotations of subject terms of sentences are presupposed by statements one would make with them, so that, when these terms fail to refer, no statements, true or false, are made?” No. *Best* semantic-theories say neither of these things. The curiously popular view that proper names in correct use necessarily denote, refer, tag, or what have you, is plainly false of ‘names’ as ordinarily understood, as is the thesis that failures of reference of names always result in failures to make statements either true or false. Against the first view, we have that ‘Santa Claus’, ‘Sherlock Holmes’, and ‘God’ are names in frequent unfaultable use, though most people do not believe in Santa Claus, though everyone knows that Sherlock Holmes is a purely fictional character, and though there is, for many, a question of whether or not God exists, and for others, who deny that God exists, no question. Against the thesis, we have that it may be true that

God does not exist: The sentence 'God does not exist' may express a true statement, even though, if it does, its grammatical subject, 'God', fails to refer (cf., Stirton 1995, and Stroll 1997).^{8,9}

"What makes 'God' a name is the *intention*" (Gellman 1995, p. 543n2) with which it is used by believers to refer *not* by way of a concept or description that would pick out its referent, but by tying "into a referential chain that culminates... [in an] initial act or acts of naming" (Gellman 1995, p. 536) its referent. No matter to the semantic status of 'God' if the initial acts of naming went astray and nothing was actually named in them. No matter, if, for example, Moses was mistaken when he thought someone was speaking to him and naming Himself, 'YHWH' (*Exodus* 3:14) – no matter, if he was then dreaming. No matter, indeed, if that bit of *Exodus* is pure fiction, with the line in which God is quoted as naming itself having the status of the first speech in *Moby Dick*. The status of 'God' as a name is settled by the *intention* of believers when using it to refer by tying into a referential chain that goes back to a named being, whether or not they succeed in their intention. The use of this name by nonbelievers is parasitic on its use by believers.

4. THE CORE ATTITUDINAL CONCEPTION OF GOD

Whatever else [would] be true of God, it must at least be said that God [would be] a *worthy object of worship*. (Peterson et al. 1991)

4.1. There is not complete agreement regarding what would be the attributes of God, or about the meaning – the *proper* meaning – of the words 'the true god'. Indeed, this use of 'true' suggests disagreement. But there is an important *point* of agreement, and it is possible to see central parts of *the common conception of God* – that is, the conception of the god of the old and new Bible and of the Koran, as elaborated by "traditional theologians" (Rowe 1993, p. 5) – as a response to this point of agreement that, I am saying, is settled by, (i) *the meaning of 'god'* and, (ii) *the conventional tie of 'God' to 'the god'*.

John Findlay is right to "pin God down... as the 'adequate object of religious attitudes'" (Findlay 1955[1948], p. 48[176]). Findlay speaks in this regard of reverence, adoration, abasement, awe, wonder, extreme gratitude, and, above and before all others not included in it, of *worship*.¹⁰ God, it seems agreed by all, would need to be an appropriate object for at least some attitudes or emotions and behavior, including this one. That much is fixed by the meaning of 'the true god'. It would be very odd to say that God exists or that some being is the one and only true god, and to say this with indifference or while countenancing indifference. It is a plausible linguistic conjecture that at least part of the meaning of 'god' is that, even though psychologically possible, such indifference would be *inappropriate* on the part of those who believingly speak God's name and in a way *impossible* for those who speak with understanding of

The One of whom they would speak. God, it seems, just *must*, at least in the end and on full reflection and appreciation, matter to, and be worshipped at least in their hearts by, those who believe that God exists. Those who *believe that God exists* just *must*, at least in the end, *believe in God*, where this includes, in addition to the belief that, a worshipful attitude. In Plato's opinion The Good, an impersonal Idea or Form, must matter and be loved by all who know it. He considered its indifferent apprehension to be quite impossible. God would, according to ordinary religious thought and talk, be like that. *God would be in an objectively normative manner a proper object for religious attitudes*. This is a fixed point of agreement in our use of the name 'God' in religious discourse.

4.2. My semantic hypothesis is consonant with the following note on the etymology and semantics, which, though it is offered for the name 'God', is, as far as it goes, adequate only for the word 'god'. "**God** . . . The ulterior etymology is disputed. Apart from the unlikely hypothesis of adoption from some foreign tongue, the OTeut. *gudo*^m implies as its pre-Teut. type either *ghudho-m* or *ghuto-m*. The former does not appear to admit of explanation; but the latter would represent the neut. of the [passive] pple. of the root *gheu-*. There are two Aryan roots of the required form. . . . ; one meaning 'to invoke' . . . , the other 'to pour, to offer sacrifice' Hence *ghuto-m* has been variously interpreted as 'what is invoked' . . . and as 'what is worshipped by sacrifice' Either of these conjectures is fairly plausible, as they both yield a sense practically coincident with **the most obvious definition deducible from the actual use of the word, 'an object of worship'**" (*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume A-0, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 1168, being p. 267 in the volume for 'G' of *The Oxford English Dictionary* of 1933; bold emphasis added). My position is that the strongest semantic demand on the correct use of 'God' in evidence in its actual religious use is that God would be *the* one and only *proper* object of worship.

There is confirmation of this hypothesis even in the name's wider uses. Consider: "Ladies and gentleman, your attention please. God is in the house!," said Fats Waller, "when he was playing in a nightclub, and told . . . that Art Tatum had just walked in" (Gelly 1986, p. 61). This Wallerian hyperbole was for the assembled being in the presence of a musician of singular magnificence, a higher being, as it were, who was, as a pianist, simply awesome. Other speakers in other circumstances could use those words of a poet or a wide-receiver. Constant, as the idea expressed by these declarations, is the awesomeness of some person in some dimension, and this person's being *as if* worthy of worship *as a whatever*. Variable, and only suggested by a given context, would be the manner or dimension of this awesomeness, and also the nature and/or accomplishments of this person that made him awesome in that manner, or on which his awesomeness was consequent, and somewhat similarly, I think, for the primary use of 'God'. For differences, this name expresses the idea of awesomeness in every dimension and of being really worthy of worship without

qualification for all that it is. For a similarity, the primary use also leaves un-said and at most only suggests the nature and history of its purported bearer that would make God totally awesome and worthy of unqualified worship, or on which This One's appropriateness as an object of religious emotions and behavior would be consequent.

4.3. Confirmation of another sort for my semantic proposal that, bottom line, God would be the proper object of worship can be found in *the common conception of God* elaborated from the Bible by traditional theologians. It is as if, at least in its major parts, this conception were tailored for the attitudinal office that I say is assigned by linguistic convention to a being properly named 'God'. God, according to this common conception, would be a proper object of religious attitudes, par excellence. He would be "worthy of worship . . . in virtue of his [nature and his possession of certain] properties" (Swinburne 1993, p. 292).¹¹ These would be properties that made appropriate other more specific religious attitudes, as well as this major one. The common conception details a wide consensus concerning these properties. This consensus is arguably summed up in what I term *the philosophers' conception of God*, which would, in a single formula, make God the proper object par excellence, a *proper* object if any object could be, of religious attitudes and behavior, including centrally again those of worship. To establish a perspective, and to make some distinctions, for chapters to come, I start with the philosopher's conception and go from it to the common one.¹²

5. THE PHILOSOPHERS' CONCEPTION OF GOD – GOD AS A PERFECT BEING

If God would be a proper object of worship – if it would make sense that we should bend to God – it is required that This One should be *superior* to us, that This One should be great. "[R]eligious attitudes presume *superiority* in their objects, and such superiority, moreover, as reduces us, who feel the attitudes, to comparative nothingness" (Findlay 1955[1948], p. 51 [179]). How much superior to us and how much greater than us do we want God to be? The more superior the better. "[H]aving described a worshipful attitude as one in which we feel disposed to bend the knee before some object, to defer to it wholly, and the like, we find it natural to say that such an attitude can only be fitting where the revered *exceeds* us very vastly. . . . To feel religiously is . . . to presume surpassing greatness in some object. . . ." (Ibid). To feel religiously, Findlay maintains, is to presume for the object of one's feelings *unsurpassable* greatness. "[N]ow we advance further – in company with a large number of theologians and philosophers, who have added . . . touches to . . . portraits of deity . . . to make their object worthier of our worship . . . we are led . . . to [the] demand that our religious object should have an *unsurpassable* supremacy . . . that it should tower *infinitely* above all other objects" (Ibid).

We are led, Findlay is saying, to the god of the philosophers, to René Descartes's *perfect being*, to St. Anselm's *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*, to a being superior not only to us, but to everything that is and that *might be*. We are led to *this* idea of *the Supreme Being*. Having formed the idea of such greatness, it can seem that it would be proper to bend before, and to worship, nothing less – that it is either this God of the philosophers or no god at all. “This conception of God, as the absolutely perfect being, is one that . . . is . . . plausibly thought to be implied by the very idea of worship . . .” (Peterson et. al. 1991, p. 51). I doubt this, but what is certain is that this conception of God, that God as a perfect being, fuels most contemporary and much historic, philosophic discussion of God, as well as much popular discussion.

6. THE COMMON CONCEPTION OF TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY

According to the philosophers' conception, God would be unsurpassably great. We can recover and in a manner explain ‘the common conception’ by asking, Great in what ways, and in what manner? I am not suggesting that the common conception was reached by deduction from the philosophers' conception. I think that historically most parts of common conception were articulated before the synoptic philosophers' conception. My claim is only that the philosophers' conception can come first in order of explanation, and that all parts of the common conception can be understood as elaborations of it.

6.1 *Ways in which God would be great*

6.1.1 *In general.* God would be great in all ways that would contribute to being a proper object for religious attitudes. That, I think, is a better summary than that God would be great in all “valued” ways (Findlay 1955[1948], p. 51 [179]) or great in all ways that it is “intrinsically better” to be than not be (Morris 1987, p. 12). I explain what would be God's greatness in terms of the core ideas of the worshipful, awesome, venerable, and so on. This being's attributes would contribute to its being *unsurpassably worthy* of religious attitudes and emotions. God's attributes would ‘make’ God worshipful and the rest, and thus great, as attributes are thought to make persons good and lovable and their actions praiseworthy and right.

6.1.2 *In particular*

6.1.2.1. God would be unsurpassably powerful, *omnipotent*, and capable of doing absolutely everything that it is conceivable that anyone should do. That greatness would contribute to God's being *maximally awesome*. The deity would be unsurpassably knowledgeable, *omniscient*, and knowledgeable of absolutely everything that is knowable. That greatness would make sense of aspects of *unreserved respect*, for example, respect for God's authority regarding

what is for the best, and right and wrong. God would be unsurpassably good, *perfectly good*. "For if a being were to fall short of perfect goodness, it would not be worthy of unreserved praise and worship. So, God [would be] not just a good being, his goodness [would be] unsurpassable" (Rowe 1993, p. 8). One might dread an omnipotent and omniscient devil and bend and scrape before it, but, I take Rowe to imply, it would not make sense for anyone to praise and adore it in his heart or sincerely to worship it.

6.1.2.2. However, to quibble this last point, what about 'devil worship'? One possibility is to say that devil-worshippers see the devil not as seriously evil, but only as 'seriously evil,' that is, only as what other people say is seriously evil. Elaborating, devil-worshippers may see the devil's so-called evil as what makes that one so wonderful, so very good. Another possibility, however, is that the coherence of devil worship for a few people shows that goodness, in contrast perhaps with great power and knowledge, is, contrary to Rowe's suggestion, not in everyone's fully reflective and considered view essential to something's being a proper object of praise and worship. In any case, however, goodness is, in almost everyone's considered view, required if a being is to be worthy of praise and worship, which explains the perfection of it in the conception of traditional theologians.

Rowe suggests that God's perfect goodness would include, in addition to being and doing good, 'having it good' (Rowe 1993, p. 9). But that strikes an odd note and is at best an uncertain element of the common conception. Connectedly, for the thesis I am developing, it is doubtful that having everything good would suit God for any religious attitude or emotion. Having everything good could suit God for unreserved envy, but that is not a religious attitude. Left open are questions concerning unreserved admiration, whether precisely it would be a proper response to God's having it good. As for the unreserved praise of which Rowe speaks, we have it on no less an authority than Aristotle that that would not be a proper response to God's having it good in unsurpassable measure. "[N]o one praises happiness in the same sense in which he praises justice, but he exalts its bliss..." (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1101b26, tr. M. Ostwald). Perhaps, then, the appropriate response to God's having it good would be rejoicing with This One. That does have a clear religious ring to it.

6.1.2.3. Returning to firmer ground, certainly God, according to the common conception, would be *responsible* at least ultimately for the existence of all that exists. Absolutely every existent would be *due to* God at least ultimately and would, for its existence, *depend on* this being, which greatness would make sense of attitudes of *unreserved gratitude* ('cosmic gratitude,' I once heard George Nahknikian suggest), since in view of this unsurpassable existential responsibility, but for God we would be nothing. But for This One, nothing that need not be, that is, nothing that exists only contingently, would be. According to this idea, God would be *The Creator* of the world and of everything in it and also *The Sustainer* and every-moment-ratifier of creation, 'the ground of