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New Arguments for the Existence of God: Developments in Natural Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion in the Early Twenty-First Century

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion have flourished in the opening decades of the twenty-first century. One sign of this is the development of many new philosophical arguments for the existence of God. This thesis seeks to answer the question of how new arguments for God's existence developed in natural theology and analytic philosophy in the last twenty years (2000-2020) are to be evaluated. In the process, the methods of historical research and philosophical analysis and evaluation are employed. The thesis documents dozens of novel arguments for God and gives insight into the historical context in which they emerged by describing recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion. It also provides a philosophical analysis of a dozen or so new arguments for God and outlines an approach to evaluating arguments for God's existence.

Contents

Preface

The development of new arguments for the existence of God in recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion is an interesting, if fairly unknown, feature of the opening decades of the twenty-first century. We will become much more familiar with these arguments over the course of this thesis, but it is also important to say something about the personal background of the thesis. Every research project, it seems, is shaped by those doing the research, and this project is no exception. As someone interested in the question of God's existence and in holding an informed view on the matter, examining new arguments for God is of personal importance to me. Admittedly, I am somewhat skeptical of such arguments (as I am of arguments against God's existence), but skepticism that is not informed by careful study is rather cheap. Confidence that God does (not) exist abounds in our time, but it is often accompanied with much ignorance of the relevant evidence, arguments and literature. Of course, we do not all get the same opportunities to ponder these matters, and I am grateful that it was possible to do my master's thesis on the current topic, and honoured to have been supervised by Emanuel Rutten, a philosopher who has come up with multiple novel arguments for God's existence.

Introduction

1. Introduction

In the first decades of the twenty-first century natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion have flourished. One of the signs of this is the development of many new philosophical arguments for God. Among the most noteworthy of these new arguments is an ontological argument developed by the Canadian philosopher Alexander Pruss.[1] This argument is considered by some to be the best ontological argument for God currently on offer. But like many new arguments for God, this argument is largely unknown within the diverse and specialized disciplines of philosophy and theology, and virtually unheard of in religious communities and society more generally. This thesis documents dozens of these novel arguments spread over thirteen different categories. It also describes recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion so that we can better understand the historical context in which these arguments emerged. In addition, the thesis provides a brief philosophical analysis of a dozen or so new arguments and outlines an approach to evaluating new arguments for God.

At present there seems to be little secondary literature on recent arguments for God with a similarly broad scope. An outlier in the current research is Chad McIntosh's 2019 article on nontraditional arguments for theism, which refers to some 50 arguments, many of them found in publications from the last twenty years.[2] McIntosh's article is thus, despite its slightly different focus, of great value for this project.[3] Moreover, McIntosh presents a useful taxonomy of theistic arguments in this article, which will be outlined further on. Also, the most recent history of natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion is somewhat underexplored.[4] In virtue of these things, the thesis contributes

[1] Alexander R. Pruss, "A Gödelian Ontological Argument Improved Even More," in *Ontological Proofs Today*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 203-211.
[2] Chad A. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments for Theism," *Philosophy Compass* 14, no.5 (July 2019): 1-14, 12590, accessed January 7, 2021, https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1111/phc3.12590.
[3] I have also made grateful use of his recent powerpoint overview of arguments for God, many of which are new arguments. Chad McIntosh, "100+ Args for God," 1-359, accessed April 29, 2021, https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1i7-6PKnoOK8EiiC1r-tt44mZK703nCsN2_QH_0TxxZU/edit#slide=id.gbfd27458c3_0_108.
[4] The multivolume work *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion* does not (yet) have a volume on the opening decades of the twenty-first century. Graham Oppy and N.N. Trakakis, eds., *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, 5 vols. (Acumen Publishing, 2009). But see Paul Draper and J.L. Schellenberg, eds.,

to current academic research and may be of use to researchers working within the fields of theology, philosophy and history.

The thesis may also be of interest to some outside of the academy. Belief in God is typically not directly based on philosophical arguments, new or old, but such arguments can have value for religious believers and faith communities as (communicable) reasons to believe that God truly exists. Furthermore, such arguments can be of interest to members of society that are interested in the question of God's existence. Increased public awareness of new philosophical arguments for God can help give depth to public discussions about religion. The more historical, analytic and evaluative parts of the thesis can moreover help people to understand and evaluate new arguments for God.

The structure of this thesis is fairly straightforward. The central research question which the thesis aims to answer is: How are new arguments for God's existence developed in natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion in the last twenty years (2000-2020) to be evaluated? This central question raises a number of sub-questions which are dealt with here in the introduction and in chapters 1-3. In the introduction we engage the difficult question of what counts as a new argument for the existence of God. In the process, some key terms used in this thesis will be clarified. Then the first chapter discusses recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion. This chapter deals with the question of what natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion are and gives us insight into the historical background of new arguments for God. It also familiarizes us with some of the philosophers that show up at various points in the thesis. In the second and third chapters new arguments for God are documented and philosophically analysed. These chapters address the question of what new arguments for God have been developed in recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion and do much of the groundwork for our later evaluation of new arguments for God. For these chapters we will make use of McIntosh's taxonomy. Finally, the last chapter addresses the main research question of the thesis. The methods used in the thesis project include a study of relevant literature, historical research, and philosophical analysis and evaluation. The thesis project was delimited in various ways to make it feasible. We will, for instance, focus on new arguments for God published in academic publications.

Renewing Philosophy of Religion: Exploratory Essays (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); M. David Eckel, C. Allen Speight and Troy DuJardin, eds., *The Future of the Philosophy of Religion* (Springer, 2021).

2. McIntosh's Taxonomy of Theistic Arguments

Chad McIntosh has distinguished two broad categories of theistic arguments: *traditional* and *nontraditional* arguments. Traditional arguments are grouped into the following seven categories: (1) cosmological arguments, (2) ontological arguments, (3) design arguments, (4) moral arguments, (5) miracles arguments, (6) pragmatic arguments, and (7) experiential arguments. Nontraditional arguments are also divided into seven categories: (1) metaphysical arguments, (2) nomological arguments, (3) axiological arguments, (4) noological arguments, (5) linguistic arguments, (6) anthropological arguments, and (7) meta-argument arguments.[5] This taxonomy gives us much of the structure for chapters 2 and 3 and its categories will be clarified in these chapters, but here it is important to note that we will not consider pragmatic arguments in this thesis. That is because pragmatic arguments are arguably not arguments for God's existence, but rather arguments for *believing* that God exists.[6]

3. New Arguments for God: What Counts?

The question of what counts as a new argument for the existence of God is not an easy one. First of all, there are differing accounts of what an argument is.[7] An argument is, roughly, a distinct set of propositions or statements which support a specific thesis or conclusion. It is customary to distinguish at least two sorts of arguments: *deductive* arguments and *inductive* arguments.[8] A classic example of a deductive argument is the following argument:

(1) All men are mortal.
(2) Socrates is a man.
(3) Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

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[5] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 1-2.
[6] Jeff Jordan, "Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God," in *The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2018 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed February 4, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/pragmatic-belief-god/. For an example, see Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager: Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24.
[7] Cf. Matthew McKeon, "Argument," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 8, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/argument/; Jeffrey Goodman, "On Defining 'Argument'" *Argumentation* 32, no. 4 (2018): 596.
[8] But see David Hitchcock, *On Reasoning and Argument: Essays in Informal Logic and on Critical Thinking* (Springer, 2017), 3-6. Moreover, there are differing accounts of what deductive and inductive arguments are. Cf. Tracy Bowell and Gary Kemp, *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 1; McKeon, "Argument," https://iep.utm.edu/argument/; Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), 4-6.

This argument is *valid*, since its premises are such that they, if they are true, together guarantee the truth of the conclusion. But that does not make the argument *sound*. For a deductive argument to be sound it must be valid and only have true premises. Inductive arguments work differently than deductive arguments. Richard Swinburne distinguishes two types of inductive arguments: (1) arguments whose premises make the conclusion more probable, and (2) arguments whose premises make the conclusion probably true.[9] Swinburne gives an example of each type which helps us understand the difference:[10]

Type 1:	Type 2:
(1) All of 100 ravens observed in different parts of the world are black. (2) Therefore, all ravens are black.	(1) 70% of the inhabitants of the Bogside are Catholic. (2) Doherty is an inhabitant of the Bogside. (3) Therefore, Doherty is Catholic.

Further, there are *abductive* arguments. They are also called 'inferences to the best explanation'. Such arguments typically assert that some explanation is the simplest, best or most plausible (available) explanation and that therefore the argument's conclusion is (likely) true. The appeal to explanatory considerations is arguably what sets them apart from deductive and inductive arguments.[11] It is relatively easy to identify an argument if it is presented in a somewhat formal manner such as the arguments above. However, arguments are commonly offered in a more informal way. The precise shape of such arguments is often unclear, which is also the case with many new arguments for God.

But what counts as an argument for *God*? Here we are faced with the problem that the word 'God' is used in different ways. The term is used in translations of various sacred texts and holy books, including the Tanakh, the Quran and the Christian Bible. In Christian Scripture it refers to a unique, good, perfect and eternal deity who is the almighty creator of the heavens and the earth, liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them, is wise, loving, just, merciful and

[9] Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), 4-6.
[10] Slight modifications were made for the sake of presentation. Note that Swinburne does not think it necessary to use terms like 'probably' in the conclusions. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 4.
[11] For more on abductive arguments, see Ilkka Niiniluoto, *Truth-Seeking by Abduction* (Springer, 2018), 96; Igor Douven, "Abduction," in *The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2017 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed February 9, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/abduction/.

slow to anger, and raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.[12] But the term is often used a bit differently in contemporary philosophy of religion. For example, Richard Swinburne writes that he takes the proposition 'God exists' to be logically equivalent to the proposition that "there exists necessarily a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who necessarily is eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and the creator of all things."[13]

In philosophy of religion, the term 'God' is closely associated with the term 'theism'. Theism comes in different forms. There is, for instance, *bare theism* or *mere theism*. Bare theism, on one account, is equivalent to the thesis that a personal first cause exists, that is, an uncaused personal cause of everything besides itself.[14] A much fuller portrait of God is provided by *classical theism*, which is associated with Greek philosophers and medieval Christian, Jewish and Islamic thinkers. According to Thomas Williams, the God of classical theism is unqualifiedly perfect, absolutely united (i.e. simple), self-sufficient, immutable, atemporal, immaterial, free from all spaciotemporal limitations, impassible, and perfect in knowledge, power and goodness.[15] Classical theism overlaps with *perfect being theism*, on which God is a perfect being or the greatest metaphysically possible being.[16]

Then there is *neoclassical theism*. Ryan Mullins explains that neoclassical theists reject one or more of the classical attributes of God, particularly timelessness, immutability, simplicity and impassibility, but affirm, for instance, that God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent.[17] Mullins sees the affirmation of exhaustive divine foreknowledge as distinguishing neoclassical theism from *open theism*.[18] Open theism overlaps with neoclassical theism, but what perhaps sets it apart is the belief

[12] This draws on Gn 1:1, Dt 4:31, 32:4; Ps 145:8; Jer 10:6, 34:13; Mt 5:48; Mk 10:27; Lk 18:19; Acts 5:30; 1 Cor 6:14; Eph 1:20; 1 Tm 1:17; 1 Jn 4:8, 16; Rv 19:6.
[13] Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 7.
[14] We are drawing on ideas of Emanuel Rutten here, although he also writes that "(bare) theism comprises of course much more than 'just' a personal first cause". Emanuel Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism: A Critical Assessment of Contemporary Cosmological Arguments* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2012), 174-176, 176n237.
[15] Thomas Williams, "Introduction to Classical Theism," in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 95.
[16] In *The Openness of God* William Hasker described perfect being theology' in terms of God being "an absolutely perfect being". Yuijn Nagasawa describes perfect being theism more in terms of God being the greatest metaphysically possible being. Clark H. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 131; Yuijn Nagasawa, *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9.
[17] Ryan T. Mullins, *God and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 25-26.
[18] Mullins, *God and Emotion*, 25.

that God, although omniscient, does not (and cannot) foreknow all free human actions.[19] Open theism has further been distinguished from *process theism* which is strongly associated with Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. Like neoclassical theists and open theists, process theists reject (parts of) classical theism. What distinguishes them is likely a commitment to some sort of process metaphysics.[20]

In light of all this, my thesis includes arguments which *seem* to be new arguments for God, either in the primary sense of arguments that (explicitly) *conclude* that God exists or in the secondary sense of arguments that *support* the thesis that God exists. In this we are guided by how an argument's originator seems to view it (e.g. whether it is presented as a new argument for God), which allows us to sidestep the problem of the different usages of the term 'God'. Moreover, by focussing on publications from the years 2000-2020 we can be confident that we are, in any case, dealing with fairly recent arguments.

4. Conclusion

The thesis topic has now been introduced and we have discussed the thesis's relevance, its main research question and its basic structure. We have also dealt with some preliminary matters such as the issue of what counts as a new argument for God. Next we will turn our attention to recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion, which forms an important part of the historical context of new arguments for God.

[19] Note that Clark Pinnock talked of revising classical theism. James Rissler, "Open Theism," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 16, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/o-theism/; Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God*, 107, 130-131.
[20] Cf. Mullins, *God and Emotion*, 26; Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God*, 112; Donald Viney, "Process Theism," in *The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2020 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed February 17, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/process-theism/.

Chapter 1: Recent Natural Theology and Philosophy of Religion

1. Introduction

This chapter clarifies what is meant by 'natural theology' and 'analytic philosophy of religion' and offers a brief description of the recent history of these fields, giving us a clearer sense of the historical context of new arguments for God and familiarizing us with some of the figures that show up in other parts of the thesis. In this description, I draw on various sources and pay attention to key people, publications, discussions and institutions. Nevertheless, our description is limited and is shaped by particular interests, especially an interest in understanding and contextualizing new arguments for God's existence.[21] Further, it is worth noting that while there is a wealth of publications from within the fields of natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion, there are few extensive treatments of the most recent history of these fields. This is not particularly surprising given that we are dealing with recent history, but it is worth mentioning nevertheless. Before we get to the recent history of these fields, the next two paragraphs will give us a glimpse of their larger history.

2. Natural Theology

Natural theology has been variously described and defined. In *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland describe it as "that branch of theology that seeks to provide warrant for belief in God's existence apart from the resources of authoritative, propositional revelation."[22] But Charles Taliaferro defines it as "the practice of philosophically reflecting on the existence and nature of God independent of real or apparent divine revelation or scripture."[23]

[21] See Jörg Rüpke, "History," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London: Routledge, 2011), 285. For Daniel Wickberg, historians are in large part *contextualizers*. Daniel Wickberg, "Intellectual History vs. the Social History of Intellectuals," *Rethinking History* 5, no. 3 (2001): 383.
[22] William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, "Introduction," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), ix.
[23] Charles Taliaferro, "The Project of Natural Theology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), 1.

Further, James Brent describes natural theology as "a program of inquiry into the existence and attributes of God without referring or appealing to any divine revelation."[24]

Nevertheless, it seems clear that someone is doing natural theology, if she offers arguments for the existence of a deity, which do not involve (explicit) appeals to divine revelation. Major figures of philosophy and theology are reckoned among the practitioners of natural theology, including Aristotle, Ibn Sina and Thomas Aquinas. Other famous practitioners include: Plato, Anselm, Ibn Rushd, John Duns Scotus, René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and William Paley.[25] Moreover, although historical discussions tend to focus on Western and Middle-Eastern figures, natural theology has also been identified further East. For example, Indian philosophers such as Udayana and Uddyotakara advanced arguments considered arguments for God.[26] Indeed, some have suggested that religious thinkers and philosophers "across almost every epoch and tradition (Near Eastern, African, Asian, and European) have engaged the project of natural theology, either as proponents or critics."[27]

David Hume and Immanuel Kant have been viewed as noteworthy critics of (forms of) natural theology.[28] Within recent Christian theology, the most famous critic of natural theology is perhaps the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, who held, roughly, that no human knowledge of God should be pursued, or can be had, apart from God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.[29] Barth's negative stance on

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[24] James Brent, "Natural Theology," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 24, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/theo-nat/.

[25] Cf. Taliaferro, "The Project of Natural Theology," 1-2; Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt, *A Natural History of Natural Theology: The Cognitive Science of Theology and Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 8; Andrew Chignell and Derk Pereboom, "Natural Theology and Natural Religion," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2020 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed on February 24, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/natural-theology/; James Brent, "Natural Theology," https://iep.utm.edu/theo-nat/.

[26] Matthew R. Dasti, "Indian Rational Theology: Proof, Justification, and Epistemic Liberality in Nyāya's Argument for God," *Asian Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (February 2011), 3-4; John Kronen and Sandra Menssen, "The Argument from Wholes: A Classical Hindu Design Argument for the Existence of God," *Faith and Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (April 2013): 138-139.

[27] Chignell and Pereboom, "Natural Theology and Natural Religion," https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/natural-theology/.

[28] Cf. Brent, "Natural Theology," https://iep.utm.edu/theo-nat/; Taliaferro, "The Project of Natural Theology," 1-2; De Cruz and De Smedt, *A Natural History of Natural Theology*, 10; Nancy Frankenberry, "Natural Theology," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 336-337.

[29] For a relevant discussion, see Rodney Holder, "Karl Barth: Natural Theology Challenged," in *The Heavens Declare: Natural Theology and the Legacy of Karl Barth* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2012), 15-53.

natural theology has influenced other theologians, but has not led to a total rejection of natural theology.[30] Someone from another part of the world that might qualify as a critic of natural theology is the medieval Buddhist philosopher Ratnakīrti.[31]

The historical development of (Western) natural theology has been sketched in various ways. According to Chignell and Pereboom, in the West the most active discussions of natural theology were during the high medieval period and the early modern period. But they add that there has been "a revival of natural theological debate in the public sphere" in the past few decades.[32] Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt seem to view the pre-Christian classical period as a time of prominence of natural theology in the West, with natural theology becoming prominent again in the Middle Ages, first among Islamic theologians and then later among Christian writers. In their view, natural theology continued through the early modern period, declined in the late nineteenth century under the influence of methodological naturalism, but is now experiencing a revival, together with philosophy of religion.[33] However, a similar decline narrative has been challenged by Russell Manning, who remarks that there seems to be a strong case that the true heyday of natural theology was the nineteenth century.[34] Moreover, natural theology was not absent from the patristic period. For example, Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus appear to have argued for the existence of God without direct appeal to divine revelation.[35]

Those that advance or critique arguments for God in our own time are thus doing something that is not entirely new, whether or not they are conscious of this. Contemporary natural theology has

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[30] For example, many Dutch theologians followed Barth in his rejection of natural theology. René van Woudenberg, "Moeten we tegen natuurlijke theologie zijn?" in *NTT* 69, no. 4 (2015): 252-253. Russell Manning remarks that "it is striking how much natural theology has, in fact, persevered in the twentieth century, even in those traditions most decisively influenced by Barth." Russell Re Manning, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.
[31] For more information, see Dasti, "Indian Rational Theology," 14-16; Parimal G. Patil, *Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
[32] Chignell and Pereboom, "Natural Theology and Natural Religion," https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/natural-theology/.
[33] De Cruz and De Smedt, *A Natural History of Natural Theology*, 7-11.
[34] Manning, *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, 3.
[35] Matthew Levering, *Proofs of God: Classical Arguments from Tertullian to Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 27-44. See also David Bradshaw, "Alexei Fokin on Natural Theology in the Orthodox Tradition from Patristic to Late Byzantine Times," (video of paper presentation, The Inaugural Conference Pan-Orthodox Unity and Conciliarity, IOTA, January 9-12, 2019), accessed February 26, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUmXjd5ZUeo&list=PL9cNXJIT3S2SiXPB_jkdkysnA1kovJ731&index=3.

roots which go back into ancient times. In light of this, it may be tempting to dismiss recent natural theology as mere repetition of old arguments. But that is a mistake. As chapters 2 and 3 make clear, there is genuine novelty in recent natural theology. With these things in mind, we now turn to discuss analytic philosophy of religion.

3. Analytic Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy of religion is, at least in one sense, a field of academic study touching on all sorts of matters associated with religion. Its roots can be traced back a long way, and many of the thinkers mentioned above play a role in contemporary philosophy of religion. However, according to Charles Taliaferro, the term 'philosophy of religion' originated with 17th century Cambridge Platonists, and he suggests that they might have been the first explicit philosophers of religion. Moreover, he sees reason to believe that philosophy of religion only emerged as a distinct sub-field of philosophy in the mid-twentieth century.[36]

When it comes to contemporary philosophy it is common to distinguish *analytic* and *continental* philosophy. The distinction seems to have been introduced after the Second World War among philosophers in England. The term 'continental philosophy' was used to refer to philosophies, philosophers and philosophical movements then found in continental Europe, while the term 'analytic philosophy' was used to refer to certain philosophical approaches found in England and (later) also in the wider English-speaking world.[37] This sort of distinction is also made when it comes to contemporary philosophy of religion. Because of its strong links to new arguments for God, this thesis focusses on *analytic* philosophy of religion, rather than on *continental* philosophy of religion.[38] For what follows, we will make critical use of William Hasker's discussion of the history of analytic philosophy of religion.[39]

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[36] Charles Taliaferro, "Philosophy of Religion," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 1, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/philosophy-religion/.
[37] Richard Wolin, "Continental Philosophy," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed March 1, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/continental-philosophy.
[38] For more on continental philosophy of religion, see Merold Westphal, "Continental Philosophy of Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William J. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 472-493; Morny Joy, ed. *Continental Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).
[39] William Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William J. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 421-446.

The history of analytic philosophy of religion is divided by Hasker into three phases. During the first period, which lasts until about 1965, there was a strong preoccupation with religious language and particularly the question of its meaningfulness. This interest was primarily related to A.J. Ayer's introduction of logical positivism into English philosophy around 1936. One of the core tenets of logical positivism was a family of principles known as 'the verification principle', on which, roughly, a statement is only meaningful if it is tautological or empirically verifiable.[40] Statements like 'God exists' were thought to be neither and thus to be, in a sense, meaningless.[41] For Hasker the controversy about the meaningfulness of religious language comes to a head in the debate about theology and falsification, in which Antony Flew played a central role.[42] In 1950 the young philosopher presented a paper at C.S. Lewis's Socratic Club in Oxford entitled 'Theology and Falsification', which was later published, reprinted and read widely.

Flew took a different approach to religious language than Ayer and did not rule out the possibility that theological claims were meaningful assertions.[43] In his paper, Flew rather raised the question of what would count as a disproof of God's existence.[44] This was key for Flew because, in his view, "anything which would count against [an] assertion, or which would induce the speaker to withdraw it and to admit that it had been mistaken, must be part of (or the whole of) the meaning of the negation of that assertion."[45] And, Flew reasoned, to know the meaning of the negation of a claim, is pretty much to know the meaning of that claim.[46] We cannot get into the details of the ensuing debate, but a number of philosophers responded to Flew, including R.M. Hare and Basil Mitchell, both members of a group of Oxford thinkers known as 'The Metaphysicals'.[47] John Hick is also

[40] Britannica editors, "Verifiability Principle," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed March 2, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/verifiability-principle. For more on logical positivism, see Thomas Uebel, "Vienna Circle," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2020 ed., ed. Edward Zalta, accessed March 2, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/vienna-circle/.
[41] J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 154.
[42] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 422.
[43] Cf. Roy Abraham Varghese, preface to *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, by Antony Flew and Roy Abraham Varghese (New York: HarperOne, 2007), xi-xiv.
[44] Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," in Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, eds. *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (1955; repr., London: SCM Press, 1963), 99.
[45] Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," 98.
[46] Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," 98.
[47] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 423-425; Olli-Pekka Vainio, "Natural Theology: A Recent History," in *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2 (2017): 7-8.

considered part of this discussion, especially with reference to his *Faith and Knowledge* (1957).[48] Sometime in the late 1960s, according to Hasker, "the claim that speech about God is devoid of cognitive import died a quiet death."[49] Here we get to the second historical phase which Hasker characterizes in terms of attack and defense of theism. Key works were published during this period, which lasts into the 1980s, and some of those writing during this period are among the most well-known philosophers of religion today.

In 1967 Alvin Plantinga published *God and Other Minds*, which according to some is one of the most important works of post-war analytic philosophy of religion.[50] In this book Plantinga defends the rationality of belief in God, but does so in a surprising way. He first critiques various arguments for and against God's existence, concluding that they neither prove nor disprove God's existence, but then goes on to argue that belief in God is nevertheless rational. [51] Plantinga also published on the logical problem of evil, which involves the (alleged) incompatibility of the existence of God and evil. Plantinga did so partially in response to J.L. Mackie's famous article "Evil and Omnipotence" (1955). Mackie was convinced that the following propositions are inconsistent: (1) God is omnipotent, (2) God is wholly good, and (3) evil exists.[52] Making use of the idea of possible worlds (that is, roughly, possible versions of reality), Plantinga, however, developed a response known as the free will defense, which for many people solved Mackie's logical problem.[53]

A few years later Richard Swinburne published the first book of his trilogy on "the philosophy of theism", namely *The Coherence of Theism* (1977), which was followed by *The Existence of God* (1979) and *Faith & Reason* (1981).[54] Swinburne's discussion of the attributes of God is part of a larger

[48] See Paul Badham, "John Hick," in *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 5, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Graham Oppy and N.N. Trakakis (London: Routledge, 2014), 236; Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 425.
[49] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 427.
[50] Charles Taliaferro, "Twentieth-Century Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction," in *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 5, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Graham Oppy and N.N. Trakakis (London: Routledge, 2014), 5.
[51] James F. Sennett, "Alvin Plantinga," in *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 5, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Graham Oppy and N.N. Trakakis (London: Routledge, 2014), 274-276.
[52] J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64, no. 254 (1955): 200.
[53] Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1982), 164-190; Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 432. But see Anders Kraal, "Has Plantinga 'Burried' Mackie's Logical Argument from Evil?' *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 75 (2014): 189-196.
[54] Richard Swinburne, "Short Intellectual Autobiography," University of Oxford, accessed March 4, 2021, http://users.ox.ac.uk/~orie0087/.

exploration of God's attributes happening during the second historical phase.[55] Further, Swinburne took a much different approach to natural theology than Plantinga, and developed a cumulative case for the existence of God. Around the same time, William Lane Craig published his *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (1979), based on his study of cosmological arguments of the medieval thinkers al-Kindi, al-Ghāzāli and Saadia ben Joseph. Craig presented a modern version of the argument, which he has, with slight differences in formulation, defended ever since.[56]

In the same period a number of key publications of atheist philosophers were published.[57] In "The Presumption of Atheism" (1972) Antony Flew argued for 'the presumption of atheism' in the debate about God's existence, on which the theist basically has the obligation or task to (1) introduce a concept of God, (2) defend it against any objections to its coherence, and (3) provide a sufficient reason to believe that God, thus conceived of, exists.[58] In 1979 William L. Rowe published an argument for atheism from certain cases of intense suffering, which was important for the discussion on the problem of evil.[59] J.L. Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism* (1982) criticized arguments for God's existence and concluded that it is not probable that God exists.[60]

The third historical phase starts some time in the 1980s (a precise date is not given) and continues into the twenty-first century. This period is characterized by a diversification of topics studied in the field.[61] The topics explored include: (1) non-Western religions, (2) religious pluralism, (3) the relationship between science and religion, (4) particular (Christian) doctrines, (5) divine command theories of ethics, (6) religious (anti)realism, and (7) the implications of religious beliefs for

[55] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 427.
[56] William Lane Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), 64. For a recent defense, see William Lane Craig and James D. Sinclair, "The *Kalām* Cosmological Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 101-201.
[57] See also Graham Oppy and N.N. Trakakis, "Late-Twentieth-Century Atheism," in *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 5, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Graham Oppy and N.N. Trakakis (London: Routledge, 2014), 301-312.
[58] Antony Flew, "The Presumption of Atheism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (1972): 31-32, 38.
[59] William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 335-341.
[60] Richard Swinburne, review of *The Miracle of Theism* by J.L. Mackie, *Faith and Rationality* by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Faith and Reason* by Anthony Kenny, *God and Skepticism* by Terence Penelhum, *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 1 (1985): 46.
[61] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 421.

epistemology generally.[62] We cannot delve deeply into these topics. But for each of them, I shall mention at least one or two key figures or publications.

John Hick is a key figure in the study of non-Western religions and religious pluralism. Making use of Immanuel Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal, Hick advanced a view on which, roughly, the personal deities of the religions and the nonpersonal ultimates of Eastern philosophies are manifestations (in human experience) of the Real. Noteworthy here is Hick's *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989), based on his 1986-1987 Gifford Lectures.[63] The Gifford Lectures, on a side note, is a prestigious series of lectures on natural theology.[64] Religious epistemology was a major topic within analytic philosophy of religion in the late twentieth century. Noteworthy is the development of Reformed epistemology by Alvin Plantinga, Nicolas Wolterstorff and William Alston. According to Plantinga, the main claim of Reformed epistemology is that belief in God can be *properly basic*, which is roughly to say that a person can be justified in holding this belief in a way that is not based on (reasoning from) other beliefs held by that person.[65] Further, according to Reformed epistemology, such belief can be *internally rational* (that is, roughly, appropriate for a rational person in light of her evidence) and also *warranted*, if produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties aimed successfully at the production of true belief and functioning in the environment for which they were designed.[66]

Within analytic philosophy of religion, Plantinga is one of the most well-known contributors to the discussion about science and religion, especially because of his book *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (2011) and his Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism (EAAN). The argument leads to the conclusion that naturalism and evolution, taken together, cannot be rationally accepted.[67] There is,

[62] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 435.
[63] David C. Cramer, "John Hick (1922-2012)," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 8, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/hick/.
[64] See also Brian Hebblethwaite, "Natural Theology," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 196-203.
[65] Alvin Plantinga, "Reformed Epistemology," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 674-677.
[66] Plantinga, "Reformed Epistemology," 677-678.
[67] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 344.

Plantinga argues, a conflict between naturalism and evolution such that one cannot "sensibly" believe both.[68]

Particular religious doctrines were explored in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, Swinburne published books on the Christian doctrines of God, atonement, revelation, and providence.[69] Hasker briefly describes the discussion of the doctrine of divine providence, which touches on God's power and knowledge and human agency and freedom. In the process Hasker refers to various things already briefly discussed in this thesis (e.g. process theism and open theism), but also mentions 'molinism', from the Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina. On molinism, roughly, God possess 'middle knowledge' so that he knows what creatures *would* freely (choose to) do under various circumstances, making it possible for God to determine what will happen without limiting human freedom.[70] The discussion around molinism has continued into the twenty-first century.[71]

Divine command theory is, roughly, a family of views on which the will of God determines the moral status of (some) things.[72] Noteworthy publications in this context are Philip Quinn's book *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements* (1978) and Robert Adam's work *Finite and Infinite Goods* (1999). [73] In the debate around religious realism and anti-realism two of the key figures are D.Z. Phillips and Roger Trigg. The debate is, very roughly, about the relationship between human beings, religious language, and reality. A religious realist will tend to say that God exists independently of human beings. A religious antirealist, on the other hand, will tend to view God's existence as being very much tied up with human subjectivity.[74]

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[68] Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, 310.
[69] Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[70] Hasker, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 435-437.
[71] See Ken Perszyk, ed., *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[72] Mark Murphy, "Theological Voluntarism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 9, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/voluntarism-theological/.
[73] Philip L. Quinn, *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[74] See also Roger Trigg, "Theological Realism and Antirealism," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 651-658; Clare McGraw, "The Realism/Anti-Realism Debate in Religion," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no.1 (2007): 254-272.

4. Natural Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion (2000-2020)

Philosophy of religion around the turn of the millennium had, in the mind of some, at least six major philosophical schools: philosophical theism, Reformed epistemology, Wittgensteinianism, postmodernism, critical theory, and process thought.[75] At least the first three of these schools are closely associated with analytic philosophy of religion. In the volume *Philosophy of Religion in the 21st Century* these schools were represented by Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Stephen Mulhall. Interestingly, philosophical atheism was not treated as a separate school in the book, although atheistic philosophers of religion have been very important to philosophy of religion, as will become clearer shortly.

4.1. The Problems of Divine Hiddenness and Evil

In 1993 J.L. Schellenberg published *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, a book that argues against God's existence from there being certain people who fail to believe in God through no fault of their own.[76] Schellenberg is largely responsible for the recent exploration of the (apparent) hiddenness of God. Many different philosophers have been involved in the discussion over the past twenty years.[77] Some of the more well-known contributors include Michael C. Rea, Paul K. Moser and Daniel Howard-Snyder, who has also been quite involved in the discussion of the problem of evil.[78] In the late 70s the *logical* problem of evil was considered resolved by many philosophers and the focus shifted to the *evidential* problem of evil, on which, roughly, the existence of evil is evidence against God's existence. William Rowe and Paul Draper are some of the central figures of this discussion.[79]

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[75] See D.Z. Phillips and Timothy Tessin, eds. *Philosophy of Religion in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).
[76] Daniel Howard-Synder and Adam Green, "Hiddenness of God," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2016 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 15, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/divine-hiddenness/.
[77] See J.L. Schellenberg, "Divine Hiddenness," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 509-518; "Divine Hiddenness: Part 1 (Recent Work on the Hiddenness Argument)," *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 4 (2017): 1-9, 12355; "Divine Hiddenness: Part 2 (Recent Enlargements of the Discussion)," *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 4 (2017): 1-10, 12413.
[78] See Michael C. Rea, *The Hiddenness of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Paul K. Moser, *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Daniel Howard-Snyder and Paul Moser, eds. *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Daniel Howard-Snyder, ed. *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
[79] Michael L. Peterson, "The Logical Problem of Evil," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 491; Graham Oppy, "The Evidential Problem of Evil," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 500.

However, there are signs that the logical problem of evil has been making a comeback.[80] Major recent publications on the problem of evil include *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil* (2013) and *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil* (2017).[81] Well-known philosophers that have written on the problem of evil include Marilyn McCord Adams, Peter van Inwagen and Eleonore Stump.[82]

4.2 Science and Natural Theology

In the last twenty years philosophers of religion have written on the relationship between science and religion and engaged with scientific literature on specific topics. Alvin Plantinga, whose book *Where the Conflict Really Lies* has already been mentioned published a debate book in 2010 with Daniel Dennett entitled: *Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?*[83] Further, William Lane Craig has drawn on contemporary cosmology to defend his *kalām* cosmological argument and finetuning argument for God. Moreover, less well-known philosophers have also published on scientific topics, including Michael Peterson, Mikael Stenmark and Aku Visala.[84]

Another key figure in the discussion is Alister McGrath.[85] Among McGrath's works on science and religion are *A Fine-Tuned Universe* (2009), *Darwinism and the Divine* (2011), and *Science &*

[80] Peterson, "The Logical Problem of Evil," 491; J.L. Schellenberg, "A New Logical Problem of Evil Revisited," *Faith and Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (2018): 464-472.
[81] Justin P. McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Chad Meister and Paul K. Moser, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[82] Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Peter Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil: The Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St. Andrews in 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[83] Daniel C. Dennett and Alvin Plantinga, *Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[84] Michael Peterson and Michael Ruse, *Science, Evolution, and Religion: A Debate about Atheism and Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Mikael Stenmark, *How to Relate Science and Religion: A Multidimensional Model* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Aku Visala, *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Study of Religion* (Routledge, 2011).
[85] For those interested in the broader discussion around natural theology, see John Hedley Brook, Russel Re Mannig, and Fraser Watts, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Religion(2020).[86] McGrath has critiqued post-Enlightenment approaches to natural theology which try to demonstrate God's existence. He has instead argued for an approach on which, roughly, nature is viewed from a distinctly Christian angle so that it discloses the transcendent reality that is God.[87] It is not clear that this approach to natural theology is conducive to the development of new philosophical arguments for God, at least to the same degree as more traditional approaches are.[88] A sign of the flourishing of more traditional natural theology is the publication of *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* in 2009.[89] William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, the editors of the volume, speak of a reinvigoration of natural theology on the back of a renaissance of Christian philosophy following the collapse of logical positivism.[90] The majority of the contributors were Christian philosophers (as opposed to theologians). Another sign is the volume *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God* (2018), based on the notes of a 1986 lecture by Plantinga.[91]

Another development in recent natural theology is the discussion around 'ramified natural theology'. In a 2004 article Swinburne distinguished 'bare natural theology', roughly an attempt to demonstrate the existence of God with arguments, from 'ramified natural theology', roughly an attempt to establish more particular religious doctrines with (historical) arguments. He then defended the need for both.[92] By this time Swinburne had already published his *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (2003), which may be viewed as an instance of ramified natural theology.[93] A lot of attention was given to

[86] Alister E. McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology* (Westminister John Knox Press, 2009); *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); *Science and Religion: A New Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).
[87] Alister E. McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 3-6.
[88] On a side note, traditional natural theology may be more deeply rooted in human cognition than McGrath realizes, see Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt, *A Natural History of Natural Theology: The Cognitive Science of Theology and Philosophy of Religion* (MIT Press, 2014).
[89] William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
[90] William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, "Introduction," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), ix.
[91] Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty, *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-7.
[92] Richard Swinburne, "Natural Theology, Its 'Dwindling Probabilities' and 'Lack of Rapport'" in *Faith and Philosophy* 21, no.4 (2004): 533-536.
[93] Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

ramified natural theology around 2013, when *Philosophia Christi* devoted an issue to it.[94] However, not much has been published (explicitly) on ramified natural theology since then.[95]

4.3 Philosophical Theology and Ethics

To do philosophical theology is, roughly, to do theology with philosophical tools or in a philosophical way. Many analytic philosophers have in the past two decades engaged in philosophical theology. Think, for instance, of Jerry Wall's *Heaven* (2002), Thomas Flint's *Divine Providence* (2006), R.T. Mullins *The End of the Timeless God* (2016), Eleonore Stump's *Atonement* (2018), Shandon Gurthrie's *Gods of this World* (2018), and Jordan Wessling's *Love Divine* (2020).[96] Some of these works are part of the series 'Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology'.[97] Analytic theology is, roughly, an approach to theology that makes use of analytic philosophy. The beginnings of analytic theology as a movement lie with the publication of *Analytic Theology* (2009), a volume edited by Oliver Crisp and Michael Rea.[98] Although analytic theology has been primarily a Christian movement, practitioners can also be found in other religious traditions.[99]

Philosophers of religion have also paid attention to ethics and morality. For example, Paul Moser and Thomas Carson co-edited the book *Moral Relativism* (2000). Michael Lou Martin published *Atheism, Morality and Meaning* (2002). In 2007 Nicholas Wolterstorff published his landmark *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*. In 2011 Jerry Walls and David Baggett published *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of*

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[94] *Philosophia Christi* 15, no. 2. See also the articles listed on Angus Menuge and Charles Taliaferro, "Introduction to a Special Issue of Philosophia Christi on Ramified Natural Theology," EPS, accessed March 18, 2021, http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=195.

[95] But see Rodney Holder, *Ramified Natural Theology in Science and Religion: Moving Forward from Natural Theology* (Routledge, 2020).

[96] Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Thomas P. Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account*, rev. ed. (Cornell University Press, 2006); R.T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Eleonore Stump, *Atonement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Shandon L. Guthrie, *Gods of this World: A Philosophical Discussion and Defense of Christian Demonology* (Pickwick Publications, 2018); Jordan Wessling, *Love Divine: A Systematic Account of God's Love for Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[97] See "Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology," Oxford University Press, accessed March 19, 2021, https://global.oup.com/academic/content/series/o/oxford-studies-in-analytic-theology-osat/?prevNumResPerPage=20&prevSortField=1&start=0&lang=en&cc=nl.

[98] Oliver D. Crisp, *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[99] Samuel Lebens, Dani Rabinowitz, and Aaron Segal, *Jewish Philosophy in an Analytical Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Samuel Lebens, *The Principles of Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Safaruk Chowdhury, *Islamic Theology and the Problem of Evil* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2021).

Morality and Paul Copan published *Is God a Moral Monster?*. The following year Alexander Pruss published *One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics*. Mark Murphy published *God and Moral Law* in 2011 and he went on to publish *God's Own Ethics* in 2017. Also in 2017, Moser published *The God Relationship: The Ethics for Inquiry about the Divine*. William Lane Craig and Erik Wielenberg published *A Debate on God and Morality* together in 2020.[100] As the work in ethics and philosophical theology makes clear, analytic philosophers of religion are not solely interested in arguments for and against the existence of God.

4.4 Diverse Perspectives & Key Institutions

Recent natural theology and (analytic) philosophy of religion are more diverse than might be suspected based on what has been said thus far. First of all, there are more prominent atheistic philosophers of religion than have yet been mentioned. Among them is the Australian philosopher Graham Oppy, author of *Arguing about Gods* (2006) and *Describing Gods* (2014), and editor of the recent volume *A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy* (2019).[101] Furthermore, there is clearly an interest in non-Christian natural theology, evidenced by publications on arguments for God within Islamic and Indian thought.[102] Also, *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (2013) includes a range of perspectives.[103] Similarly, different views are represented in works like *A Companion to Philosophy*

[100] Paul K. Moser and Thomas L. Carson, *Moral Relativism: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Michael Martin, *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning* (Prometheus Books, 2002); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Mark C. Murphy, *God and Moral Law: On the Theistic Explanation of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011); Alexander Pruss, *One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012); Paul K. Moser, *The God Relationship: The Ethics for Inquiry about the Divine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Mark C. Murphy, *God's Own Ethics: Norms of Divine Agency and the Argument from Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); William Lane Craig and Erik J. Wielenberg, *A Debate on God and Morality: What is the Best Account of Objective Moral Values and Duties?*, ed. Adam Lloyd Johnson (Routledge, 2020).
[101] Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Describing Gods: An Investigation of Divine Attributes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Graham Oppy, ed., *A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).
[102] Cafer S. Yaran, *Islamic Thought on the Existence of God: Contributions and Contrasts with Contemporary Western Philosophy of Religion* (The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003); Hannah C. Erlwein, *Arguments for God's Existence in Classical Islamic Thought: A Reappraisal of the Discourse* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019); Dasti, "Indian Rational Theology," 1-21; Kronen and Menssen, "The Argument from Wholes," 138-158.
[103] John Hedley Brook, Russel Re Mannig, and Fraser Watts, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of Religion (2010) and *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (2015).[104] And sometimes the diversity of views shows up in surprising places, such as in the edited volume *Philosophical Approaches to Demonology* (2017).[105]

Universities play a key role in contemporary philosophy of religion. The leading figures of today's analytic philosophy of religion are (or have been) generally employed by universities, and many of the key works of present-day philosophy of religion have been published by university presses. Moreover, there are noteworthy philosophy of religion research centers tied to universities, including the Center for Philosophy of Religion at Notre Dame and the Centre for the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Birmingham.[106] Natural theology is, in a sense, less embedded in the contemporary university but owes much to universities as well, since many of the leading figures of natural theology are analytic philosophers of religion. Moreover, key contributions to natural theology in the twentieth and twenty-first century are connected to the Gifford Lectures, which are held at various universities in the UK.[107]

5. Conclusion

This chapter has made clearer what natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion are and has given us a clearer sense of the historical context in which new arguments for God have been developed in the past two decades. It is interesting that these arguments have emerged in a period when precisely the hiddenness of God has been extensively discussed and when some, such as the theologian Alister McGrath, have criticized traditional forms of natural theology. In the next two chapters we will zoom in on some of these new arguments, starting with new versions of traditional arguments.

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[104] Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, eds. *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Graham Oppy, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[105] Benjamin W. McCraw and Robert Arp, eds., *Philosophical Approaches to Demonology* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
[106] A number of other centers are mentioned in Charles Taliaferro, "Philosophy of Religion," in *The Standford Encylopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 23, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/philosophy-religion/.
[107] The website of the Gifford Lectures is https://www.giffordlectures.org/.

Chapter 2: New Traditional Arguments

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to (partially) answer the question of what new versions of traditional arguments for God have been developed in natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion in the years 2000-2020. Drawing on Chad McIntosh's taxonomy of theistic arguments, we include cosmological, ontological, design, miracles and experiential arguments under the heading of 'traditional' arguments for God. In what follows, each of these categories will be dealt with. I will refer to one or multiple arguments per category and provide a philosophical discussion of a selected argument. In this way, we will lay part of the foundation for chapter 4, which deals with the issue of how new arguments for God are to be evaluated. The arguments discussed in this chapter, and those in the next, are presented in a simple, standardized way.[108]

2. Novel Cosmological Arguments

Cosmological arguments include arguments which argue from the existence of some being(s) to the existence of a personal cause of the cosmos or reality as a whole. Cosmological arguments enjoy a long history, tracing back into ancient times, but there have been significant developments in the 20th and 21st century. One of these was the retrieval and development of the *kalām* cosmological argument by Stuart Hackett and William Lane Craig.[109] This has been followed by the emergence of related, but novel, cosmological arguments, including those of Andrew Loke and Calum Miller.[110] Another was the development of Thomistic and other classical arguments by Edward Feser and others.[111] Another development was the development by Robert Koons, Richard Gale and Alexander Pruss of sophisticated cosmological arguments which do not rely on a strong version of the PSR, the

[108] This results in minor differences in presentation between the thesis and sources from which they are drawn.
[109] See Craig and Sinclair, "The *Kalam* Cosmological Argument," 101-201.
[110] Andrew Ter Ern Loke, *God and Ultimate Origins: A Novel Cosmological Argument* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 93-94; Calum Miller, "A Bayesian Formulation of the *Kalam* Cosmological Argument," *Religious Studies* 50 (2014): 521-534.
[111] Edward Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017); Uwe Meixner, "A Cosmo-Ontological Argument for the Existence of a First Cause – perhaps God," in *Ontological Proofs Today*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 193-202.

Leibnizian principle(s) of sufficient reason.[112] In addition to this, a number of mostly younger philosophers have put forward new cosmological arguments in the past twenty years, including Joshua Rasmussen, Christopher Weaver, Soufiane Hamri, Travis Dumsday, Bruce Gordon, and Emanuel Rutten.[113] Some of the most recent cosmological arguments have been discussed in Rutten's *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism* (2012).[114] Rutten's own argument has not yet received much attention and what follows will be devoted to it.

Rutten's cosmological argument draws on atomism and causalism to arrive at the conclusion that there is a first cause. Atomism is the view that each composite object is (finally) composed of simple objects and causalism is the view that every object is a cause or has a cause.[115] A first cause is in this context defined as "an uncaused cause whose effect is ontologically prior to every other caused object".[116] An object is, for Rutten, ontologically prior to another object if its existence is required for the existence of that object, but that object's existence is not required for its existence.[117] So to be ontologically prior to every (other) caused object is to be such that one's existence is required for each (other) caused object's existence.

[112] David Alexander, "The Recent Revival of Cosmological Arguments," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 3 (2008): 541-550.
[113] Joshua Rasmussen, "From States of Affairs to a Necessary Being," *Philosophical Studies* 148, no. 2 (2010): 183-200; "A New Argument for a Necessary Being," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89, no. 2 (2010): 351-356; Christopher Gregory Weaver, "Yet Another New Cosmological Argument," *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 80 (2016):11-31; Soufiane Hamri, "On the Ultimate Ground of Being," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 83 (2018): 161-168; Travis Dumsday, "A Cosmological Argument from Moderate Realism," *Heythrop Journal* (2020): 732-736; Bruce L. Gordon, "The Argument from the Incompleteness of Nature," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press), 417-445.
[114] Emanuel Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism: A Critical Assessment of Contemporary Cosmological Arguments* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2012.
[115] Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 123.
[116] Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 124.
[117] Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 124n174.

Rutten's argument is as follows:

(1) There are objects.
(2) Every composite object is ultimately composed of simple objects.
(3) Every object is caused by or is the cause of another object.
(4) The sum of all caused simple objects, if not empty, is an object.
(5) The cause of an object is disjoint with that object.
(6) Every caused composite object contains a caused proper part.
(7) Therefore, there is a first cause.[118]

The argument is accompanied with a derivation of the conclusion from its premises, a defense of the premises and a chapter devoted to objections to the argument.[119] Rutten's argument is remarkably simple, especially when compared to fairly recent cosmological arguments of Koons, Gale and Pruss, Rasmussen, and Weaver.[120] And, as Rutten points out, the argument does not rely on the principle of sufficient reason nor on the impossibility of an infinite regress of causes nor on metaphysical modal notions (notice the absence of talk of 'possible worlds').[121] In my view, these are advantages of the argument. Moreover, although the argument has not yet received much critical attention from other philosophers, Rutten arguably shows that many objections against the argument fail.[122]

An objection that is seemingly not addressed is one that argues that the third premise is just as likely true as a causal thesis which does not, within the present argument, lead to the conclusion that a first cause exists. Take the following thesis: Every object causes or co-causes another object or is caused by an object or a mere sum of objects. This thesis (we shall call it causalism$_B$) is admittedly more complex than the third premise (causalism$_A$), but it arguably has some advantages as well. For instance, unlike causalism$_A$, causalism$_B$ does not lead us to the odd conclusion that if an object, A, is caused by God and some other object, B, there is (at some time) an object of which God and B are part, because it allows for causation by *mere* sums of objects. We cannot, however, swap causalism$_A$

[118] There are slight stylistic differences in our presentation. Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 126-127.
[119] Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 127-161.
[120] See Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 32-33, 55-56, 104; Weaver, "Yet Another New Cosmological Argument," 15-16.
[121] Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 124, 135, 137.
[122] Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 137-161.

for causalism$_B$ because then the argument is no longer valid, since the possibility that the sum of all caused simples is caused by a mere sum of uncaused simples is then not ruled out.[123]

3. New Ontological Arguments

Ontological arguments include arguments which proceed from a conception or definition of God to the conclusion that God exists. Although strongly associated with Anselm of Canterbury, a number of major philosophers have offered ontological arguments for God.[124] The twentieth century saw the rise of *modal* ontological arguments, including those of Norman Malcolm, Charles Hartshorne, Alvin Plantinga and Kurt Gödel.[125] More recently, Elizabeth Burns, E.J. Lowe, Jason Megill, Joshua Mitchell, C'Zar Bernstein and Robert Maydole have presented (new) ontological arguments.[126] But perhaps the most significant new ontological argument is the one mentioned in the introduction of the thesis: Pruss' 2012 ontological argument. The argument is a Gödelian ontological argument which makes use of the notion of a 'positive property', understood either as (1) a property which does not detract from its possessor's excellence, but whose negation does, or (2) a property which does not limit its possessor, but its negation does.[127] Pruss' argument can be presented as follows:

> (1) A God is a being that is essentially omnipotent, essentially omniscient, essentially perfectly good, and essentially creator of every other being.
> (2) If *A* is positive, then not-*A* is not positive.
> (3) If *A* is positive and *A* entails *B*, then *B* is positive.
> (4) If (2) and (3), then any pair of positive properties is compossible.
> (5) *A* is strongly positive, if having *A* essentially is positive.
> (6) Necessary existence is positive.

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[123] See Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 156-157.
[124] Graham Oppy, "Introduction: Ontological Arguments in Focus," in *Ontological Arguments*, ed. Graham Oppy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1-2.
[125] Robert E. Maydole, "The Ontological Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 553.
[126] Elizabeth D. Burns, "Patching Plantinga's Ontological Argument by Making the Murdoch Move," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press), 130; E.J. Lowe, "A New Modal Version of the Ontological Argument," in *Ontological Proofs Today*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 179-190; Jason L. Megill and Joshua M. Mitchell, "A Modest Modal Ontological Argument," *Ratio* 22, no. 3 (2009): 338-349; C'Zar Bernstein, "Giving the Ontological Argument Its Due," *Philosophia* 42 (2014): 665-679; Maydole, "The Ontological Argument," 580-586; Miroslaw Szatkowski, ed., *Ontological Proofs Today* (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012).
[127] Alexander R. Pruss, "A Gödelian Ontological Argument Improved Even More," in *Ontological Proofs Today*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 203.

(7) Essential omniscience, essential omnipotence and essential perfect goodness are positive properties.
(8) If (2), (3) and (4), then if *A* is a strongly positive property, then there is a necessary existing being that essentially has *A*.
(9) There is at least one unique-making strongly positive property.
(10) Being essentially such that one is creator of every other being is a positive property.
(11) Therefore, there necessarily exists a unique God.

The argument starts with a definition and premises 2, 3 and 4 can be shown to be true given either account of what it is to be a positive property. For example, if *A* is a positive property on the first account, then the property of not having *A* detracts from its possessor's excellence, which means that it is not a positive property. If *A* is a positive property on the second account, then the property of not having *A* limits its possessor, and is thus not a positive property. Moreover, (5) is the definition of what it is to be a strongly positive property. Premise 6 is where things get interesting. This premise is crucial for the success of the argument. After all, if necessary existence is positive, then on (4), it can be combined with any other positive property, including the plausibly positive properties of premises 7 and 10, resulting indeed, given (8) and (9), in the conclusion. However, the sixth premise seems to me to be a weaker part of the argument, for is it really a positive property to exist in every possible world? We can at least imagine very terrible worlds and one could argue that existing in such a world would detract from a being's excellence, and if so, would limit it. Drawing on this we can construct the following objection to premise 6:

(1) If some property is such that having it detracts from the excellence of its possessor, it is not a positive property.
(2) There is a possible world, W, such that to have the property of existing in W detracts from one's excellence.
(3) Having the property of existing necessarily entails existing in all possible worlds.
(4) If (1), (2), and (3), then the property of existing necessarily is not a positive property.
(5) Therefore, the property of existing necessarily is not a positive property.

The proponent of Pruss' argument will likely want to reject (2). One could argue that existence in a terrible world cannot itself affect one's excellence. Arguments for necessary existence being a perfection may also help show that (2) is false.[128] One could also reject (2) on the grounds that it does not hold true in such a general way; there are certain entities such that their excellence is not

[128] See Bernstein, "Giving the Ontological Argument Its Due," 672-676.

negatively affected, and perhaps is even increased, by existing even in the most terrible of possible worlds.[129] Small modifications could then be made to Pruss' argument which would still allow one to reach its conclusion. Premise 6 could, for instance, be turned into something like 'existing necessarily as a perfectly good being is a positive property'.

4. New Design Arguments

Design arguments include arguments which argue from (some feature of) a being to the conclusion that it was designed by God. This sort of argument has been widely used throughout history.[130] Recent design arguments appeal to different sorts of things, from biological information and certain complex biological systems to the general orderliness and apparent design of the world.[131] But the most formidable design arguments of our time tend to appeal to certain features of the universe's laws or initial conditions which are 'finetuned' for embodied life. A key figure in this area is Robin Collins. Collins has advanced multiple finetuning arguments.[132] Here we will consider his argument from the finetuning of the universe for *scientific discovery* (of certain things). According to Collins, this argument avoids several major objections to more standard finetuning arguments, including the multiverse objection.[133] Collins' discussion is quite technical and it is difficult to discern the precise shape of his argument. Perhaps it can be presented as follows:

> (1) The values of the fundamental parameters of physics fall within their discernable-discoverability-optimality range (DDOR) for embodied conscious agents (ECAs).
> (2) It is enormously epistemically improbable that the values of the fundamental parameters of physics fall within their DDOR for ECAs if not-T, i.e. the universe is not teleologically structured for ECAs.
> (3) It is not highly epistemically improbable that the values of the fundamental parameters of physics fall within their DDOR for ECAs on theism.

[129] Isn't there something comforting to the idea that even in the most terrible of worlds, there exists a perfectly good and loving God?
[130] E.g. Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 202.
[131] Kenneth Einar Himma, "Design Arguments for the Existence of God," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed April 29, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/design/#SH2c; C. Stephen Evans, "The Naïve Teleological Argument," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press), 120.
[132] Collins, "The Teleological Argument," 207-211.
[133] Robin Collins, "The Argument from Physical Constants: The Fine-Tuning for Discoverability," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press), 89, 91.

(4) The values of the fundamental parameters of physics falling within their DDOR for ECAs confirms theism over not-T.
(5) Therefore, God exists.[134]

It is not clear whether this argument is logically valid because the meaning of 'confirms' is unclear. If the confirmation of theism over not-T entails theism being true, then the conclusion indeed follows. Of course, as an inductive or abductive argument for God's existence it does not have to be logically valid, rather some sort of relationship of support is required and this exists between (4) and (5). That being said, (1) also seems explainable in terms of some non-divine designer (a rival hypothesis) and one might wonder whether (2) assumes that there is (very probably) no universe-making machine that actualizes all or most possible universes. The state of affairs of (1) does not seem enormously improbable if not-T *and* such a machine exists. Collins is right that the multiverse explanation he considers does not render the finetuning in question probable.[135] However, it seems that on the hypothesis that there is a *very large* multiverse, actualized by the sort of machine mentioned, even finetuning for scientific discovery is probable.

5. Novel Moral Arguments

Moral arguments include arguments from objective moral facts, obligations and duties, human dignity, human worth, altruism, the nature of justice and (even) evil.[136] The history of moral arguments for God has been extensively discussed in *The Moral Argument* (2019) by David Baggett and Jerry Walls.[137] Among the most popular moral arguments in our time is one advanced by William Lane Craig, which can be presented as follows:

(1) If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
(2) Objective moral values and duties do exist.
(3) Therefore, God exists.[138]

[134] Collins, "The Argument from Physical Constants," 101-102, 105.
[135] Note that in Collins' argument for his position MU stands for the claim "there exists a multiverse over which the parameter p takes on a wide range of values". Collins, "The Argument from Physical Constants," 90.
[136] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 2. For a discussion, see C. Stephen Evans, "Moral Arguments for the Existence of God," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2018 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 29, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/moral-arguments-god/.
[137] David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *The Moral Argument: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[138] Baggett and Walls, *The Moral Argument*, 204.

More recent arguments are offered by Baggett and Walls, C. Stephen Evans, Gregory Ganssle, David Alexander, Gabriele De Anna, and Gerald Harrison.[139] Another (seemingly) new argument is made by Angus Ritchie in his *From Morality to Metaphysics* (2012), in which he advances an argument from human moral cognition for theism.[140] This argument is considered an epistemic moral argument by Baggett.[141] Since the argument is presented informally, it is difficult to state precisely. The argument has it that classical theism is the best explanation for human beings having a capacity to cognize an objective moral order. It is thus an abductive argument, but this does not give us its exact form. Perhaps it can be presented simply as follows:

(1) There is an objective moral order.
(2) Human beings have a capacity to cognize this objective moral order.
(3) Classical theism provides the best explanation of human beings having a capacity to cognize this objective moral order.
(4) Therefore, God exists.

In this argument premise 3 clearly provides support for the conclusion that God exists, although it is difficult to say exactly how much. The conclusion, of course, does not follow logically from the premises. Further, all the premises are controversial, which does not bode well for the argument's potential to convince people of its conclusion. Some will deny the first premise and claim that morality is purely subjective. Others will have their doubts about the second premise in light of moral disagreements. Lastly, nontheistic moral realists will likely reject the third premise. However, the premises are not very easy to disprove. Neoclassical theists may think they can run their objections to classical theism against the third premise, but note that Richtie describes classical theism as belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent, self-subsistent and personal deity, leaving the

[139] David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *God and Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 273-302; C. Stephen Evans, *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 107-147, Gregory E. Ganssle, "Evil as Evidence for Christianity," in *God and Evil: The Case for God in a World Filled with Pain*, ed. Chad Meister and James K. Dew Jr. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 214-226; David E. Alexander, *Goodness, God, and Evil* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 91-124; Gabriele De Anna, "Theism and the Ontological Ground of Moral Realism," in *Ontology of Theistic Beliefs*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 19-38; Gerald K. Harrison, *Normative Reasons and Theism* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 181-183.
[140] Angus Ritchie, *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-4, 159, 175-176.
[141] David Baggett, "An Abductive Moral Argument for God," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 264.

controversial classical attributes of simplicity, immutability and impassibility unmentioned.[142] In the book, Ritchie also addresses an objection inspired by Stephen Law's 'evil-god challenge' to theism, and does so pretty successfully.[143] However, he seemingly has not addressed the following objection:

> (1) Classical theism provides the best explanation of human beings having a capacity to cognize an objective moral order, only if there is no explanation available which explains this equally or better.
> (2) The non-omnipotent-but-sufficiently-powerful-God hypothesis explains human beings having a capacity to cognize an objective moral order at least as well as classical theism.
> (3) Therefore, classical theism does not provide the best explanation of human beings having a capacity to cognize an objective moral order.

That being said, one might worry that such a God is less simple than a God who is omnipotent in the sense of being able to do anything that is possible.[144] Also, Ritchie's argument can easily be modified to avoid the above objection, for instance, by rendering the third premise as follows: 'Some version of theism provides the best explanation of human beings having a capacity to cognize this objective moral order.'

6. New Miracles Arguments

Miracles arguments include arguments from testimony and other evidence for miracles. According to Timonthy and Lydia McGrew, 'the' argument from miracles was for a long time central to the discussion of the reasonableness of Christian belief, but is somewhat neglected in contemporary philosophy of religion.[145] In their chapter in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* they go on to make a sophisticated inductive argument for the resurrection of Jesus, which is relevant to theism, since, at least according to them, if the resurrection occurred the probability that God exists is "approximately equal to 1."[146] However, here we will consider a simpler argument, one offered by

[142] Ritchie, *From Morality to Metaphysics*, 159. For an example of such an objection, see Joseph C. Schmid and R.T. Mullins, "The Aloneness Argument Against Classical Theism," *Religious Studies* (2021): 1-19, https://philarchive.org/archive/SCHTAA-53.
[143] Stephen Law, "The Evil-God Challenge," *Religious Studies* 46 (2010): 353-373; Ritchie, *From Morality to Metaphysics*, 170-174.
[144] Ritchie seems to speak of omnipotence in that sense. Ritchie, *From Morality to Metaphysics*, 170.
[145] Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 593.
[146] McGrew and McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles," 594-595.

Daniel Bonevac. The argument starts with a definition of a miracle which, according to Bonevac, is epistemological in nature and weaker (i.e. more modest) than most definitions in the relevant literature. The argument is as follows:

(1) Miracles are events the best explanation for which would invoke supernatural agency.
(2) Certain kinds of possible events are miracles.
(3) Events of those kinds have actually occurred.
(4) Therefore, there is a supernatural agent.[147]

This argument looks deductively invalid and premise 2 is superfluous in light of premise 3, since it follows logically from it.[148] However, assuming the premises are true, it is a good abductive argument for the (sometime) existence of at least one supernatural agent. Premise 3 is the most controversial premise. Naturalists will likely assert that there are no actual events that are best explained in terms of supernatural agency. Some might grant the occurrence of events (e.g. remarkable recoveries, odd near-death experiences, and so on.), which can be *somewhat plausibly* explained supernaturally. The trouble is that if we weaken the definition of a miracle accordingly much less support is provided by the premises for the conclusion. As it stands, premise 3 is admittedly difficult to disprove, but so is the premise of the following abductive argument:

(1) The best explanation of any actual event would not invoke supernatural agency.
(2) Therefore, there is no supernatural agent.

7. Novel Experiential Arguments

Experiential arguments for God include arguments from personal transformation and religious experience.[149] Evidence related to religious experiences plays a key role in Richard Swinburne's probabilistic case for God as found in *The Existence of God* (1979, 2004).[150] A novel experiential argument is presented in a 2001 article of Alexander Pruss, who categorizes it as an ontomystical argument, i.e. more or less a combination of an ontological argument and an argument from religious experience. The argument is as follows:

[147] Daniel Bonevac, "The Argument from Miracles," in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy in Religion*, vol.3, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16, 21.
[148] As was noted by my thesis supervisor, Emanuel Rutten.
[149] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 2.
[150] Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 341-342.

(1) A being, *x*, is radically dependent on another being, *y*, if and only if it is an essential property of *x* that *y*'s activity enters into a causal explanation of *x*'s existence.
(2) There is an actually existent person such that it is possible that this person is radically dependent on an essentially numinous and loving being.
(3) Therefore, there actually exists an essentially numinous and loving being on whom at least one actually existent person is radically dependent.[151]

Religious experience does not actually feature explicitly in this argument. However, Pruss makes use of mystical experience in conjunction with a principle drawn from, or inspired by, the medieval Indian philosopher Samakara to support (2). There is according to Pruss, reason to believe, or at least presume, that some mystic has had an experience *as of* being radically dependent on an essentially numinous and loving being. On the relevant Samkaraian principle, what really seems is metaphysically possible, so that if a mystic really seemed to be radically dependent on such a being, it follows that it is metaphysically possible that he or she is/was radically dependent on such a being.[152] Pruss' argument is, in some respects, pretty strong. The first step just is a definition of radical dependence and the premise (2) is such that many nontheists would, at least initially, be willing to grant it and, on the face of it, it is very hard to disprove.[153] That leaves only the derivation of the conclusion from the premises, which involves S5 modal logic and possible worlds.[154] Perhaps the best way to credibly avoid the conclusion is to offer an objection to (2). This is the move T. Ryan Byerly seems to make in his critique of Pruss' argument, in which he offers (supposed) counterexamples to Samkara's principle and argues that further argumentative support is needed for the premise.[155]

One could, of course, accept the conclusion but comment that the argument does not conclude to full-fledged theism. Some of my main issues with the argument are, in any case, that it is needlessly

[151] Alexander R. Pruss, "'Samkara's Principle and Two Ontomystical Arguments," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 49, no. 2 (April 2001): 112.
[152] Pruss, "Samkara's Principle," 112, 116-117.
[153] That being said, T. Ryan Byerly has basically argued that further argumentative support is needed for the second premise. T. Ryan Byerly, "The Ontomystical Argument Revisted," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 67 (2010): 95-105.
[154] Pruss, "Samkara's Principle," 112.
[155] T. Ryan Byerly, "The Ontomystical Argument Revisted," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 67, no. 2 (2010): 95-105.

complicated and not bold enough. For instance, the following argument from religious experience, inspired by Pruss, is simpler and gets one straight to the existence of God:

> (1) A religious experience has occurred which is such that it is possibly caused (partially) by God.
> (2) If (1), then God exists in at least one possible world.
> (3) God is such that if God exists in one possible world, God exists eternally in all possible worlds.
> (4) If God exists eternally in all possible worlds, God exists.
> (5) Therefore, God exists.

8. Conclusion

The past twenty years of natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion were not only characterized by discussion about evil, divine hiddenness, science and religion, and matters of philosophical theology and ethics, but also by the development of novel arguments for God of a traditional sort. Some of those arguments have been discussed in this chapter, and many have at least been referred to, but it is not unlikely that there are still others which could have been mentioned. Some areas, such as those relating to cosmological, ontological and moral arguments, seem to have been particularly active in the past two decades. Note that already in 2008 David Alexander wrote of a 'revival' of cosmological arguments. That was before Rasmussen, Weaver, Rutten, Hamri, Loke, and Miller presented new cosmological arguments.[156]

Noteworthy is also the use of symbolic logic, modal logic, and possible worlds semantics in (defense of) some novel traditional arguments, such as the cosmological argument of Christopher Weaver and the ontological arguments of Alexander Pruss and E.J. Lowe.[157] This signals the connectedness of recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion to the larger tradition of analytic philosophy. Further, some of the arguments make use of Bayesian probability theory, such as Timothy and Lydia McGrew's case for the resurrection and Calum Miller's Bayesian formulation of

[156] Alexander, "The Recent Revival of Cosmological Arguments," 541-550.
[157] Weaver, "Yet Another New Cosmological Argument," 11-31; Pruss, "A Gödelian Ontological Argument Improved Even More," 203-211; E.J. Lowe, "A New Modal Version of the Ontological Argument," in *Ontological Proofs Today*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 179-190.

the *kalām* cosmological argument.[158] Miller's argument illustrates the fact that new arguments do not emerge in an ahistorical void, but are typically related to previous work done in natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion. Modern cosmology has also been used in support of certain novel arguments, for instance, the finetuning argument we saw of Robin Collins.[159] Moreover, Pruss' defense of his ontomystical argument(s) illustrates the interest found among analytic philosophers of religion in engaging and drawing on non-Western philosophy.[160]

Lastly, some of the great figures of twentieth century natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion who we have encountered in the last chapter, such as Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne and William Lane Craig, have played a significant role when it comes to the publication of new traditional arguments for God. Note the roles of Plantinga and Craig in the publication of *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God* and *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, respectively, and Swinburne's trailblazing use of Bayesian probability theory in natural theology and philosophy of religion. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that younger and/or less well-known analytic philosophers of religion have been central to the development of new arguments for God in the opening decades of the twenty-first century.

[158] McGrew and McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles," 593-662; Miller, "A Bayesian Formulation of the *Kalam* Cosmological Argument," 521-534;
[159] Collins, "The Argument from Physical Constants: The Fine-Tuning for Discoverability," 89-107.
[160] Pruss, "Samkara's Principle," 111-120.

Chapter 3: New Nontraditional Arguments

1. Introduction

In the last chapter we looked at new versions of traditional arguments for God. In this chapter we turn our attention to novel nontraditional arguments developed in recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion. In the taxonomy of McIntosh, nontraditional theistic arguments are metaphysical, nomological, axiological, noological, linguistic, anthropological, and meta-argument arguments.[161] In discussing these seven categories of arguments we follow the same procedure as in the last chapter. For each category, one or more (seemingly) new arguments will be referred to and a selected argument will be subjected to a brief philosophical discussion. This chapter is especially indebted to the work of McIntosh; his 2019 article on nontraditional theistic arguments refers to, and categorizes, many recent nontraditional arguments.[162]

2. New Metaphysical Arguments

Metaphysical arguments include arguments which appeal to metaphysical entities and facts, such as propositions, sets, laws of logic, and the applicability of mathematics to the natural world.[163] Edward Feser, E.J. Lowe, Christopher Menzel, Paulo Juarez, Richard Davis, Lorraine Keller, and Brian Leftow, have all advanced (apparently) novel metaphysical arguments for God.[164] Emanuel Rutten's recent

[161] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 1-2.
[162] However, I have made critical use of the article. Sometimes it is not clear to me that McIntosh properly describes or categorizes an argument. For instance, it is not clear to me that Bruce Gordon's argument is properly categorized as nomological. See Gordon, "The Necessity of Sufficiency: The Argument from the Incompleteness of Nature," 417-445.
[163] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 2-4.
[164] Cf. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 2-4. We note that the originators of the arguments at least sometimes categorize them differently. Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God*, 109-110; E.J. Lowe, "Naturalism, Theism, and Objects of Reason," *Philosophia Christi* 15, no. 1 (2013): 35-45; Christopher Menzel, "The Argument from Collections," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 29-58; Paulo Juarez, "From the Unity of the World to God: A Teleo-Cosmological Argument for God's Existence," *Scientia et Fides* 5, no. 2 (2017): 283-303; Richard B. Davis, "God and Modal Concretism," *Philosophia Christi* 10, no. 1 (2008): 57-74; Lorraine Juliano Keller, "The Argument from Intentionality (or Aboutness): Propositions Supernaturalized," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11-28; Brian Leftow, *God and Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 536-551. Perhaps William Vallicella's turn of the millennium article and a second article by Davis should also be mentioned: William F. Vallicella, "From Facts to God: An Onto-Cosmological Argument," *International Journal*

argument from the potential existence of God might also qualify as a metaphysical argument.[165] In addition to these arguments, James Anderson and Greg Welty put forward an argument for God's existence from the laws of logic, which is (roughly) as follows:

(1) The laws of logic are necessarily true propositions which exist in all possible worlds.
(2) Propositions are essentially thoughts.
(3) If there are necessarily existing thoughts, there is a necessarily existing mind.
(4) If there is a necessarily existing mind, there is a necessarily existing person.
(5) A necessarily existing person must be spiritual in nature.
(6) Therefore, there is a necessarily existing, personal, spiritual being.[166]

The argument seems logically valid and although it arguably does not get one to full-blown theism, it does count as an argument for God in a secondary sense. The second premise is a crucial, but weak, part of the argument. Anderson and Welty first seek to establish propositions as non-physical entities and then go on to argue that they are intrinsically intentional, and are therefore (best understood as) thoughts.[167] Alex Malpass has offered various criticisms of their case for propositions being thoughts.[168] Among other things, Malpass argues that there seem to be examples of things which are intentional but not mental in nature. However, the following argument for the second premise is not vulnerable to this objection, since it allows for intentional but non-mental entities:

(1) For any proposition, *p*, it is possible that *p* is essentially a thought.
(2) If (1), then for any proposition, *p*, there is a possible world in which *p* is essentially a thought.
(3) A *p* is essentially a thought in a possible world only if it is essentially a thought in that possible world and in all other possible worlds in which it exists.
(4) Therefore, all propositions are essentially thoughts.[169]

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for Philosophy of Religion 48, no. 3 (2000): 157-181; Richard B. Davis, "God and the Platonic Horde: A Defense of Limited Conceptualism," *Philosophia Christi* 13, no. 2 (2011): 289-303.

[165] Emanuel Rutten, "Plato's *De Sofist* en een daarop geïnspireerd Godsargument," *Radix* 47, no. 1 (2021): 39-45.

[166] James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction: An Argument for God from Logic," *Philosophia Christi* 13, no 2 (2011): 321-338.

[167] Anderson and Welty argue that this is a simpler account than one on which there are thoughts *and also* intentional but non-mental objects. Anderson and Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction," 334-335.

[168] Alex Malpass, "Problems for the Argument from Logic: A Response to the Lord of Non-Contradiction," *Sophia* (2020), accessed May 5, 2021, https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s11841-020-00777-6.

[169] Admittedly, a parity objection is easily constructed against this argument.

However, there is also a more serious objection to the second premise. Malpass mentions an argument by Gottlob Frege for propositions being non-mental. Drawing on what he says, we can formulate the following objection to the second premise:

(1) All thoughts are private to those who have them.
(2) All propositions are sharable.
(3) If (1) and (2), then propositions are not essentially thoughts.
(4) Therefore, propositions are not essentially thoughts.

It is difficult to see how Anderson and Welty can easily escape this conclusion.[170] Malpass also raises other concerns, some relating to the third premise of the argument. He points out that it does not seem to follow from there being necessarily existing thoughts that there is a necessarily existing mind. Here he sketches a scenario in which there are necessary thoughts, but they exist necessarily because there is, in every possible world, a unique and contingently existing mind which thinks them. Malpass then goes on to deal with what Anderson and Welty wrote in anticipation of such an objection. According to Malpass, their response to the objection needs the distinction between thoughts and their contents, and he goes on to use this distinction in constructing a dilemma for divine conceptualists (for whom, roughly, allegedly abstract objects like propositions are thoughts in the mind of God).[171] It is difficult to state the dilemma briefly, but is roughly as follows: If some law of logic, *p*, is a specific divine thought, *t*, then either (i) *t* has *p* as its content or (ii) *t* has no content or (iii) the content of *t* is distinct from *p*. But if (ii) or (iii), then it is completely arbitrary to say that *p* is *t*, and if (i) then it is false that a thought is distinct from its content (the content of *t* would be *p*, but *t* is *p* for the divine conceptualist, so *t* would be identical to its content), but if that is false then a vicious infinite regress results.[172] However, it is not clear to me that Anderson and Welty need this distinction between thoughts and their contents *for their argument*. The following defense of the third premise, which builds on their claim that "thoughts belong essentially to the minds that produce them", does not seem to employ this distinction:[173]

[170] Note that the objection can also run on more modest versions of premises 1 and 2. One could deny (1), but that risks opening the door to scenarios on which there are necessarily existing thoughts, but no necessarily existing mind.
[171] William Lane Craig, *God Over All: Divine Aseity and the Challenge of Platonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 72.
[172] Malpass, "Problems for the Argument from Logic," https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s11841-020-00777-6.
[173] Anderson and Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction," 337n31.

(1) Thoughts belong essentially to the minds that produce them.
(2) If (1), then for any thought to exist necessarily, the mind that produced it must exist necessarily.
(3) Therefore, if there are necessarily existing thoughts, there is a necessarily existing mind.

3. New Nomological Arguments

The laws of nature, and their relationship to God, have been a topic of discussion in recent philosophy.[174] They also play a role in some recent arguments for the existence of God. Nomological arguments for God include arguments for God from the structure, status, and character of the laws of nature.[175] John Foster, Richard Swinburne, Travis Dumsday, and James Orr have all advanced seemingly novel nomological arguments in the past two decades.[176] One of the simplest of these arguments is advanced in a 2001 article by Foster. It is difficult to discern the precise shape of Foster's argument but it is roughly as follows:

(1) There are a large number of regularities in nature as hitherto experienced by us.
(2) These regularities call for an explanation.
(3) There are only two plausible explanations of these regularities in nature: (a) God imposes them on the world or (b) they reflect laws of nature in the sense of forms of natural necessity.
(4) The obtaining of such laws would not be strictly necessary but rather contingent.
(5) If (4), then the only remotely plausible explanation of the obtaining of such laws is in terms of God causing the associated regularity.
(6) Therefore, God exists.[177]

[174] See, for example, Jeffrey Koperski, "Breaking the Laws of Nature," *Philosophia Christi* 19, no. 1 (2017): 83-101; *Divine Action, Determinism, and the Laws of Nature* (London: Routledge, 2020).
[175] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 4. The case can be made that nomological arguments should fall under the heading of traditional arguments.
[176] Cf. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 4. John Foster, "Regularities, Laws of Nature, and the Existence of God," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 101 (2001): 145-161; John Foster, *The Divine Lawmaker: Lectures on Induction, Laws of Nature, and the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 149-166; Richard Swinburne, "Relations Between Universals or Divine Laws?" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 84, no.2 (2006): 179-189; Travis Dumsday, "Have the Laws of Nature Been Eliminated?" in *Reading the Cosmos: Nature, Science, and Wisdom*, ed. G. Butera (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 110-128; James Orr, "No God, No Powers: Classical Theism and Pandispositionalist Laws," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (December 2019): 411-426.
[177] Foster, "Regularities, Laws of Nature, and the Existence of God," 146, 149, 160-161.

This argument likely qualifies as an abductive argument in light of (3) and (5).[178] The fifth premise is crucial and, one might suspect, easily refuted. Couldn't the regularities be plausibly explained as a result of features of natural entities which are not caused by God and which although contingent, exists rather permanently? Such an objection can be avoided by modifying the fifth premise such that it claims that the *best available* explanation of the obtaining of such laws is in terms of God causing the regularity. Of course, naturalists will likely not grant that this is the best available explanation.

4. New Axiological Arguments

Axiological arguments, for McIntosh, appeal to sorts of value not appealed to in traditional moral arguments.[179] Included in this category are arguments from beauty and intrinsic human value.[180] Novel axiological arguments, formally stated or not, seem to have been advanced by William Vallicella, Rusell Howell, Douglas Geivett and James Spiegel, Philip Tallon, and Mark Linville.[181] Some of these arguments are seemingly regarded as moral arguments by their originators.[182] Emanuel Rutten's recent aesthetic argument for God may also qualify as a new axiological argument, although it could also be classified as an novel experiential argument.[183] Here we will consider

[178] However, as pointed out by Emanuel Rutten, a highly similar deductive argument can be formulated in which one reaches the conclusion that God exist from (1) God imposing the regularities or (2) the regularities reflecting laws which obtain because of God.
[179] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 5.
[180] At least some will take issue with the fact that, within McIntosh's taxonomy, arguments from beauty fall under the heading of 'nontraditional arguments'. Emanuel Rutten points out that the appeal to beauty as evidence for God is a traditional move.
[181] Cf. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments, 5. William F. Vallicella, "Does God Exist Because He Ought to Exist?" in *Ontology of Theistic Beliefs*, ed. Miroslaw Szatkowski (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 206; Rusell W. Howell, "Does Mathematical Beauty Pose Problems for Naturalism?" in *Christian Scholar's Review* 35, no. 4 (2006): 493-504; R. Douglas Geivett and James S. Spiegel, "Beauty: A Troubling Reality for the Scientific Naturalist," in *The Naturalness of Belief: New Essays on Theism's Rationality*, ed. P. Copan and C. Taliaferro (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 141-157; Philip Tallon, "The Mozart Argument and the Argument from Play and Enjoyment: The Theistic Argument from Beauty and Play," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 321-340; Mark Linville, "The Moral Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 417-446. The chapter of Baggett and Walls on moral value might also count as an axiological argument, although it is part of a larger case. David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, "Moral Value," in *God and Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 115-144.
[182] E.g. Linville, "The Moral Argument," 417-446; Baggett and Walls, "Moral Value," 115-144.
[183] Emanuel Rutten, "An Aesthetic Argument for God's Existence (2)," Wijsgerige Reflecties, November 30, 2015, accessed June 22, 2021, http://gjerutten.blogspot.com/2015/11/an-aesthetic-argument-for-gods.html.

William Vallicella's interesting argument. The argument, which is highly similar to Carl Kordig's 1981 deontic argument for God's existence, is as follows:[184]

(1) A maximally perfect being ought to exist.
(2) Whatever ought to exist, is possible.
(3) If a maximally perfect being is possible, then it is actual.
(4) Therefore, a maximally perfect being is actual.[185]

The argument is logically valid. The weaker premises of this argument are the first and second. If we try to formalize Vallicella's case for the first premise, it is roughly as follows:

(1) Either (i) a maximally perfect being ought to exist, or (ii) a maximally perfect being ought not to exist or (iii) a maximally perfect being neither ought to exist nor ought not to exist.
(2) If either (ii) or (iii), then a greater being than a maximally perfect being could be conceived of, namely a being in all respects perfect and such that it ought to exist.
(3) A greater being than a maximally perfect being cannot be conceived of.
(4) Therefore, a maximally perfect being ought to exist.[186]

Vallicella's case for the second premise is made with reference to the principle that whatever an agent ought to do, that agent must be able to do. According to Vallicella, it is similarly the case that "[w]hat ought to exists, must be metaphysically possible." It seems to him incoherent to hold that some state of affairs ought to exist and is (nevertheless) metaphysically impossible.[187] It is not clear to me that this is so. However, it is difficult to come up with a strong objection against the second premise. One move the nontheist could make is to grant the first premise and argue against the possible existence of a maximally perfect being, perhaps with an appeal to some version of the logical problem of evil:

(1) A maximally perfect being ought to exist.
(2) A maximally perfect being cannot exist.
(3) If (1) and (2), then it is not the case that whatever ought to exist is metaphysically possible.
(4) Therefore, it is not the case that whatever ought to exist is metaphysically possible.

[184] Carl R. Kordig, "A Deontic Argument for God's Existence," *Noûs* 15, no. 2 (1981): 207-208.
[185] Vallicella, "Does God Exist Because He Ought to Exist?" 206.
[186] Vallicella, "Does God Exist Because He Ought to Exist?" 206.
[187] Vallicella, "Does God Exist Because He Ought to Exist?" 209.

Of course, such an objection is not going to impress, let alone convince, many theists. Moreover, arguments in favor of the possible existence of a maximally perfect being count against it.

5. New Noological Arguments

Noological arguments include arguments for God from reason, consciousness, strong beliefs and knowledge. New noological arguments seem to have been put forward by Richard Swinburne, Tyler McNabb, Emanuel Rutten, Jacek Wojtysiak, Robert Koons, Ben Page, Justin Barrett, Daniel Bonevac, Katherine Rogers, J.P. Moreland and Michael Rea.[188] Here we will take a closer look at the recent argument of Tyler McNabb:

(1) If God does not exist, human beings cannot possess knowledge.
(2) Human beings do possess knowledge.
(3) Therefore, God exists.[189]

This argument is logically valid and quite simple. However, the first premise is bound to be controversial. For this premise, McNabb appeals to earlier work in support of (i) proper functionalism as the correct view of knowledge and (ii) the thesis that for human beings to have knowledge (in the proper functionalist's way), the existence of a certain sort of designer of human cognitive faculties is

[188] Cf. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 5-6. Richard Swinburne, "The Argument from Colors and Flavors: The Argument from Consciousness," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 293-303; Tyler Dalton McNabb, *Religious Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 37-38; Emanuel Rutten, "A Modal-Epistemic Argument for the Existence of God," *Faith and Philosophy* 31, no.4 (2014): 386-400; Jacek Wojtysiak, "Two Epistemological Arguments for the Existence of God," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 1 (2018): 21-30; Robert Koons, "The General Argument from Intuition," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 238-257; Ben Page, "Arguing to Theism from Consciousness," *Faith and Philosophy* 37, no. 3 (2020): 336-362; Justin Barrett, "The Argument from Positive Epistemic Status," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 159-169; Daniel Bonevac, "The Putnamian Argument, The Argument from Reference, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Argument from Plus and Quus: Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 214-237; Katherine A. Rogers, "Evidence for God from Certainty," *Faith and Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2008): 31-46; J.P. Moreland, "The Argument from Consciousness," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 282-343; Michael Rea, "Theism and Epistemic Truth-Equivalences," *Noûs* 34, no. 2 (2000): 291-301.
[189] McNabb, *Religious Epistemology*, 37.

required. More specifically, what is required is a conscious and intentional designer, whose past actions and nature are compatible with Alvin Plantinga's truth-aimed conditions and whose design plan for humans does not presuppose or depend on an actual infinite (McNabb has an independent argument for the metaphysical impossibility of an actual infinite).[190] Now, one might object that even if McNabb's previous work succeeds, this fails to establish that the existence of *God* (as opposed to some lesser designer), is required for human knowledge derived from properly functioning faculties. This objection has some force since it indeed seems that the designer in question could lack key attributes traditionally attributed to God (e.g. omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence). However, McNabb's argument can easily be modified such that is an argument for God in a secondary sense. Further, the second premise seems, at first glance, true. But we may wonder whether it is about knowledge *simpliciter* or knowledge acquired in the way envisioned by the proper functionalist. If the latter, then it may be vulnerable to objections against proper functionalism.[191] Lastly, McNabb's argument could also run on a more modest second premise:

(1) If God does not exist, human beings cannot possess knowledge.
(2) Human beings can possess knowledge.
(3) Therefore, God exists.

6. Novel Linguistic Arguments

Linguistic arguments for God include arguments which appeal to certain facts of semantics and language. Such arguments have been advanced in the past two decades by Daniel Bonevac, Jeffery Johson and Joyclynn Potter, John Baumgardner and Jeremy Lion, and Alexander Pruss.[192] Further,

[190] McNabb admittedly characterizes the work he relies on slightly different (e.g. he talks about arguing that a *worldview* is not compatible with proper functionalism unless it affirms the existence of the sort of designer mentioned). However, note that he indicates his argument is *based* on his previous work and he later writes that he will assume that the work described makes the first premise more plausible than its negation. McNabb, *Religious Epistemology*, 33-34, 37.
[191] For such objections one could draw on Chris Tucker, "On What Inferentially Justifies What: The Vices of Reliabilism and Proper Functionalism," *Synthese* 191, no. 14 (2014): 3311-3328; Jeffrey Tolly, "Swampman: A Dilemma for Proper Functionalism," *Synthese* 198 (2021): 1725-1750.
[192] Cf. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 6-7. Jeffrey L. Johnson and Joyclynn Potter, "The Argument from Language and the Existence of God," in *The Journal of Religion* 85, no. 1 (2005): 83-93; Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," 227-229; Alexander Pruss, "The Argument from Counterfactuals: Counterfactuals, Vagueness, and God," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 76-88; John R. Baumgardner and Jeremy D. Lyon, "A Linguistic Argument for God's Existence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58, no. 4 (2015): 771-786.

Emanuel Rutten's recent semantic argument also qualifies as a new linguistic argument for God.[193] Here we will examine Daniel Bonevac's, rather technical, argument for God from reference. Bonevac's argument (roughly) argues for God's existence from God being the best explanation of terms having specific referents; it being the case that, for instance, the word 'brain' refers to brains and not to bananas.[194] In the argument 'transcendent' means roughly 'independent of individual finite minds, temporally and modally stable, infinitary, normative and objective'.[195] The talk of skeptical scenarios refers roughly to scenarios in which a term does not succeed in referring to its intended reference, but one is (seemingly) unable to discover that.[196]

(1) If realism is true, then, given a term *t*, among our possibilities are skeptical scenarios for *t*.
(2) Terms have specific referents.
(3) A term *t* can have a specific referent only by virtue of some fact.
(4) If there were a fact by virtue of which *t* had a specific referent, there would be grounds for discounting skeptical scenarios for *t*.
(5) There could be grounds for discounting skeptical scenarios for *t* only if *t*'s reference is grounded in something transcendent.
(6) Something independent of individual, finite minds can ground reference only if there is something with causal power, independent of individual finite minds, that makes such grounding possible.
(7) Only a transcendent causal power could make possible grounding in something transcendent.
(8) Nothing natural is transcendent.
(9) Anti-realism grounds refence in some feature of a collection of finite minds.
(10) A finite collection of finite minds does not suffice to explain the grounding of reference.
(11) An infinite collection of finite minds does not suffice to explain the grounding of reference.
(12) The best explanation for the existence of a supernatural, transcendent causal power grounding reference in the transcendent includes an infinite mind and, in particular, the existence of God.
(13) Therefore, there is a God.[197]

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[193] Emanuel Rutten, "Positive Universally Held Properties are Necessarily Universally Held," *Acta Philosophica* 30 (2021): 139-157. In light of the following blogpost, in which Rutten reaches the conclusion that God exists on the basis of the argument, the argument may be said to be an argument for God in the primary sense: Emanuel Rutten, "Het semantisch argument: een inleiding," Wijsgerige Reflecties, October 24, 2020, accessed June 23, 2021, http://gjerutten.blogspot.com/2020/10/het-semantisch-argument-een-inleiding.html.
[194] I'm making use of Bonevac's example here. Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," 229.
[195] Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," 225.
[196] Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content, 219, 221, 233n5.
[197] Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," 229.

Bonevac's argument is an abductive argument and together the premises provide support for the conclusion that there is a God. However, it seems a bit convoluted. For example, (1) can seemingly be dropped and it is not clear why (9)-(11) are needed.[198] Premises 4 and 5 are crucial for the argument. After all, premises (2) and (3) are quite plausible, and (2)-(5) establishes the transcendental grounding of reference, which if *completely* independent of individual finite minds, indeed cannot, it seems, be adequately explained in terms of a collection of finite minds. Unfortunately, the reasoning behind premise 4 is somewhat unclear.[199] Perhaps Bonevac thinks that the fact in question would make knowledge possible on the basis of which the skeptical scenario's could be discounted. But then the fact by itself is not sufficient to bring about grounds for discounting the scenario's.

Moreover, there seems to be some tension between premises 4 and 5. Premise 4 gives the impression that there being a fact by which *t* has a specific referent is *sufficient* for there to be grounds for discounting the skeptical scenario's. But if (5) is true, then that is false, or at least not the whole story. After all, (5) tells us that there could only be such grounds if *t*'s reference were grounded in something transcendent. Bonevac's rationale for (5) is not very clearly stated. There is a section in the chapter in which he seeks to explain "why Plato and his followers find each aspect of transcendence important to solving skeptical puzzles."[200] But there he arguably fails to show that there could be grounds for discounting skeptical scenarios for *t* only if *t*'s reference is grounded in something "infinitary" (one of the features of transcendence). However, later on he hints at an argument along the following lines: Only a transcendent causal power can make the relationship between term and referent possible.[201] That argument seems to support (5).

7. New Anthropological Arguments

Anthropological arguments for God include arguments from (supposed) characteristics of human beings and human life, including free will, play, certain desires and beliefs, and political authority. In the last twenty years anthropological arguments seem to have been advanced by Philip Tallon, Alexander Pruss, Jerry Walls, Trent Dougherty, Jeremy Neill and Tyler McNabb, Justin Barrett and Ian

[198] As Emanuel Rutten points out, (10) and (11) are implied by (2)-(5).
[199] A version of it is first found on page 222, but Bonevac does not seem to explain it anywhere in his chapter.
[200] Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content, 225-226.
[201] Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," 227.

Church, Todd Buras and Michael Cantrell, C. Stephen Layman, and Sébastien Réhault.[202] Here we will highlight Buras and Cantrell's argument from desire for the possible existence of God, as found in their chapter in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God*. Their argument must be understood against the background of recent work done on modal ontological arguments, which, for Buras and Cantrell, has established that, given S5 modal logic, if God possibly exists, then God exists.[203] Unfortunately, they do not provide a formal rendering of their argument, making it difficult to present it properly. The following rendering is, hopefully, adequate as a summary of their argument:

(1) Non-defective desires, by definition, have possible objects.
(2) There is a state of affairs, *s*, such that *s* is non-defectively desired and such that the existence of God is a necessary condition for *s* to obtain.
(3) There is a possible world in which *s* obtains.
(4) Therefore, God possibly exists.

In their chapter, Buras and Cantrell argue that complete happiness is a state of affairs that is non-defectively desired and only possible if there is a God. But they indicate that they think there are many of such states. The sort of happiness in view involves both experiential states and objective excellence. They describe it as "the enjoyment of the fullest compossible actualization of all one's

[202] Cf. McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments, 7-8. Tallon, "The Mozart Argument and the Argument from Play and Enjoyment," 335-337; Alexander Pruss, "The Ontological Argument from Desire," Alexander Pruss' Blog, accessed May 11, 2021, https://alexanderpruss.blogspot.com/2010/04/ontological-argument-from-desire.html; "The Ontological Argument and the Motivational Centres of Lives," *Religious Studies* 46 (2010): 233-249; Jerry L. Walls, "The Argument from Love and the Argument from the Meaning of Life: The God of Love and the Meaning of Life," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 304-320; Trent Dougherty, "Belief That Life Has Meaning Confirms That Life Has Meaning: A Bayesian Approach," in *God and Meaning: New Essays*, ed. J. Seachris and S. Goetz (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 81-98; Jeremy Neill and Tyler Dalton McNabb, "By Whose Authority? A Political Argument for God's Existence," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 2 (2019): 163-189; Justin L. Barrett and Ian M. Church, "Should CSR Give Atheists Epistemic Assurance? On Beer-Goggles, BFFs, and Skepticism Regarding Religious Beliefs," *The Monist* 96, no 3 (2013): 311-324; Todd Buras and Michael Cantrell, "C.S. Lewis's Argument from Nostalgia: A New Argument from Desire," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 356-371; C. Stephen Layman, *Letters to Doubting Thomas: A Case for the Existence of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 159-161; Sébastien Réhault, "Can Atheism Be Epistemically Responsible When So Many People Believe in God?" *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7, no.1 (2015): 181-198. The arguments of Linda Zagzenski and Marek Dobrzeniecki's should perhaps be included as well, although they look very much like pragmatic arguments. Marek Dobrzeniecki, "Is the Fact that Other People Believe in God a Reason to Believe? Remarks on the Consensus Gentium Argument," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 3 (2018): 133-153; Linda Zagzebski, "Epistemic Self-Trust and the *Consensus Gentium* Argument," in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, ed. K.J. Clark and R.J. Vanarragon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 34.
[203] Buras and Cantrell, "A New Argument from Desire," 356.

potentialities for excellence."[204] For them, such happiness requires an ideal set of external circumstances, circumstances which (supposedly) can only be secured by God.[205] Levelling an objection against the second premise is perhaps the best way for a nontheist to avoid the conclusion, but one could also argue against the actual, and then possible, existence of God:

> (1) There is only a state of affairs, *s*, such that *s* is non-defectively desired and such that the existence of God is a necessary condition for *s* to obtain, if God possibly exists.
> (2) God is such that if God does not exist in all possible worlds, then it is not the case that God possibly exists.
> (3) God does not exist in the actual world.
> (4) If (2) and (3), then it is not the case that God possibly exists.
> (5) Therefore, there is no state of affairs, *s*, such that *s* is non-defectively desired and such that the existence of God is a necessary condition for *s* to obtain.

8. New Meta-Argument Arguments

The last category of nontraditional arguments is meta-argument arguments. These arguments include arguments from there being multiple or many arguments for God. Building blocks for such an argument are found in Ted Poston's chapter in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God*, which presents a Bayesian model for assessing the evidential impact of multiple arguments.[206] Further, McIntosh himself sketches two (sorts of) meta-argument arguments. According to the first, we should expect there to be multiple, independent lines of evidence (or arguments) for a theory if a theory is true. According to the second, arguments that God exists are also arguments (or evidence) that God possibly exists.[207] Drawing on the first sketch, the following inductive argument can be drawn up:

> (1) If a theory is true, we should expect there to be multiple, independent arguments in support of it.
> (2) There are multiple, independent arguments for theism.
> (3) Therefore, theism is true.

[204] Buras and Cantrell, "A New Argument from Desire," 359-360.
[205] Buras and Cantrell, "A New Argument from Desire," 366.
[206] Ted Poston, "The Argument From So Many Arguments," in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project*, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 372-386.
[207] McIntosh, "Nontraditional Arguments," 8.

The conclusion, of course, does not follow logically from the premises, but it does receive support from them. One may, however, have doubts about the first premise. Is it always the case that multiple, independent arguments for a theory should be expected if a theory is true? To avoid falsification by a single counterexample, it is advisable to change the premise into something like: 'Normally, if a theory is true, there being multiple, independent arguments in support of it falls within the range of things to be expected.' A further problem is that, obviously, a parallel inductive argument can be formulated for atheism, since there are also multiple, independent arguments for it.[208] In short, there is an obvious parity objection against this argument.

A more promising inductive argument for God can be constructed along the following lines. Let 'atheism' (A) be the thesis that God does not exist, and 'partial hiddenness theism' (PHT) be the thesis that God exists and God wants, at this time, some people to believe in God's existence and God's existence to not be obvious to all people. If PHT is true, then, of course, God exists.

(1) There are multiple arguments for theism.
(2) There being multiple arguments for theism is more likely on PHT than on A.
(3) There are multiple arguments for atheism.
(4) There being multiple arguments for atheism is at least as likely on PHT as on A.
(5) Therefore, God exists.

9. Conclusion

The last twenty years has seen the emergence of nontraditional arguments for God in various categories. In light of the last category of arguments discussed, it may be interesting to get a better handle on how many novel arguments we are talking about precisely. There are some difficulties associated with counting new arguments, but there is reason to believe that over 30 new versions of traditional arguments and 45 novel nontraditional arguments have been put forward, in formal or informal manner, in the first two decades of this century.[209] As the close reader may have noticed,

[208] Filipe Leon, "100 (or so) Arguments for Atheism," Ex-Apologist, accessed June 24, 2021, https://exapologist.blogspot.com/2019/09/sixty-arguments-for-atheism.html.
[209] Traditional arguments: (1) Loke, *God and Ultimate Origins*, 93-94; (2) Miller, "A Bayesian Formulation of the *Kalam*," 521-534; (3-6) Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God*, 35-37, 80-82, 128-131, 161-163; (7) Rasmussen, "From States of Affairs to a Necessary Being," 183-200; (8) Rasmussen, "A New Argument for a Necessary Being," 351-356; (9) Weaver, "Yet Another New Cosmological Argument," 11-31; (10) Hamri, "On the Ultimate Ground of Being," 161-168; (11) Dumsday, "A Cosmological Argument," 732-736; (12) Gordon, "The Argument

many of the nontraditional arguments are found in *Two Dozen (Or So) Arguments for God*, which of course builds on ideas of one of the great philosophers of religion of the past and present century, Alvin Plantinga. When it comes to nontraditional arguments, innovation and developments seem especially to have occurred in the areas of metaphysical, noological and anthropological arguments. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to the question of how new arguments for God are to be evaluated.

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from the Incompleteness of Nature," 417-445; (13) Rutten, *Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*, 126-127; (14) Meixner, "A Cosmo-Ontological Argument," 193-202; (15) Burns, "Patching Plantinga's Ontological Argument," 130; (16) Megill and Mitchell, "A Modest Modal Ontological Argument," 338-349; (17) Bernstein, "Giving the Ontological Argument Its Due," 665-679; (18 & 19) Maydole, "The Ontological Argument," 580-586; (20) Pruss, "A Gödelian Ontological Argument Improved Even More," 203; (21) Lowe, "A New Modal Version of the Ontological Argument," 179-190; (22) Collins, "The Teleological Argument," 207; (23) Evans, "The Naïve Teleological Argument," 120; (24) Collins, "The Argument from Physical Constants," 102; (25) Baggett and Walls, *God and Cosmos*, 273-302; (26) Evans, *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God*, 107-147; (27) Ganssle, "Evil as Evidence for Christianity," 214-226; (28) Alexander, *Goodness, God, and Evil*, 91-124; (29) De Anna, "Theism and the Ontological Ground of Moral Realism," 19-38; (30) Harrison, *Normative Reasons and Theism*, 181-183; (31) Ritchie, *From Morality to Metaphysics*, 3-4, 159, 175-176; (32) McGrew and McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles," 593-662; (33) Bonevac, "The Argument from Miracles," 21; (34) Pruss, "'Samkara's Principle and Two Ontomystical Arguments," 112.

Nontraditional arguments: (1) Feser, *Five Proofs*, 109-110; (2) Lowe, "Naturalism, Theism, and Objects of Reason," 35-45; (3) Menzel, "The Argument from Collections," 29-58, (4) Davis, "God and Modal Concretism," 57-74; (5) Juarez, "From the Unity of the World to God," 283-303; (6) Keller, "Propositions Supernaturalized," 11-28; (7) Leftow, *God and Necessity*, 536-551; (8) Rutten, "Plato's *De Sofist* en een daarop geïnspireerd Godsargument," 39-45; (9) Anderson and Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction," 321-338; (10) Foster, "Regularities, Laws of Nature, and the Existence of God," 145-161; (11) Foster, *The Divine Lawmaker*, 149-166; (12) Swinburne, "Relations Between Universals or Divine Laws?" 179-189; (13) Dumsday, "Have the Laws of Nature Been Eliminated?" 110-128; (14) Orr, "No God, No Powers," 411-426; (15) Vallicella, "Does God Exist Because He Ought to Exist?" 206; (16) Howell, "Does Mathematical Beauty Pose Problems for Naturalism?" 493-504; (17) Geivett and Spiegel, "Beauty," 141-157; (18 & 19) Tallon, "The Theistic Argument from Beauty and Play," 321-340; (20) Rutten, "An Aesthetic Argument for God's Existence (2)," http://gjerutten.blogspot.com/2015/11/an-aesthetic-argument-for-gods.html; (21) Linville, "The Moral Argument," 417-446; (22) Swinburne, "The Argument from Consciousness," 293-303; (23) McNabb, *Religious Epistemology*, 37-38; (24) Rutten, "A Modal-Epistemic Argument for the Existence of God," 386-400; (25 & 26) Wojtysiak, "Two Epistemological Arguments for the Existence of God," 21-30; (27) Koons, "The General Argument from Intuition," 238-257; (28) Page, "Arguing to Theism from Consciousness," 336-362; (29) Barrett, "The Argument from Positive Epistemic Status," 159-169; (30-32) Bonevac, "Arguments from Knowledge, Reference, and Content," 214-237; (33) Rogers, "Evidence for God from Certainty," 31-46; (34) Moreland, "The Argument from Consciousness," 282-343; (35) Rea, "Theism and Epistemic Truth-Equivalences," 291-301; (36) Johnson and Potter, "The Argument from Language and the Existence of God," 83-93; (37) Pruss, "The Argument from Counterfactuals," 76-88; (38) Baumgardner and Lyon, "A Linguistic Argument for God's Existence," 771-786; (39) Rutten, "Positive Universally Held Properties are Necessarily Universally Held," 139-157; (40) Pruss, "The Ontological Argument from Desire," https://alexanderpruss.blogspot.com/2010/04/ontological-argument-from-desire.html; (41) Pruss, "The Ontological Argument and the Motivational Centres of Lives," 233-249; (42 & 43) Walls, "The Argument from Love and the Argument from the Meaning of Life," 304-320; (44) Dougherty, "Belief That Life Has Meaning Confirms That Life Has Meaning," 81-98; (45) Neill and McNabb, "By Whose Authority?" 163-189; (46) Barrett and Church, "Should CSR Give Atheists Epistemic Assurance?" 311-324; (47) Buras and Cantrell, "A New Argument from Desire," 356-371; (48) Layman, *Letters to Doubting Thomas*, 159-161; (49) Réhault, "Can Atheism Be Epistemically Responsible When So Many People Believe in God? 181-191.

Chapter 4: Evaluating New Arguments for God

1. Introduction

The previous three chapters discussed recent natural theology and analytic philosophy of religion and new arguments for God developed within these fields. In this final chapter, we will face the difficult question of how such arguments are to be evaluated. The evaluation of arguments may seem to be a purely subjective exercise. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that a 'good' argument is nothing more than an argument one likes. More plausibly, one could hold that if someone says that an argument is good, she means nothing more than that she herself finds it convincing. To give an evaluation of an argument, on this view, is roughly to state whether or not one finds it convincing. However, I take it that evaluating an argument is about determining how 'good' it is and I hold that an argument can have good features which are not person-relative. In what follows, I will first sketch a more rigorous approach to evaluating arguments and show how it may be applied to new arguments for God.

2. Evaluating Arguments

There are various views on how arguments in general are to be evaluated.[210] But when it comes to evaluating arguments for God specifically, it is useful to turn briefly to Graham Oppy's *Arguing about Gods*. In the book, Oppy discusses the issue of what counts as a good or successful argument.[211] Oppy indicates that he defends the view that "in circumstances in which it is well known that there has been perennial controversy about a given claim, a successful argument on behalf of that claim ought to persuade all of those who have hitherto failed to accept that claim to change their minds."[212] That is a rather high standard, which seemingly no argument for God, old or new, can meet. For Oppy a good argument, it seems, is (1) "in good inferential standing", (2) "possessed of acceptable

[210] See, for instance, Daniel H. Cohen, "Evaluating Arguments and Making Meta-Arguments," *Informal Logic* 21, no 2 (2001): 73-84; Douglas Walton, "New Methods for Evaluating Arguments," *Inquiry* 15, no. 4 (1996): 44-65.
[211] Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1, 7-15.
[212] Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 1. But see William Lane Craig, "Arguing successfully about God: A Review Essay of Graham Oppy's *Arguing about Gods*," *Philosophia Christi* 10 (2008): 435-442.

premises" for reasonable people, and (3) not circular or question-begging.[213] What Oppy's views help make clear is that what a good argument is, is plausibly not a purely subjective matter nor merely a matter of whether the argument is valid or sound. However, I think we can give a more elaborate account of good features an argument can have.

In the first place, an argument can have good features related to its form and the degree to which its premises support its conclusion. As we have seen, some of the arguments discussed in this thesis are deductively valid. Others are not, but nevertheless have an appropriate argumentative form in which one or more premises provided evidential support for the conclusion. Further, it is a good feature of an argument if it is not (explicitly) circular, i.e. if its conclusion is not part of its premises. There are also good features related to argumentative support, objections against the premises, and the extent to which the premises are believed. It is, for instance, a good feature of an argument if there are good independent arguments for one or more of its premises. Similarly, it is a good feature if there are no good objections available against its premises. Further, it is a good feature if the premises are already *believed* to be true by many people.[214] Additionally, it is good if they are highly *believable*, for instance, for people with relevant expertise.[215] Moreover, there are good features an argument can have related to the persuasiveness of the argument. It is, for example, a good feature if the argument persuades many people that its conclusion is true. In the case of arguments for God, it is a good feature if they persuade many nontheists that God exists.

Further, there are good features related to the modesty of an argument's premises, the extent to which they have withstood scrutiny, and the way in which they relate to the premises of other arguments. There is something good about an argument that does not involve very grand premises. At least often a more modest premise is better than one that is more grand. One could, for instance, argue that God exists from the premise that God *necessarily* exists, but it is arguably much better to do so from the more modest premise that God *possibly* exists. Premises that have withstood many attempted refutations are, all else being equal, to be preferred over premises that have not received critical attention. Arguments can also be improvements over previous arguments, for example, through avoiding objections to these arguments. Lastly, there are certain good features related to

[213] Oppy, *Arguing about Gods*, 10-11.
[214] At least under certain circumstances.
[215] Something that is presently not widely believed may nevertheless be such that it could or would be widely believed.

the nature of the conclusion of an argument. Throughout this thesis, I have talked of arguments for God in a primary sense (i.e. arguments that conclude that God exists) and arguments for God in a secondary sense (i.e. arguments that support the thesis that God exists). Arguably, all else being equal, an argument for God that *concludes* that God exists is better than one that merely *supports* the claim that God exists.

In addition to all these features, there are other good features for an argument to have, including being clear, only having functional parts (e.g. no unnecessary premises) and having premises which seem to be plausibly or probably true to many people. Some features of an argument are, of course, more difficult to discern than others. Even experts can, for instance, reach different conclusions on whether an argument is sound. But that does not show that such features are not genuinely good features or that they are irrelevant to evaluating arguments. Having now sketched an approach to evaluating arguments, I will show how it can be applied to new arguments for God. Note that an overview of our evaluative approach is provided as a 19-point checklist in the appendix.

3. New Arguments for God

Chapters 2 and 3 provide us with evidence for more than 70 new arguments for God.[216] Obviously, offering a detailed evaluation of all these arguments goes well beyond what is possible within this thesis. Instead, I will demonstrate how such an evaluation might be done by applying my evaluative approach to the 13 arguments discussed in the previous chapters, and particularly to the ontological argument of Pruss. Pruss' argument seems to be one of the better arguments for God discussed in this thesis. It is an argument for God in the primary sense and the sort of God concluded to is very great indeed. The metaphysical significance of the conclusion of Pruss' ontological argument is greater than that of Pruss' experiential argument, Rutten's cosmological argument, Bonevac's miracles argument, Anderson and Welty's metaphysical argument, and Buras and Cantrell's anthropological argument, which are only arguments for God in the secondary sense. Indeed, it seems one could accept the conclusions of these arguments and still plausibly maintain that theism is false. In the absence of other considerations, Pruss' ontological argument should therefore be judged a much better argument for God. One could, of course, argue that there are difficulties with

[216] In fact, I have provided evidence for 83 new arguments for God (see footnote 209). But supposing that there is an error rate of 10%, then there is still evidence for 74 new arguments for God.

Pruss' argument such that one of these arguments is in fact better. But note that (1) we have seen objections to the arguments of Rutten and Anderson and Welty, (2) Buras and Cantrell's argument, even if successful, strictly speaking gets one only to the possible existence of God, (3) Bonevac's miracles argument has a premise that will likely be rejected by most nontheists, and (4) there are objections available to Pruss' experiential argument.[217]

Further, the premises of Pruss' ontological argument seem, at least at first glance, more acceptable to nontheists than those of Ritchie's moral argument, Foster's nomological argument and McNabb's noological argument, which are arguments for God in the primary sense.[218] Its deductively valid form makes it preferable over McIntosh's meta-argument, the premises of which do not together entail its conclusion. Moreover, as we have seen, there is a powerful parity objection to that argument. Compared to Pruss' argument, the linguistic argument of Bonevac and the design argument of Collins seem to provide less support for their conclusion and are less clear about the attributes of the God concluded to.[219] Besides, we raised various concerns about Bonevac's argument and pointed out a strong objection to Collins' argument.[220] This leaves us with Vallicella's axiological argument and Pruss' ontological argument. Pruss' argument is a modal argument dependent on something like S5 modal logic, but so is Vallicella's argument, so that cannot be a reason to favour one over the other. Both also have highly significant metaphysical conclusions. Vallicella's argument is more simple than that of Pruss, but perhaps its premises are slightly less plausible to the average nontheist.[221] Moreover, in Pruss' argument the specific attributes of the being concluded to are clearer. For considering other features of Pruss' argument, it is helpful to restate it here:

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[217] See chapter 2.

[218] With regards to Ritchie's argument, nontheists will find it hard to accept that classical theism provides the best explanation of human beings having a capacity to cognize the objective moral order that (supposedly) exists. In the case of Foster's argument, nontheists will struggle to accept that an explanation involving God would be the only remotely plausible explanation of the laws of nature contingently obtaining. When it comes to McNabb's argument, nontheists will generally reject the claim that human beings cannot possess knowledge if God does not exist.

[219] It is not clear whether the premises of Bonevac's argument and Collins' argument entail their conclusion or merely support it. This is because it is not entirely clear what 'confirms' means in Collins' argument and whether, in Bonevac's argument, the best explanation is, by definition, a true explanation.

[220] See chapter 2.

[221] It seems that many nontheists will find it more plausible that things like necessary existence and essential omniscience are positive properties than that a maximally perfect being ought to exist or that whatever ought to exist is possible.

(1) A God is a being that is essentially omnipotent, essentially omniscient, essentially perfectly good, and essentially creator of every other being.
(2) If *A* is positive, then not-*A* is not positive.
(3) If *A* is positive and *A* entails *B*, then *B* is positive.
(4) If (2) and (3), then any pair of positive properties is compossible.
(5) *A* is strongly positive, if having *A* essentially is positive.
(6) Necessary existence is positive.
(7) Essential omniscience, essential omnipotence and essential perfect goodness are positive properties.
(8) If (2), (3) and (4), then if *A* is a strongly positive property, then there is a necessary existing being that essentially has *A*.
(9) There is at least one unique-making strongly positive property.
(10) Being essentially such that one is creator of every other being is a positive property.
(11) Therefore, there necessarily exists a unique God.

The outline of Pruss' argument is quite clear and its various steps and features seem functional, but we may have questions about the precise meaning of terms like 'omniscience' and 'omnipotence'. The argument is deductively valid and non-circular. The start of the argument is, of course, a definition. Premises 6, 7, 9 and 10 are (at first glance) plausible and also acceptable to at least some nontheists.[222] With regards to (2) and (3), we note that Graham Oppy claims that Gödelian ontological arguments start with a notion of a positive property that is intuitive only to theists, but that seems incorrect to me.[223] However, the term 'positive property' is likely too weak to do justice to (2) and (3). It seems much better to speak of a 'perfection'. The most immodest premise is perhaps premise 6, against which I offered an objection in the second chapter.

Many people will likely agree with at least premises 7 and 9. It is difficult to say to which degree the various parts of the argument are controversial or already believed. The persuasive power of Pruss' argument is also difficult to assess, but it is at least clear that it has not persuaded everyone who has considered it.[224] As of yet, the argument does not seem to have faced much scrutiny, but critiques of

[222] Matthew Parker claims that once the "modal import" of Pruss' premises is unpacked they are "not very plausible at all", but grants that they initially seem plausible. Matthew W. Parker, "How Gödelian Ontological Arguments Fail," 1-7, accessed June 28, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/36079827/How_G%C3%B6delian_Ontological_Arguments_Fail.
[223] Graham Oppy, "Gödel: The Third Degree," *Inference* 3, no. 1 (2017), accessed June 26, 2021, https://inference-review.com/article/goedel-the-third-degree.
[224] See Oppy, "Gödel: The Third Degree," https://inference-review.com/article/goedel-the-third-degree; Parker, "How Gödelian Ontological Arguments Fail," 1-7; Thomas Metcalf, "On Gödel's Ontological Argument,"

it are available. Objections to the argument include Graham Oppy's parody argument, Matthew Parker's objections to believing that necessary existence and essential omnipotence are positive properties and Thomas Metcalf's challenge to S5.[225] However, although these objections raise questions that need to be addressed, it is not clear that they really refute Pruss' argument. In the end, how one views these objections will depend on how plausible one finds the premises involved.[226] Note also that there is argumentative support for Pruss' argument.[227]

Is Pruss' argument better than other arguments for God? Yes, as we have seen, it is in some ways better than other new arguments for God. It is also an improvement over some ontological arguments.[228] In light of all this, it is fair to say that of the 13 new arguments for God discussed in this thesis, Pruss' ontological argument is one of the best, at least if one accepts the underlying modal framework. Note that this evaluative judgment can be accepted whether or not one holds the argument to be sound. If it is sound, then it is an extraordinary argument, for it leads to the conclusion that there necessarily exists a God who is essentially omnipotent, essentially omniscient, essentially perfectly good, and essentially creator of every other being.

Inference 3, no. 2 (2017), accessed June 29, 2021, https://inference-review.com/letter/on-goedels-ontological-argument.

[225] Oppy, "Gödel: The Third Degree," https://inference-review.com/article/goedel-the-third-degree; Parker, "How Gödelian Ontological Arguments Fail," 5-7; Metcalf, "On Gödel's Ontological Argument," https://inference-review.com/letter/on-goedels-ontological-argument.

[226] For example, Parker is right that essential omnipotence would entail not existing necessarily (and, if so, would plausibly not be a positive property), if there were a possible world in which there were no omnipotent being. But if one grants S5 and finds it more plausible that a necessarily existing essentially omnipotent being is metaphysically possible than there is a possible world with no omnipotent being, then one will (presumably) not view this sort of objection as successful.

[227] Pruss, "A Gödelian Ontological Argument Improved Even More," 203-211; "A Gödelian Ontological Argument Improved," *Religious Studies* 45 (2009): 247-353; "Gödel," in *Ontological Arguments*, ed. Graham Oppy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 139-154. For arguments that necessary existence is a positive property, see Bernstein, "Giving the Ontological Argument Its Due," 672-676.

[228] It is clearly treated as an *improved* ontological argument. See, for instance, Parker, "How Gödelian Ontological Arguments Fail"; Emanuel Rutten and Jeroen de Ridder, *En dus bestaat God: De beste argumenten* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn *Motief*, 2015), 98.

4. Conclusion

Quite a bit of ground was covered in this thesis. In the introduction we dealt with the issue of what counts as an argument for God. In chapter 1 we clarified the terms 'natural theology' and 'analytic philosophy of religion' and described the historical context in which new philosophical arguments for God have emerged. Chapters 2 and 3 provided a philosophical analysis of 13 of these arguments spread over 13 different categories and offered evidence for dozens of other novel arguments for God. Moreover, in the final chapter we outlined an approach to evaluating arguments and demonstrated how it could be applied to new arguments for God by using it to evaluate the 13 arguments discussed and particularly Pruss' 2012 ontological argument, which is plausibly judged to be one of the best arguments for God considered in this thesis, at least if one accepts s5 modal logic.

Thus we have provided an answer to our central research question and the sub-questions related to it. Nevertheless, much more research can be done on new philosophical arguments for God. For instance, our thesis likely provides only an incomplete overview of philosophical arguments for God that have emerged in the past two decades, with numerous arguments still left unmentioned. Also, many new arguments for God are informally presented by their originators, which makes it difficult to analyse and evaluate them. A number of these arguments were formalized in this thesis, but more can be done on this front.[229] Moreover, much more philosophical analysis and evaluation of new arguments for God can be done. For such evaluation, we could make use of the evaluative approach outlined in this chapter and the checklist included as an appendix to this thesis.

[229] I would like to draw attention to the work McIntosh has already done in this area. See Chad McIntosh, "100+ Args for God," 1-359, accessed April 29, 2021, https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1i7-6PKnoOK8EiiC1r-tt44mZK703nCsN2_QH_0TxxZU/edit#slide=id.gbfd27458c3_0_108.

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Appendix: Evaluating Arguments for God: A Checklist

1. Clarity: Is the form of the argument clear? Are the premises and conclusion clear?
2. Good form: Does the argument have an appropriate deductive, inductive or abductive form?
3. Internal support of the conclusion: If the premises were true, would the conclusion then be (likely) true? How much support do the premises provide for the conclusion?
4. Non-circularity: Is the argument non-circular, at least explicitly?
5. Functionality: Does the argument contain unnecessary features or premises without a clear function?
6. Modesty: How modest are the premises of the argument?
7. Plausibility: How plausible are the premises of the argument?
8. Acceptability: Can the premises be accepted consistently by a non-theist? Can they be incorporated easily into a nontheistic belief system?
9. Controversiality: How controversial are the argument's premises? To what extent are they (already) disputed or rejected as false?
10. Agreeability: How likely are people to agree with the premises if confronted with them?
11. Belief: To what extent are the premises (already) believed by experts, non-theists or people in general?
12. Scrutiny: To what extent has the argument faced and withstood critical scrutiny?
13. Argumentative support: Are there valid arguments available in support of the premises? How good are these arguments?
14. Objections: Are there valid objections available against the argument? How good are these objections?
15. Relative goodness: Is the argument better than (many) other arguments for God?
16. Persuasive power: Has the argument convinced people of its conclusion?
17. Soundness: If the argument is valid, are all the premises true?
18. Significance: Is the argument an argument for God in the primary sense (concludes that God exists) or in the secondary sense (supports the thesis that God exists)? What does the argument tell us about the attributes of this God?
19. Additional features: Does the argument have additional good features?