

## 1.

# Atheism is Dead . . .

*'The question of God ... has returned to the contemporary conversation.'*

– Roy Abraham Varghese<sup>1</sup>

God is back, and this time it's personal. Recent years have seen a rising tide of public debate about the existence of what Richard Dawkins calls 'a supernatural creator that is "appropriate for us to worship"'.<sup>2</sup> God, as 'he'<sup>3</sup> is otherwise known, has permeated the media – from the internet to print, from television and film to radio and pod-casts, as well as the bestseller shelves of book stores. As David Robertson comments, 'Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* [has] been joined in the bestseller lists by Christopher Hitchens' *God is not Great*, Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation*, A.C. Grayling's *Against all Gods* and a host of other books [e.g. Daniel Dennett's *Breaking the Spell*] extolling the virtues of atheism and the dangers and follies of religion.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps more surprising than the fact that we have started thinking publically about God again is the ironic fact that this conversation was started by atheists. As Madeleine Bunting observes,

It's an extraordinary publishing phenomenon – atheism sells. Any philosopher, professional polemicist or scientist with worries about their pension plan must now be feverishly working on a book proposal . . . The science writer, Matt Ridley, recently commented that on one day at Princeton he met no fewer than three intellectual luminaries hard at work on their God books . . . Surely not since Victorian times has there been such a passionate, sustained debate about religious belief.<sup>5</sup>

The motivation of those who have put God in the spotlight isn't only intellectual (or financial), it is also intensely political: 'After more than six years of a Republican administration that has been identified more closely with Christian conservatives than any other in American history, there was bound to be a backlash . . . Add to that the unpopularity of the current administration's policy in Iraq and you have a combustible mix of political and cultural hostility . . .'<sup>6</sup> God's *existence* is of course the central issue at stake in every debate about theism; but the current 'sizzle' surrounding this 'stake' is the proclamation that faith isn't merely *intellectually* mistaken, but *morally wrong* to boot. Hence, Christopher Hitchens writes, 'I'm not even an atheist so much as I am an antitheist; I not only maintain that all religions are versions of the same untruth, but I hold that the influence of churches, and the effect of religious belief, is positively harmful.'<sup>7</sup>

*Wired Magazine* dubbed the rising tide of popular antitheism 'The New Atheism' in a November 2006 cover story written by agnostic contributing editor Gary Wolf. He wrote that 'The New Atheists will not let us off the hook simply because we are not doctrinaire believers. They condemn not just belief in God but *respect* for belief in God. Religion is not only wrong; it's evil. Now that the battle has been joined, there's no excuse for shirking.'<sup>8</sup> The New Atheism combines a naturalistic worldview with a moral imperative to eradicate religion (or at least *theistic* religion); a rhetorical 'call to arms' fuelled by the intellectual and moral failings of Christian and Muslim fundamentalism. Indeed, one of the primary arguments advanced by the New Atheist movement is that faith is either directly or indirectly the cause of such suffering that it should be spurned by all right-thinking people. The New Atheism is thus as much of a political *riposte* to monotheistic religion (especially the American 'Christian Right', on the one hand, and 'Jihadist' Islam on the other) as it is an *intellectual* riposte to the God hypothesis. As agnostic John Humphrys observes:

The twenty-first century came of age on 11 September 2001. Nineteen Muslims, with the name of their God on their lips, murdered three thousand Americans . . . Whatever else they may have achieved, the zealots have given militant atheists yet more

ammunition. Isn't this what religion does, they say, create endless conflict in the name of God? So the atheists are on the march armed with logic and even more righteous indignation at the horror of religion and determined, at the very least, to weaken its grip on the national debate.<sup>9</sup>

Thus vocal antitheists have launched a political-cum-intellectual movement that has precipitated not only a raft of replies from believers, but which has simultaneously ignited a heated debate among atheists about the tactical merits of telling the faithful that they are all brainwashed idiots who pose a threat to public safety. And just as the New Atheism has provided theists with an expanded 'route to market', so it has stirred up renewed expressions of more tentative forms of non-theism, as exemplified by the publication of Humphrys' *In God We Doubt: Confessions of a Failed Atheist* (2007) and David Berlinski's *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions* (2008). As secular philosopher John Gray observes: 'there has been a sudden explosion in the literature of proselytising atheism . . . For the first time in generations, scientists and philosophers, high-profile novelists and journalists are debating whether religion has a future. The intellectual traffic is not all one-way.'<sup>10</sup>

### **Three Responses**

Jeremy Stangroom complains that 'It's obvious that God doesn't exist and that religion is bunk. But irritatingly this is not the view of some ninety percent of the world's population.'<sup>11</sup> The typical response to the God hypothesis is 'theism' (an ancient Greek term meaning 'god-ism'). For the monotheist (one-god-ist) 'God' means: 'a supreme personal being – distinct from the world and creator of the world.'<sup>12</sup> There are two atypical responses to the God hypothesis: atheism and agnosticism.

#### *Atheism*

Atheism is the denial that the proposition 'God exists' is true. Like many whose 'atheism is motivated at least in part by their naturalism',<sup>13</sup> philosopher Julian Baggini, editor of *The*

*Philosopher's Magazine*, calls upon naturalism ('a belief that there is only the natural world and not any supernatural one'<sup>14</sup>) to provide an alternative 'positive world view'<sup>15</sup> to that of theism. Equating atheism with naturalism secures Baggini a big bunch of denials, all grounded in the denial that there is anything more to reality than the physical. As Baggini explains: 'The atheist's rejection of belief in God is usually accompanied by a broader rejection of any supernatural or transcendental reality. For example, an atheist does not usually believe in the existence of immortal souls, life after death . . . or supernatural powers.'<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the atheist's rejection of theism is often *produced* by the presupposition that naturalism is true. As Corliss Lamont says: 'naturalistic metaphysics . . . considers all forms of the supernatural as myth [because it] regards Nature as the totality of being . . .'<sup>17</sup>

In recent decades, naturalism has come under an unprecedented barrage of high-calibre intellectual fire on multiple fronts.<sup>18</sup> As John G. West reports: 'A growing number of scientists and other scholars . . . say that recent developments in biology, chemistry, physics and related sciences undermine the . . . materialist worldview . . .'<sup>19</sup> Sociologist Steve Fuller admits that: 'naturalism remains a controversial position within academic philosophy. In fact, it is probably still a minority position.'<sup>20</sup>

According to many commentators, atheists in society at large are a shrinking minority. Paul M. Zulehner, a distinguished sociologist of religion, says that European atheists are: 'an infinitesimally small group [such that there] are not enough of them to be used for sociological research.'<sup>21</sup> A worldwide poll taken in 1991 put the global figure for atheists at just 4.4% of the population.<sup>22</sup> By 2006 it was estimated that only 2% of the world population were atheists.<sup>23</sup> As Phil Zuckerman acknowledges: 'the nations with some of the highest degrees of organic atheism (such as Great Britain, France, and Scandinavia) have been experiencing a steady increase of atheism over the past century, an increase which shows no indication of abating . . . On the other hand, worldwide atheism overall may be in decline.'<sup>24</sup>

### *Agnosticism*

The more popular atypical response to the God hypothesis is *agnosticism* (from the Greek *gnosis*, meaning 'knowledge', and the

alpha 'a,' which negates its subject). As a general term, agnosticism expresses: 'any conscious attitude of doubt, denial, or disbelief, towards some, or even all, of man's powers of knowing or objects of knowledge.'<sup>25</sup> Applied to religion, agnosticism is: 'The position that neither affirms belief in God (theism) nor denies the existence of God (atheism) but instead suspends judgement.'<sup>26</sup>

Strictly speaking, an agnostic claims that we *cannot* know whether God exists ('hard' agnosticism); but the term is often used to mean someone who says that we (or they) simply *do not* know if God exists ('soft' agnosticism). The soft agnostic may claim that *no one* has been able to resolve the question of God's reality one way or the other, and that therefore 'suspension of judgement is the only reasonable stance'<sup>27</sup> (corporate soft agnosticism); or merely that *they* have been unable to resolve the question of God's reality, and are currently suspending judgement (individual soft agnosticism). While theists believe that the proposition 'God exists' is true, and atheists believe that this proposition is not true, agnostics believe that 'God exists' is a proposition with a truth-value that either they or we *do not know* (perhaps because we *cannot* know).

General agnosticism 'reduces to the self-destructing assertion that: "one knows enough about reality in order to affirm that nothing can be known about reality."<sup>28</sup> In any form of *limited* agnosticism 'the door remains open for some knowledge of reality',<sup>29</sup> and this is of course compatible with 'finite knowledge of an infinite God.'<sup>30</sup> As agnostic-turned-theist Francis Collins warns, 'To be well defended, agnosticism should be arrived at only after a full consideration of all the evidence for and against the existence of God. It is a rare agnostic who has made the effort to do so.'<sup>31</sup>

Many agnostics are practical atheists. As atheist George H. Smith writes, 'One either accepts the proposition "god exists" as true, or one does not . . . The self-proclaimed agnostic must still designate whether he does or does not believe in a god . . . Agnosticism is not the escape clause that it is commonly thought to be.'<sup>32</sup> We all live either as if God exists, or as if God doesn't exist, and agnostics usually live as if he doesn't. As agnostic Somerset Maugham acknowledged: 'the practical outcome of agnosticism is that you act as though God did not exist.'<sup>33</sup>

Philosopher Stephen D. Schwarz comments that the supposedly neutral position of agnosticism:

is certainly a position, but is it really neutral? What does this position entail for one's life? Does it not entail the same thing as atheism: that one does not live before God, that one does not reckon with God, that one does not pray to God, does not thank him? Whether one does not reckon with God because one says, 'God is not,' or because one says, 'I don't know that he is,' makes no practical difference . . .<sup>34</sup>

### **Interesting Times**

*'Doubt that a supernatural being exists is banal . . .'*  
– John Allen Paulos<sup>35</sup>

A reputedly Chinese curse runs: 'May you live in interesting times.'<sup>36</sup> The last century was an 'interesting time' for those concerned with the God hypothesis: 'in the 1960's . . . in the affluent West, at least, there emerged a "radical godlessness" that was, by historical standards, unique.'<sup>37</sup> Naturalistic atheism remains the orthodox worldview of Western intellectual culture, despite the fact that its advocates constitute 'a tiny minority of the world's population'<sup>38</sup> with a disproportionate amount of influence in and through the academy. As Keith Ward reports:

In the first decades of the twentieth century, idealism was almost taken for granted among English-speaking philosophers . . . In the latter half of the twentieth century, some of the very best professional philosophers opted for materialism. But most of them would concede that their view is provocative, and that there are deep and unresolved puzzles . . . I have taught philosophy professionally in British universities for at least twenty years and am on the committee of the Royal Institute for Philosophy. Looking around at my philosopher colleagues in Britain . . . I would say that very few of them are materialists. Some . . . are idealists. A good number are theists. And most seem to be generally sceptical or agnostic about all worldviews, preferring to deal with specific tricky problems case by case . . .<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, recent decades have seen affiliation with theistic religion suffering a marked decline in many countries.

[N]ations with the highest degrees of organic atheism (atheism which is not state-enforced . . .) include most of the nations of Europe, as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. There also exist high degrees of atheism in Japan, Vietnam, North Korea, and Taiwan. Many former Soviet nations . . . contain significant levels of atheism . . . In some societies, particularly Europe, atheism is growing.<sup>40</sup>

In a 2004 MORI poll conducted for the BBC, '12% said they were sure there was no God and another 14% said they're unconvinced that one exists. Between them, it looks like 26% are agnostic or atheist, and in a similar question (phrased differently) 29% said that they do not believe in God.'<sup>41</sup> British lives actively centred on God are undoubtedly atypical; in fact, according to recent findings:

About half of the British believe in God, yet about 72% told the 2001 census that they were Christian, and 66% of the population have no *actual* connection to any religion or church, despite what they tend to write down on official forms. Between 1979 and 2005, half of all Christians stopped going to church on a Sunday. Religion in Britain has suffered an immense decline since the 1950s, and all indicators show a continued secularisation of British society . . .<sup>42</sup>

Jonathan Petre reports that in Britain, 'While 1,000 new people are joining a church each week, 2,500 are leaving.'<sup>43</sup> The 2005 English Church Census found that 'Sunday churchgoing continues to fall at a rate of 2.3 per cent a year, an improvement from the 2.7 per cent decline in the 1990s but still a very alarming slide.'<sup>44</sup> According to Peter Brierley:

While the apex for church membership in 1930 in the UK topped ten million people (29% of the population), by 1980 the number had dropped to 7.5 million people (just 13% of the population). In the interim, overall population in the UK had increased by ten

million . . . If we are to follow this trend, the total decrease from 7.5 million in 1980 to 4.6 million in 2020, and from 13.4% of the population to just 7.2% leads to an average rate of decline of 1.2% per year.<sup>45</sup>

It would be a mistake to extrapolate from this decline the eventual death of Church attendance in the UK.<sup>46</sup> As of 2005, 34% of Churches were growing (compared to 21% in 1998), while 16% were stable (compared to 14% in 1998). One quarter of churches in decline during the 1990s have turned things around.<sup>47</sup> Figures published in 2006 showed that: 'Evangelicals account for a rising one-third share of the 870,000 regular attenders remaining in the Church of England.'<sup>48</sup> At some point, then, the two graphs are going to intersect, and a growing, mainly evangelical church will emerge. And none of this addresses the state of British non-Christian theists, including approximately 1.6 million Muslims.

#### *The Rise of Positivism*

The intellectual roots of Britain's slide into secularism can be traced to a time in the early twentieth century when God was almost banished from the intellectual scene by the idea that talk about 'God' was *literally meaningless*. This view was rooted in the 'verification principle' of the 'logical positivists'. Kelly James Clark explains that positivism 'began in the early 1920s in an informal discussion group in Austria called the Vienna Circle. The original members, led by physicist Moritz Schlick, included mathematicians, physicists, sociologists and economists but no professional philosophers.'<sup>49</sup> This omission was unfortunate, because 'United by their passionate dislike of the metaphysical . . . the group developed a unified philosophy that embraced science and attempted to destroy philosophy.'<sup>50</sup> Attempting to develop a philosophy that dispenses with philosophy makes about as much sense as Groucho Marx's comment that he wouldn't belong to any club that would have him as a member.

The positivist's verification criterion said that the meaning of any statement that wasn't true by definition (e.g.  $2 + 2 = 4$ ) lay in its ability to be empirically verified (at least in principle). To 'empirically verify' something means to check it out with the physical senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.). In other words, the

statement 'This is a book' is meaningful *because you can verify it* by seeing, touching and even smelling this book. But 'God exists' is a meaningless statement, *because you can't verify it* by seeing or touching or smelling God. According to positivism, 'God exists' isn't a meaningful statement that's either true or false, but a use of language on a par with nonsense poetry (like the parts of 'Jabberwocky' Lewis Carroll didn't define). It may have emotional resonance, but it has no rational content that can be understood and judged. Oxford philosopher A.J. Ayer – whose 1936 publication *Language, Truth and Logic* popularized positivism in Britain – proclaimed:

'God' is a metaphysical term. And if 'God' is a metaphysical term, then it cannot even be probable that a god exists. For to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false . . . If a putative proposition fails to satisfy [the verification] principle, and is not a tautology, then . . . it is metaphysical, and . . . being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless.<sup>51</sup>

As Ayer admitted, 'If the assertion that there is a god is nonsensical, then the . . . assertion that there is no god is equally nonsensical.'<sup>52</sup> Ditto agnosticism! Ironically, given that many who embraced positivism were materialists: 'materialism would have to be rejected as nonsense by a strict interpretation of logical positivism.'<sup>53</sup> The mind-independent reality of matter is neither true by definition, nor something that can be empirically verified!

William Cash calls Ayer 'arguably the most influential 20th-century rationalist after Bertrand Russell'.<sup>54</sup> As Catholic philosopher F.C. Copleston observed, 'Ayer's writings [have] exercised a widespread influence, particularly perhaps on university students, for whom it possessed the charm of novelty and an atmosphere of daring.'<sup>55</sup> Ayer's declaration that God-talk was nonsense influenced many.

It was one of those books that galvanize a whole generation. Ambitious undergraduates commonly read it at a sitting. Their elders were appalled. When students tried to discuss the book at an Oxford seminar, the Master of Balliol flung it through the

window . . . Asked what came next, the young iconoclast [Ayer] said cheerfully: 'There's no next. Philosophy has come to an end. Finished.'<sup>56</sup>

### *The Fall of Positivism*

Sir Anthony Kenny recalls how 'Philosophers of religion were in a pretty shattered state when I first came to the subject, and thought it would be wonderful if they could prove that religious propositions had meaning, let alone that they were true.'<sup>57</sup> However, Kenny observes, 'In the fifty years I've been in philosophy I think there's been a great revival of confidence among philosophers of religion.'<sup>58</sup> Julian Baggini comments, 'Although Kenny has moved from faith to agnosticism, in the discipline as a whole, he has witnessed a remarkable rehabilitation of religious belief.'<sup>59</sup> As Paul Copan and William Lane Craig observe, 'Over the last forty years there has been an ongoing revolution in Anglo-American philosophy. As the old, anti-metaphysical prejudices have waned, there has been a renaissance of Christian philosophy.'<sup>60</sup> Indeed, just two decades after *Language, Truth and Logic* was published, Copleston wrote that 'there are few British philosophers who willingly accept the title of "positivists" or who make open profession of applying the principle of verifiability as a criterion of meaning . . . [positivism] is no longer fashionable.'<sup>61</sup>

Several factors conspired to render positivism unfashionable. For example, philosopher John Hick pointed out that, when made sufficiently precise, the statement 'God exists' is empirically verifiable (at least in *principle*, which is all the verification criterion requires): 'A set of expectations based upon faith in the historic Jesus as the incarnation of God, and in his teaching as being divinely authoritative, could be so fully confirmed in *post-mortem* experience as to leave no grounds for rational doubt as to the validity of that faith.'<sup>62</sup> That is, if one was to die and find oneself in a Christian afterlife, one could count this as an *indirect* verification of God's existence; 'the existence or non-existence of the God of the New Testament is a matter of fact, and claims as such eventual experiential verification.'<sup>63</sup>

Hick's argument didn't challenge the verification principle, but its capacity to draw a line of demarcation between 'scientific'

claims on the one hand and 'metaphysical' claims on the other. Unless positivism is framed broadly enough to allow the sort of *indirect* verification utilized by Hick, many explanatory claims within science would lack meaning, because they concern entities that are verified indirectly from observation of their hypothesized effects. This being so, it may be argued that the God hypothesis is not only verifiable *in principle*, but also *in practice*, since several arguments for God can be framed using the same scientific form of indirect verification. As Basil Mitchell comments:

the Logical Positivist movement started as an attempt to make a clear demarcation between science and common sense on the one hand, and metaphysics and theology on the other. But work in the philosophy of science convinced people that what the Logical Postitivists had said about science was not true, and, by the time the philosophers of science had developed and amplified their accounts of how rationality works in science, people discovered that similar accounts applied equally well to the areas which they had previously sought to exclude, namely theology and metaphysics.<sup>64</sup>

As George Schlesinger argues, 'Theism is in principle confirmable by all sorts of possible observations and is in fact confirmed by some actual observations.'<sup>65</sup>

Richard Dawkins objects strongly to 'the erroneous notion that the existence or non-existence of God is an untouchable question, forever beyond the reach of science . . . Either he exists or he doesn't. It is a scientific question; one day we may know the answer, and meanwhile we can say something pretty strong about the probability.'<sup>66</sup> In *The God Delusion* Dawkins defines science as simply 'the honest and systematic endeavour to find out the truth about the real world'.<sup>67</sup> Such a definition provides no grounds for the sort of air-tight distinction between metaphysical philosophy and natural philosophy (as science used to be called) sought by positivism. In practice, however, Dawkins uses 'science' as a term of endearment restricted to any critical investigation of the 'real world' *grounded in empirical evidence*; and as a naturalist he assumes that the 'real world' can be described in

exclusively naturalistic terms. By way of contrast, Intelligent Design (ID) theorists<sup>68</sup> refuse to allow *a priori* assumptions to pre-determine the conclusions natural philosophy reaches. Instead, they follow Scottish philosopher David Hume in distinguishing between conclusions science can and can't support without purely metaphysical extension.<sup>69</sup> Dawkins is less nuanced than Hume. Nevertheless, bearing the above in mind, ID theorists can give a qualified welcome to Dawkins' affirmation that 'the existence of God is a scientific hypothesis . . . God's existence or non-existence is a scientific fact about the universe, discoverable in principle if not in practice.'<sup>70</sup> And all ID theorists (theists and non-theists alike) can give an unqualified welcome to his statement that: 'The presence or absence of a creative super-intelligence is unequivocally a scientific question . . . The methods we should use to settle the matter . . . would be purely and entirely scientific methods.'<sup>71</sup> As William Lane Craig explains:

Dawkins . . . implicitly rejects methodological naturalism and treats intelligent design as a scientific hypothesis which should be assessed like any other scientific hypothesis . . . Dawkins does not reject the inference to a cosmic designer *tout court*: he recognizes that we might be products of some super-human designer, and he offers no in principle objection to inferring such an intelligent designer of the universe. What Dawkins objects to is identifying that super-human designer with God . . . Thus, whatever the merit of Dawkins' objection [to the God hypothesis], design theorists will be unfazed by it, since it is strictly irrelevant to a design inference . . . Dawkins, then, finds himself in agreement with the most fundamental tenets of intelligent design theory: (i) that intelligent design is a scientific hypothesis which should be assessed as such, (ii) that it is illegitimate to exclude *a priori* from the pool of explanatory options hypotheses which appeal to final causes or even super-natural beings, and (iii) that the design inference is not to be equated with an inference to theism . . .<sup>72</sup>

A positive answer in respect of the existence of 'a creative super-intelligence' (a scientific conclusion, as Dawkins confirms) would nevertheless provide obvious grist for the metaphysical mill of arguments for theism. The point of most immediate relevance

here, of course, is that *Dawkins' atheism, no less than the theism he opposes, is built upon positivism's grave.*

Chief among the woes of positivism, as R. Douglas Geivett explains, was the fact that the verification principle: 'was neither empirically verifiable nor tautological'.<sup>73</sup> The principle '*failed its own requirement for factual meaningfulness*', notes William P. Alston, 'and thus was self-refuting'.<sup>74</sup> Keith Ward reports the following conversation with Ayer:

A student once asked [Ayer] if you could make any true general statement about meaningful statements. 'Yes,' he replied. 'You can say that all meaningful statements must be verifiable in principle.' 'I see what you mean,' said the student. 'But how can I verify that?' 'I am glad you asked that,' said the philosopher. 'You cannot verify it. But it is not really a meaningful statement; it is just a rule for using language.' 'Whose rule?' 'Well, it's my rule, really. But it is a very useful one. If you use it, you will find you agree with me completely. I think that would be very useful.'<sup>75</sup>

If we adopt the rule, then of course we will agree with Ayer, who will find that useful! But he can't give us a *reason* for adopting his rule that doesn't contradict the rule he wants us to adopt. Hence James Kelly Clark describes the verification principle as a piece of 'unjustifiable philosophical imperialism that, in the end, could not survive critical scrutiny'.<sup>76</sup> Ayer himself mused, 'I just stated [the verification rule] dogmatically and an extraordinary number of people seemed to be convinced by my assertion'.<sup>77</sup> In 1973 he admitted that 'the verification principle is defective . . .'.<sup>78</sup> Discussing positivism in 1978, Ayer conceded, 'Nearly all of it was false'.<sup>79</sup> Ayer wrote the obituary for verificationism: 'Logical Positivism died a long time ago. I don't think much of *Language, Truth and Logic* is true. I think it is full of mistakes'.<sup>80</sup>

UCLA philosopher Tyler Burge writes that 'the central event [in philosophy during the last half-century was] the downfall of positivism and the re-opening of discussion of virtually all the traditional problems of philosophy'.<sup>81</sup> Including, of course, the God hypothesis. As Craig explains,

The collapse of verificationism was undoubtedly the most important philosophical event of the twentieth century. Its demise meant a resurgence of metaphysics, along with other traditional problems of philosophy that had been suppressed. Accompanying this resurgence has come something new and altogether unanticipated: a renaissance in Christian philosophy. The face of Anglo-American philosophy has been transformed as a result. Theism is on the rise; atheism is on the decline.<sup>82</sup>

*Plantinga's Impact*

**'planting**, v. To use twentieth-century fertilizer to encourage new shoots from eleventh-century ideas which everyone thought had gone to seed; hence *plantinger*, n. one who plantings.'

– Daniel Dennett, *Philosophical Lexicon*

In 1967 American philosopher Alvin Plantinga (b. 1932) published *God and Other Minds*, which 'applied the tools of analytic philosophy to questions in the Philosophy of Religion with an unprecedented rigour and creativity'.<sup>83</sup> He argued by analogy with the rationality of belief in other minds (whose non-tautological existence can't be empirically verified) that 'if my belief in other minds is rational, so is my belief in God.'<sup>84</sup> If belief in God is meaningless because he can't be empirically verified, then so is belief in other minds. But positivists believe in other minds . . . Then, with the 1974 publication of *The Nature of Necessity*, Plantinga kick-started a philosophical re-evaluation of the traditional arguments for God by using modal logic to lay out a valid version of the 'ontological' argument (originally formulated in 1078 AD by Anselm).<sup>85</sup> Plantinga's work on the ontological argument (which will be briefly examined in chapter seven) got a theistic foot in the newly re-opened door of metaphysics and served, as Roger Scruton acknowledges, 'the useful purpose of showing the rumours of God's death to be greatly exaggerated'.<sup>86</sup>

One could think of *God and Other Minds* and *The Nature of Necessity* as tackling both prongs of the positivist's proposed dilemma: show that theism is verifiable or tautologically true, or else accept banishment to the outer darkness of meaninglessness. In effect, Plantinga responded to the first prong that the demand

for verification renders positivism self-contradictory, and to the second prong that although he can't prove that God's existence is tautologically true, he can prove that it is *rational to think that God's existence is tautologically true*, and that this is sufficient to demonstrate that God-talk is meaningful. For how can a truth-claim be rational yet meaningless?

Plantinga also had a massive effect on the philosophical standing of one of the few arguments *against* the existence of God, the 'problem of evil'. Sam Harris remains impressed by the so-called 'logical problem of evil', that is, that 'If God exists, either He can do nothing to stop the most egregious calamities, or He does not care to. God, therefore, is either impotent or evil.'<sup>87</sup> (Note that, even if it worked, this is only an argument against the existence of a deity who is all-powerful *and* all-good, not an argument against the existence of a deity *per se*.) However, atheist William L. Rowe observes that few contemporary philosophers believe there is a logical contradiction between God's existence and evil.

Some philosophers have contended that the existence of evil is *logically inconsistent* with the existence of the theistic God [who is all-powerful and all-good]. No one, I think, has succeeded in establishing such an extravagant claim. Indeed . . . there is a fairly compelling argument for the view that the existence of evil is *logically consistent* with the existence of the theistic God.<sup>83</sup>

Rowe is referring to Plantinga's 'free will defence', namely that it is *logically possible* (albeit implausible) that all evil is caused by the misuse of libertarian free will given by God to various creatures as the necessary means to a sufficiently greater good. '[M]any contemporary philosophers believe that the Free Will Defence . . . is a strong and effective response to the logical problem of evil . . . Plantinga . . . and other theistic philosophers have cast serious doubt on the viability of all formulations of the logical problem of evil . . .'<sup>89</sup> In essence, the logical problem of evil is based upon the assumption that it is *impossible* for God to have a morally sufficient reason for permitting evil. But as Craig explains:

there is no reason to think that God and evil are logically incompatible. After all, there is no *explicit* contradiction between them.

And if the atheist means that there is some *implicit* contradiction between God and evil, then he must be presupposing some hidden premise to bring out this implicit contradiction. But . . . no philosopher has been able to identify such premises . . . more than that, we can actually prove that God and evil *are* logically compatible. You see, the atheist presupposes that God cannot have morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evil in the world. But this assumption is not necessarily true. So long as it is even *possible* that God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting evil, it follows that God and evil are logically consistent.<sup>90</sup>

Agnostic Paul Draper concedes that 'it is possible that there is some good reason (perhaps a reason too complicated for humans to understand) for God to permit tragedies. So tragedies don't conclusively disprove God's existence.'<sup>91</sup> Primarily because of Plantinga's analysis, 'informed philosophers of religion today acknowledge that the logical problem of evil is not a good argument against God's existence. Whether among theists or atheists, there is something of a consensus that the logical problem of evil is not a problem.'<sup>92</sup>

The typical atheistic claim today is not that evil *disproves* God, but rather than evil *counts against* God (the New Atheist argument that the evil done by theists counts against the rationality and/or morality of theistic *belief* is a separate issue). However, even if evil counts against God – an assumption Plantinga (along with many other philosophers) questions by noting the difficulty of extrapolating from our inability to propose reasons justifying the existence of evil in all instances, to the conclusion that there are instances of evil that probably lack any justification<sup>93</sup> – one must still take into account the grounds *for* belief before deciding if evil counts *decisively* against God. As Plantinga argues:

suppose evil does constitute evidence, of some kind, against theism: what follows from that? Not much. There are many propositions I believe that are true and rationally accepted, and such that there is evidence against them. The fact that Peter is only three months old is evidence against his weighing nineteen pounds; nevertheless I might rationally (and truly) believe that's how much he weighs. Is the idea, instead, that the existence of God is

improbable with respect to our *total evidence* . . .? To show this, the atheologist would have to look into all the evidence *for* the existence of God . . . This is vastly messier and more problematic than a terse and elegant demonstration of a contradiction [as attempted by the failed logical problem of evil].<sup>94</sup>

Hence agnostic Graham Oppy concedes that 'If theists can reasonably suppose that they have lots of evidence which supports the claim that God exists, then they may reasonably believe that there is a solution to "the problem of evil", even if they do not know what that solution is.'<sup>95</sup>

Due to his cutting-edge contributions to the philosophy of religion and the theory of knowledge, Plantinga has been lauded as not only 'the best *Christian* philosopher of his time', but as 'the most important philosopher of any stripe'.<sup>96</sup> As John G. Stackhouse comments, due to the excellence of Plantinga's labours 'the Christian view of things simply has to be taken seriously by any questioner with the integrity to appreciate sound philosophy.'<sup>97</sup> Many philosophers have followed Plantinga's example, re-affirming and updating the case for God. Hence Craig writes of 'a resurgence of interest in natural theology – that branch of theology which seeks to offer cogent argument or reasons for God's existence apart from the resources of authoritative divine revelation.'<sup>98</sup>

#### *The Intellectual Resurrection of Theism*

On 8 April (Good Friday) 1966, *Time Magazine* ran a cover story by John T. Elson entitled 'Is God Dead?', about the 'death-of-God' movement in American theology. 'Even within Christianity,' it stated, 'now confidently renewing itself in spirit as well as form, a small band of radical theologians has seriously argued that the churches must accept the fact of God's death, and get along without him.'<sup>99</sup> Craig explains that 'According to the movement's protagonists, traditional theism was no longer tenable and had to be once and for all abandoned. Ironically, however, at the same time that theologians were writing God's obituary, a new generation of young philosophers was rediscovered His vitality.'<sup>100</sup> A few years later, *Time* carried a cover story asking 'Is God coming back to life?' Interest in the philosophy of religion grew to the point

where, in 1980, *Time* ran a story on 'Modernizing the case for God', describing the contemporary movement among philosophers putting new life into the arguments for God.

In a quiet revolution in thought and argument that hardly anybody could have foreseen only two decades ago, God is making a comeback. Most intriguingly, this is happening not amongst theologians or ordinary believers, but in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers, where the consensus had long banished the Almighty from fruitful discourse.<sup>101</sup>

The shift documented by *Time* prompted Craig to write that 'when one recalls the bleak days of the "Death of God" movement in the sixties, it is not unfair to speak of a veritable resurrection of theism.'<sup>102</sup> Gary R. Habermas notes that 'Over the last few decades, it seems the table has turned on naturalists.'<sup>103</sup> Richard M. Gale reports a 'startling resurgence of theism within philosophy during the past thirty or so years'.<sup>104</sup> So pronounced is this renaissance that noted theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg confidently pronounces that 'Atheism as a theoretical position is in decline worldwide.'<sup>105</sup> Atheist philosopher Quentin Smith has highlighted the 'influx of talented theists'<sup>106</sup> into philosophy departments, saying that 'Perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians.'<sup>107</sup> Smith laments that 'Academia has now lost its mainstream secularisation . . . If naturalism is the true world-view and a "Dark Age" means an age when the vast majority of philosophers (and scientists) do not know the true world-view, then we have to admit that we are living in a Dark Age.'<sup>108</sup>

The 2005 World Congress of the International Academy of Humanism took as their theme 'Towards a New Enlightenment', stating 'we are facing a new dark ages.' Scientist-turned-theologian Alister McGrath calls this 'a fascinating glimpse of the crisis of confidence . . . gripping atheism at the moment.'<sup>109</sup> Whether it bespeaks a new dark age or a new enlightenment, increasing numbers of philosophers and scientists are certainly deploying 'a tough-minded intellectualism in defence of . . . theism.'<sup>110</sup> As J.P. Moreland notes, 'there has been a noticeable increase in the number of intellectuals who

embrace historic Christianity as a rational worldview.<sup>111</sup> Roy Abraham Varghese talks of a 'resurgence of rational theism in science and philosophy . . .'.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, as another scientist-turned-theologian, John Polkinghorne, comments, 'we are living today in a . . . period of intense activity in natural theology . . . The revival that has taken place has been more at the hands of the scientists than of the theologians.'<sup>113</sup>

While the theory of evolution has been thought by some to undermine belief in God (and has been both promoted and opposed on such ideological grounds), the scientific discovery of a cosmic beginning in the 'big bang' has replaced the ancient Greek idea of an eternal universe and confirmed theist's belief in a cosmic beginning. Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow writes that, for non-believing scientists 'the story ends like a bad dream';<sup>114</sup> for, having scaled the mountains of ignorance, 'he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.'<sup>115</sup> Cosmologists have also discovered that life depends upon a 'finely-tuned' set of physical laws, a 'just right' combination many interpret as evidence that our universe was designed for life. Hence, as Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland observe, 'A significant and growing number of scientists, historians of science, and philosophers of science see more scientific evidence now for a personal creator and designer than was available fifty years ago.'<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, as John G. West reports, while theists have long noted legitimate interpretations of the Bible that don't conflict with evolution:<sup>117</sup>

a growing number of scientists and philosophers of science have voiced scepticism of key parts of neo-Darwinian, including its central claim that natural selection and random mutation are sufficient to explain the intricate and highly-functional complexity we see throughout the natural world. Some of these scholars are proponents of what is known as 'intelligent design,' which proposes that 'certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection.' [However] These criticisms made of neo-Darwinism extend well beyond [those] who subscribe to intelligent design.<sup>118</sup>

For example, in an article entitled 'Why Pigs Don't Have Wings', published in October 2007, leading atheist philosopher of mind Jerry Fodor criticised evolutionary psychology *and its underlying adaptationist assumptions*, noting:

an appreciable number of perfectly reasonable biologists are coming to think that the theory of natural selection can no longer be taken for granted . . . Shake a stick at a Darwinist treatise and you're sure to find, usually in the first chapter, claims for the indispensability of adaptationism. Well, if adaptationism really is the only game in town, if the rest of biology really does presuppose it, we had better cleave to it warts and all. What is indispensable therefore cannot be dispensed with, as Wittgenstein might have said. The breaking news, however, is that serious alternatives to adaptationism have begun to emerge; ones that preserve the essential claim that phenotypes evolve, but depart to one degree or other from Darwin's theory that natural selection is the mechanism by which they do. There is now far more of this sort of thing around than I am able to survey . . . the classical Darwinist account of evolution as primarily driven by natural selection is in trouble on both conceptual and empirical grounds.<sup>119</sup>

In sum, the naturalistic-atheistic worldview has never been in such a precarious intellectual position. 'Many philosophers are today talking about the collapse of modern atheism', writes Terry L. Miethe, 'not necessarily that there are less atheists, but that there is less reason for being one . . . because of the philosophical, scientific, and ethical evidence for the existence of God.'<sup>120</sup> McGrath is right to observe that 'Atheism remains an important challenge to faith throughout the Western world . . .',<sup>121</sup> but he is also correct in continuing into the observation that 'many of its critics believe that the movement has lost its way and that its intellectual credentials and cultural appeal have dwindled in recent years.'<sup>122</sup> As Ralph McInerney notes, on the one hand, 'It's very rare that someone thinks he can really refute theism. So what you get are arguments against it but no one thinks of them as conclusive.'<sup>123</sup> William C. Davies likewise reports that 'Critics of theism (at least among philosophers) have all but given up thinking that God's existence can be disproved.'<sup>124</sup> On the other

hand, 'There are very many, and generally well-received, philosophical attempts to show the reasonableness of theism . . .'<sup>125</sup> As James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis confirm, 'Natural theology is alive and well in contemporary philosophy.'<sup>126</sup> Hence Norman L. Geisler writes of 'a *collapse* of the *intellectual grounds* for holding an *atheist* position',<sup>127</sup> while Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser report that theism 'flourishes and multiplies in the academic world.'<sup>128</sup>

*A Change of Mind for Antony Flew*

'it may well be that no one is as surprised as I am that my exploration of the Divine has after all these years turned from denial to discovery.'

– Antony Flew<sup>129</sup>

As Roy Abraham Varghese explains, 'within the last hundred years, no mainstream philosopher has developed the kind of systematic, comprehensive, original, and influential exposition of atheism that is to be found in Antony Flew's fifty years of atheological writings.'<sup>130</sup> It was thus a symbolic high water mark for the intellectual resurrection of theism when Flew, 'an icon and champion for unbelievers for decades,' a scholar dubbed 'the world's most influential philosophical atheist,'<sup>132</sup> announced in January 2004 that he had come to believe in a God because 'the case for an Aristotelian God who has the characteristics of power and also intelligence, is now much stronger than it ever was before.'<sup>133</sup> If his newfound belief in a minimal form of theism upset people, well 'that's too bad', said Flew. 'My whole life has been guided by the principle of Plato's Socrates: Follow the evidence, wherever it leads.'<sup>134</sup> As Craig J. Hazen wrote, Flew's defection was big news 'not only about his personal journey, but also about the persuasive power of the arguments modern theists have been using to challenge atheistic naturalism.'<sup>135</sup> Jay W. Richards captures something of the earth-shattering nature of Flew's change of mind.

For over fifty years the British philosopher Antony Flew was the English-speaking world's most intellectually serious public atheist. He first engaged Christian apologist C.S. Lewis at Oxford in

1950 and continued to pursue scholarly defences of atheism for over five decades. His basic argument was always the same: there just wasn't enough evidence to believe in God. Then, at age eighty-one, he changed his mind.<sup>136</sup>

Why did Flew change his mind? Flew explains his reasons at length in his 'last will and testament',<sup>137</sup> written with the help of Roy Abraham Varghese: *There Is a God* (Harper One, 2007). Unfortunately, prominent atheists (including Richard Dawkins and Roy Hattersley) responded to Flew's apostasy with *ad hominem*<sup>138</sup> assertions about his losing his marbles in his dotage,<sup>139</sup> or about his hedging his bets with respect to the afterlife. In *There Is A God*, Flew comments:

When reports of my change of mind were spread by the media . . . some commentators were quick to claim that my advanced age had something to do with my 'conversion.' It has been said that fear concentrates the mind powerfully, and these critics had concluded that expectations of an impending entrance into the afterlife had triggered a deathbed conversion. Clearly these people were familiar with neither my writings on the non-existence of an afterlife nor with my current views on the topic . . . I do not think of myself 'surviving' death. For the record, then, I want to lay to rest all those rumours that have me placing Pascalian bets.<sup>140</sup>

Harper One deputy publisher Mark Tauber complained that a *New York Times Magazine* feature by Mark Oppenheimer 'generalized from Flew's aphasia to senility – which is far from accurate.'<sup>141</sup> Oppenheimer suggested that Varghese had (unwittingly) railroaded the aging Flew into expressing opinions that were not his own. Flew responded with a press release saying:

My name is on the book and it represents exactly my opinions. I would not have a book issued in my name that I do not 100 percent agree with. I needed someone to do the actual writing because I'm 84 and that was Roy Varghese's role. The idea that someone manipulated me because I'm old is exactly wrong. I may be old but it is hard to manipulate me. This is my book and it represents my thinking.<sup>142</sup>

As Varghese wrote to the *New York Times Magazine*, 'the substantive portions of the book came from a combination of Tony's published and unpublished writings . . . as well as extensive correspondence and numerous interviews with him . . . The cute sub-titles and the enchanting anecdotes, I'm afraid, did not originate with Tony although he OKed them . . . Tony edited, corrected and approved at least ten versions of the manuscript.'<sup>143</sup> Tauber confirms that 'Varghese took Tony's thoughts and put them in publishable form. This is not an unusual practice.'<sup>144</sup>

On 12 March 2008 Flew (now aged 85) participated in a panel discussion on *There Is A God* with philosopher Gary R. Habermas and New Testament scholar N.T. Wright, at a conference held in Westminster Chapel. As an audience member I can attest that, while Flew did display a tendency to forget names, and to drift off subject when answering questions, he clearly did still know his stuff, and his own mind. Under what might be considered some quite leading questions, Flew refused to go further than acknowledging his openness to the *possibility* of Jesus' resurrection. He also told the (mainly Christian) audience in no uncertain terms that he thought life after death was impossible.

In a perfectly lucid interview just prior to the publication of *There is a God*, Flew explained his defection from atheism in his own words:

With every passing year, the more that was discovered about the richness and inherent intelligence of life, the less it seemed likely that a chemical soup could magically generate the genetic code. The difference between life and non-life, it became apparent to me, was ontological and not chemical. The best confirmation of this radical gulf is Richard Dawkins' comical effort to argue in *The God Delusion* that the origin of life can be attributed to a 'lucky chance.' If that's the best argument you have, then the game is over . . . I would add that Dawkins is selective to the point of dishonesty when he cites the views of scientists on the philosophical implications of the scientific data.

Two noted philosophers, one an agnostic (Anthony Kenny) and the other an atheist ([Thomas] Nagel), recently pointed out that Dawkins has failed to address three major issues that ground the rational case for God. As it happens, these are the very same

issues that had driven me to accept the existence of a God: the laws of nature, life with its teleological organization and the existence of the Universe.<sup>145</sup>

## Conclusion

Whatever the cause, 'there's more interest in religion generally now than there was say 20 to 30 years ago in the Western world',<sup>146</sup> and the percentage of atheists worldwide has declined. As McGrath observes:

The term 'postatheist' is now widely used to designate the collapse of atheism as a worldview in Eastern Europe and the resurgence of religious belief throughout many of those areas that had once been considered officially atheist. Yet it is now clear postatheism is not limited to the East; it is becoming a recognizable presence within Western culture. Atheism, once seen as Western culture's hot date with the future, is now seen as an embarrassing link with a largely discredited past.<sup>147</sup>

Michael Shermer muses, 'At the beginning of the twentieth century social scientists predicted that belief in God would decrease by the end of the century because of the secularization of society. In fact . . . the opposite has occurred . . . Not only is God not dead, as Nietzsche proclaimed, but he has never been more alive.'<sup>148</sup> A 2005 survey by *Free Inquiry* found that the marginalization of secularism was more pronounced in America than in Europe, and presciently concluded: 'the culture war for which battle lines are now being drawn may forge a new landscape for religion in American public life.'<sup>149</sup> Atheist philosopher Michael Martin's response to the survey anticipated 'that secularism will be on the defensive and even in a decline.'<sup>150</sup> Yet Martin held out the hope that this 'decline might well give birth to a resurgence of secularism', while warning that 'without continued effort on the part of dedicated secularists, this resurgence will not occur.'<sup>151</sup> Martin's hopes were about to be fulfilled . . .

### **Recommended Resources**

- William P. Alston, 'Religious Language and Verificationism', in Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (eds.), *The Rationality of Theism* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- James Kelly Clark (ed.), *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993).
- William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (eds.), *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2001).
- Antony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (London: Harper Collins, 2007).
- Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (London: Rider, 2004).
- Thomas V. Morris (ed.), *God and The Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Roy Abraham Varghese (ed.), *The Intellectuals Speak Out about God* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1984).

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- A.J. Ayer: Language, Truth, Logic and God (an excerpt from *Language, Truth and Logic*), [www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/ayer\\_metaphysics.html](http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/ayer_metaphysics.html).
- Michael D. Beaty, 'God Among the Philosophers', [www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=53](http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=53).
- James A. Beverly, 'Thinking Straighter: Why the world's most famous atheist now believes in God', [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/april/29.80.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/april/29.80.html).
- William Cash. 'Did atheist philosopher see God when he "died"?', [http://neardeath.home.comcast.net/religion/001\\_pages/02.html](http://neardeath.home.comcast.net/religion/001_pages/02.html).
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- Kelly James Clark, foreword to *Philosophers Who Believe*, [www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/writings/pwbintro.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/writings/pwbintro.htm).
- William Lane Craig, 'The Resurrection of Theism', [www.leaderu.com/truth/3truth01.html](http://www.leaderu.com/truth/3truth01.html).

- William Lane Craig, 'The Problem of Evil', [www.bethinking.org/resource.php?ID=60&TopicID=3&CategoryID=3](http://www.bethinking.org/resource.php?ID=60&TopicID=3&CategoryID=3).
- William Lane Craig, 'God is Not Dead Yet,' [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/july/13.22.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/july/13.22.html).
- Gary R. Habermas and Antony Flew, 'My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism: An Exclusive Interview with Former British Atheist Professor Antony Flew', [www.biola.edu/antonyflew/flew-inter-view.pdf](http://www.biola.edu/antonyflew/flew-inter-view.pdf).
- Antony Flew, 'Flew Speaks Out', [www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/intermediate/flew-speaks-out-professor-antony-flew-reviews-the-god-delusion.htm](http://www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/intermediate/flew-speaks-out-professor-antony-flew-reviews-the-god-delusion.htm).
- Douglas Groothuis, 'The Great Debate', [www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2008/004/12.39.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2008/004/12.39.html).
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- Daniel Hill, 'What's New in Philosophy of Religion?', [www.philosophynow.org/archive/articles/21hill.htm](http://www.philosophynow.org/archive/articles/21hill.htm).
- Alvin Plantinga, 'Spiritual Autobiography', [www.calvin.edu/125th/wolterst/p\\_bio.pdf](http://www.calvin.edu/125th/wolterst/p_bio.pdf).
- Quentin Smith, 'The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism', [www.philoonline.org/library/smith\\_4\\_2.htm](http://www.philoonline.org/library/smith_4_2.htm).
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*Audio*

- William Lane Craig, 'Furor Over Flew's *There Is A God*', [www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5887](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5887).
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William Lane Craig, 'Philosophy 03', [www.rfmedia.org/RF\\_audio\\_video/RF\\_podcast/Philosophy\\_03.mp3](http://www.rfmedia.org/RF_audio_video/RF_podcast/Philosophy_03.mp3).

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*Video*

Douglas Geivett, 'Problems of Evil', <http://hisdefense.org/LinkClick.aspx?link=http%3a%2f%2fhisdefense.org%2fvideo%2fGeivett+-+Problems+of+Evil.WMV&tabid=136&mid=954>.