

ANSELM'S ARGUMENT FOR THE BEING OF GOD—ITS HISTORY AND WHAT IT PROVES.

THE so-called ontological proof of the being of God is at first sight a very strange piece of theological dialectic, and it has gone through a curious history. Stated first by Anselm, it was generally rejected by the Schoolmen on grounds already pressed against it in Anselm's time by the monk Gaunilo. It was revived in a somewhat modified form by Descartes, and again attacked, first by Gassendi, and subsequently by Kant, on substantially the same grounds which had been alleged by Gaunilo. Finally, it was defended in a somewhat ambiguous way by Hegel, who maintained that it represents a valid process of thought under a form that conceals its real import and cogency. It may be useful to reconsider its history and meaning.

It is ostensibly an argument from the conception of God in our minds to His existence as an objective reality; and it is put by Anselm in regular syllogistic form. Scripture, he argues, has truly declared the man 'who hath said in his heart that there is no God,' to be a fool; for no one can deny God's existence without contradicting himself. He, like every one who uses the word God, must conceive Him as the greatest of beings. That, indeed, is a mere analytic judgement; for, unless we thought of a greatest of beings, we should not think of God at all. But this predicate 'greatest,' or 'that beyond which nothing greater can be conceived,' involves existence; for God would not be the greatest that can be conceived, if He were a mere idea, a mere subjective appearance, and not also an objective reality. If God were only an idea, we could think of something greater than God: of a Being, who was not merely in our thoughts, but also in existence.

To this reasoning, Gaunilo made the natural objection that we

cannot take the mere idea of a thing as proving its existence. We can argue, he asserts, from essence to essence, from existence to existence; but we cannot legitimately cross over from essence to existence. Otherwise, we could easily prove the reality of anything which we can set before us in thought. Think of an island in the ocean, which we may call a lost island because no one has ever been able to find it, an island of the blessed, richer, more fertile, more delightful than any that we know, an island perfect in every respect: must we not regard existence as one of the elements included in its perfection? May we not, then, argue that, as such an island existing would be more perfect than the mere thought of it, therefore such an island exists? The *salto mortale* from thought to existence might just as well be made in behalf of a perfect island as of a Being perfect in all respects, and it is as impossible in the one case as in the other. What Anselm really proves is that, if a being corresponding to our thought of the greatest being could otherwise be shown to exist, He would necessarily be self-subsistent, a being whose existence was derived from Himself.

The answer which Anselm makes to these objections is that there is an essential distinction between the idea of God and all other ideas; it is the one and only idea which overreaches the difference between thought and reality. 'Everything can be thought *not to be* except that which *is* supremely. In other words, all those things can be conceived not to be which have beginning or end or combination of parts—whatever, in short, is in time or place, and is not an absolute whole—while that alone cannot be thought not to be, in which there is neither beginning nor end nor combination of parts, and which no thought ever finds except as always and everywhere whole.' It appears, therefore, that by 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived,' Anselm means the Absolute, as a unity which is beyond all limitation and difference. And his contention is that we have a consciousness of an infinite Being, not merely in the sense of that which is beyond any greatness that may be given, but in the sense of an absolute totality in unity, which has nothing beyond it and can be limited by nothing but itself, and that such a consciousness cannot be conceived as a *mere* thought, which is a phenomenon of our subjectivity.

The defect, however, of this argument, as Anselm states it, is that it seems to start with the opposition of subject and object, as if it were an absolute opposition, in which there were mere ideas on one side and pure realities on the other ; and then goes on to bring in a consciousness of the unity which transcends this opposition as if *it* were one of these ideas. But if we hold to the opposition, we cannot make a bridge from thought to existence by means of the mere thought of existence. In other words, existence can neither in this, nor in any other case, be added on to thought by any extension of its content. For, even if the content added be that of the unity of thought and being, it cannot enable us to go beyond the form of thought itself, or pass over from it to the form of reality. To admit such a transition, we must assume that very unity we seek to prove ; and that is just what Anselm does. He assumes, in short, that an addition to the *content* of thought will make it more than thought, and will break through the opposition, which he started by assuming, between thought and reality. But if such a unity can be reached at all, it can only be by a reconsideration of the grounds upon which thought was opposed to reality, and cannot be smuggled in as part of the content of thought.

This point will become clearer if we follow the Cartesian reproduction of the argument. Descartes had laid down the principle that 'if we form no judgement except regarding objects that are clearly and distinctly represented to us by the understanding, we can never be deceived'; and in his *Fifth Meditation*, he goes on first to illustrate this by the mathematical relations of things, and then to apply it to the idea of God. 'I discover,' he says, 'in my mind innumerable ideas of objects, which cannot be esteemed pure negations, though they perhaps possess no reality beyond my thought, and which are not framed by me—although it may be in my power to think or not to think them—but have true and immutable natures of their own. So, for example, when I imagine a triangle, though there perhaps is not and never was in any place in the universe such a figure, it remains nevertheless true that this figure possesses a certain determinate nature, form, or essence, which is immutable and eternal and not framed by me nor in any degree dependent on my thought: as appears from the circumstance that various

properties of the triangle may be demonstrated ; for example, that its three angles are equal to two right angles, that its greatest side is subtended by its greatest angle, and the like ; which properties, whether I will or not, I clearly discern to belong to it—though I did not think of them at all beforehand, when for the first time I recognized a triangle as such—and which accordingly cannot be said to be invented by me.’ Then, after dwelling on the fact that in this way our clear and distinct apprehension of certain geometrical relations gives us true knowledge, he goes on to say, ‘But now, if from the very fact that I can draw from my thought the idea of an object, it follows that all that I clearly and distinctly recognize to pertain to that object, really pertains to it, may I not derive from this an argument for the being of God, and, indeed, a demonstrative proof of it? It is as certain that I find in me the idea of God as that I find in me the idea of any figure or number—the idea, that is, of a Being supremely perfect ; and I apprehend that an actual and eternal existence belongs to His nature no less clearly than I apprehend that all I can demonstrate of any figure or number veritably belongs to the nature of that figure or number. Hence, even though all the conclusions I have reached in the previous *Meditations* were proved to be invalid, the existence of God would pass with me for a truth at least as certain as I ever judged any of the truths of mathematics to be ; though, indeed, such an argument may not immediately seem to be self-evident, but rather to have much of the appearance of a sophism. For, as I am accustomed in all other cases to make a distinction between essence and existence, it seems natural for me to believe that the existence of God also is separate from His essence, and that I can conceive of God as not actually existing. But nevertheless, when I consider the matter more attentively, I see manifestly that the existence of God can no more be separated from His essence than the property of having its angles equal to two right angles can be separated from the essence of a triangle, or the idea of a mountain from that of a valley ; so that it is not less impossible to conceive of a God, that is, of a Being supremely perfect, to whom existence is wanting, or, in other words, of a God to whom a particular perfection is wanting, than to conceive of a mountain without a valley.

'But it will be said that, though I cannot conceive of a God without existence any more than of a mountain without a valley, yet, just as from the fact that I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley it does not follow that any mountain exists in the world, so likewise, though I conceive God as existing, it does not follow that God exists; for my thought imposes no necessity upon things. And just as I can imagine a winged horse, though there be no such creature, so I might perhaps attribute existence to God though no God existed. I answer that the cases are not analogous, and that there is a fallacy lurking under the objection. For from the fact that I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that any mountain or valley is in existence, but only that the mountain and the valley, whether they do or do not exist, are inseparable from one another. Whereas, on the other hand, from the fact that I cannot conceive God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and therefore that He exists; not, indeed, that my thought can cause it to be so or impose any necessity upon things, but contrariwise the necessity that is in the thing itself, i.e. the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to have this thought. For I am not at liberty to conceive a God without existence, i.e. a Being supremely perfect, who yet is without one perfection, as I am at liberty to conceive a horse with or without wings.'

Against this argument, Gassendi brought the old objection that we can only pass from thought to thought and from existence to existence, but not from thought to existence; or, as he otherwise puts it, we cannot enumerate among the perfections included in the content of the idea of God the form or act by which He exists. And this objection is taken up and urged still more forcibly by Kant, who asserts that the idea of a necessarily existing Being, a Being the very conception of whom involves existence, implies a kind of *μετάβασις ἐς ἄλλο γένος*. In all judgements of logical necessity we posit the predicate in reference to the subject, or as analytically contained in the idea of the subject; and therefore, if the notion of being is contained in any subject, we can produce it in the predicate. But we assert the predicate only on condition of the position of the subject of which it is predicated. We cannot, therefore,

deny the predicate if we admit the subject ; but nothing hinders us from denying them both together. So if God is posited, we may say that existence is necessarily one of his predicates, but we cannot say that it is necessary to posit God at all. To include the absolute position of the subject in the notion of the subject is like taking the 'is' of the copula, which merely indicates the relative or hypothetical position of the predicate, as if it expressed absolute position; it is to include in the thought of the subject the determination of it as existing and not merely as thought. But existence adds nothing to the *content* of a thought. There is no more in ten thousand actual than in ten thousand possible dollars. No doubt, there is a difference in their relation to me, when the one exists only in my thought and the other also in my purse ; but the difference is extraneous to the content of the conception. Existence cannot, therefore, be inferred *a priori* from conceptions alone ; it can be established only *a posteriori* by data of sense, which are determined by the conceptions of the understanding as part of the connexion of experience. But no such data can be got for the idea of God.

In all this we have only the old objection restated in terms of the Kantian philosophy. The argument, in all its different forms, seems to start with the opposition of thought and being, and then, by means of the special content of the idea of God, it attempts to make a bridge between thought and being ; but the bridge *ex hypothesi* can never reach the opposite side. Kant seems to get beyond this dualistic presupposition in so far as he shows that we determine objects as such through our thought ; but this conclusion he immediately qualifies by maintaining that the thought which apprehends the object is not pure thought, but thought as determining a given matter of sense ; and the object so reached is therefore only phenomenal. But for pure thought to apprehend objects, and objects which are not phenomenal but real, remains for Kant an impossibility.

Kant, however, as often, shows us the bottom of the difficulty and the way out of it, a way that was already indicated by Descartes when he said that the idea of God was not simply one idea among others which we *may* have, but that it is an idea which we *must* have, an idea which is presupposed in the

consciousness of self as in the consciousness of objects, and which therefore we cannot refuse to admit, if we assert the validity of self-consciousness or that of the consciousness of objects. This argument is stated by Descartes—not in immediate connexion with the ontological argument, but in an earlier part of the *Meditations*—where he says that we cannot be conscious of ourselves except in relation to a Being more complete than ourselves and who is indeed the absolute standard of completeness. 'It ought not to be imagined that we do not conceive the infinite by a true idea but only by the negation of that which is finite, as we comprehend rest and darkness by the negation of movement and light: since on the contrary I see evidently that there is more reality in the infinite than in the finite substance, and therefore that I have the idea of the infinite in me prior to the idea of the finite, i. e. that in me the idea of God is prior to the idea of myself: for how would it be possible that I should be conscious that I doubt or desire, i. e. that there is something wanting to me and that I am not all perfect, if I had not in me the idea of a more perfect being than myself by comparison with whom I am conscious of the defects of my own nature?' Descartes then goes on to maintain that we do not first posit the finite, and then by thinking away its limit come to the idea of the infinite, but that, contrariwise, the idea of the infinite is the positive basis of all thought of the finite. 'This idea,' he says, 'is quite clear and distinct; for all that my mind conceives clearly and distinctly of what is real and true and contains in it any perfection, is contained and comprised entirely in this idea. Nor is it any argument against this that I do not comprehend the infinite, and that there are in God an infinity of things which I cannot understand or in any way attain to by my thought. For it is of the nature of the infinite that I, who am finite and limited, cannot comprehend it. It suffices that I understand this well, and that all the things which I conceive clearly and in which I know that there is some perfection—and perhaps also a multitude of others which I do not know—are in God formally or eminently. This, I say, suffices to make the idea I have of Him the most clear and distinct of all those that are in me.'

The meaning of this is, obviously, that I as a determinate or

finite being am conscious of myself as a special modification or part of the infinite whole, and know myself as I know other finite things only as in it and related to it. In fact, Descartes goes on in the next *Meditation* to maintain that all knowledge of objects, and especially the knowledge of the self is reached by a negative determination of the absolute or infinite Being, who alone is conceived as having a purely positive reality and therefore a purely affirmative determination. 'There is present to my thought not only a real and positive idea of God, as of a Being supremely perfect; but also, so to speak, a certain negative idea of nothingness, i. e. of that which is infinitely removed from every kind of perfection: and thus I am a mean between God and nothingness. In other words, there is nothing to be found in me which can bring me into error, in so far as the Supreme Being has produced me: but if I consider myself as participating in some fashion in nothingness or not-being, i. e. in so far as I am not myself the Supreme Being but am in many things defective, I find myself exposed to an infinity of wants: so that I ought not to be astonished if I am deceived. And thus I know that error is not something real which depends on God, but is solely a defect.'

There is in this logic a mixture of truth and error: truth, in so far as Descartes corrects the mistake which he himself had made in the first instance, in treating self-consciousness as the primary principle of knowledge, and failing to recognize that the consciousness of self is but one element in our thought, which can be distinguished but not separated from the other elements of which we are conscious; but error, in so far as this distinction is taken as merely negative or privative, and not as involving any positive relation of the elements distinguished. The effect of this doctrine is seen at once in Spinoza, with whom the removal of all determinations, viewed as merely negative, carries us back to the sole reality of an infinite substance which yet is absolutely undeterminate. It is only by partial unfaithfulness to this view that Spinoza is able to develop any distinction of attributes and modes within his absolute substance. The truth, however, which underlies this whole movement of thought from Descartes to Spinoza is one which was partly hidden from Descartes himself, and altogether

hidden from the individualistic philosophy of the next generation, viz. that the rational individual as such cannot be conscious of himself except in distinction from, and relation to, other things and beings, and must therefore know himself and all other things and beings as forming parts of one whole, one intelligible universe. Or, to put it more generally, he is a being who can know himself, as he can know all particular objects, only through the universal. This is, as we have seen, what is expressed by Descartes when he declares that the consciousness of God is prior to the consciousness of self, though unfortunately he expresses this truth in such a way that the self tends to disappear in God. Still the general truth, that the consciousness of God is not separable from but presupposed in the consciousness of self, is independent of this misconception. And it leads to a new view of the ontological argument. The thought of God ceases to be regarded simply as one among many other thoughts we *may* have, and becomes the idea of the unity which is presupposed in all our consciousness of the particular existence either of ourselves or of anything else, an idea which in some form or other we *must* have. The argument, therefore, according to this interpretation of it, is not from an idea viewed as a subjective state of the individual mind to an object corresponding to it; but rather the idea of God, by its priority to all distinction of objectivity and subjectivity, is to be regarded as at once the principle of being and of knowledge, and therefore at once objective and subjective. For, if we know all things, and especially the subject as opposed to the object, and the object as opposed to the subject, by the differentiation of a presupposed unity, it becomes absurd to treat this presupposed unity as itself a special phase of the subject. This, no doubt, alters the form of the argument—as an argument from an idea in our minds to something out of our minds, an argument presupposing the absoluteness of the very distinction which by means of the idea of God it seeks to reduce to something relative, and therefore makes the conclusion the direct negation of the premises. Rather, we are now bound to say, the division of subject and object, as a division in our consciousness, is possible only on the presupposition of a unity which is beyond the division and which manifests itself in it.

The result of this discussion, then, seems to be that we cannot give a true meaning to the ontological argument except by regarding it not as starting from thought as a subjective state in order to reach the objective, but as starting from a consciousness that, as all distinctions are relative, the ultimate principle of being and knowing must be a unity which underlies, comprehends, and is manifested in all forms of both. The true ontological argument is, therefore, an argument that begins with the idea of God, or perhaps at this stage we should rather say of the Absolute, as the unity of 'all thinking things, all objects of all thought,' and tries to unfold all the differences of subject and object, and all other differences, as subordinate to this unity.

And this at once points out the relation of the ontological argument to the other traditional arguments for the Being of God. *They* represent the regress from the finite as such to the infinite; *it* represents the return from the infinite to the finite: and either class of argument is imperfect without the other.

The argument *a contingentia mundi* and the design argument are different stages in the process of thought by which the mind rises from the finite to the infinite. Both of them in their syllogistic form are liable to the objection that they put into the conclusion more than is in the premises. But almost every one has now become aware that the strict syllogistic form does not adequately represent the real process of inference. It is far more truly represented, as Descartes tends to represent it, as a movement of thought in which the premises furnish merely a starting point which is transformed and superseded by the conclusion. Thus at first we take the finite as an absolute reality. But, so taken, it contradicts itself and points to the infinite as its truth. It might, indeed, be maintained that this is the true description of the process of reasoning or inference in all cases in which there is any real advance of thought, and not a mere analytical restatement of what is already known. The movement of thought is never a real advance, unless it brings the premises together in a unity which transforms them and gives them a new meaning. And thus, stating it epigrammatically, we might say that in every fruitful inference the conclusion contradicts the premises; though this would only be one half of the truth, for it must also reinstate them in a new form. Be

this however as it may, it is evident that the case is so here, or, in other words, that the real meaning of the argument *a contingentia mundi* is that the particular existences which we at first take as self-subsistent realities are discovered to be finite and contingent, and are therefore seen to exist only in and through the infinite. And, again, the real meaning of the design argument is that the particular ends of finite existence, which at first seemed to be ends in themselves, are recognized to be only elements in, or phases of, the absolute good. On the other hand, the ontological argument in its true meaning must be taken as just the opposite counterpart of these, as expressing the movement of thought from the infinite to the finite, the movement in which the infinite or absolute manifests itself to be no mere Spinozistic substance or *ἀπειρον* in which all definite existence is lost—the lion's den before which all the footsteps are directed inwards and none outwards—but essentially a living principle, a principle of knowing and being, which reveals itself in the natural and spiritual world, in the existence of finite objects and in the consciousness of finite subjects, yet does not in all this differentiation lose itself or its unity. Hence it may be regarded as the peculiarly Christian argument, the process of thought corresponding to the idea of the *λόγος* or self-revealing nature of God. From this point of view, what we have in the argument of Anselm is only an example of that degeneration of speculative ideas into an external ratiocinative form, of which the Scholastic philosophy gives us so many instances, which in fact might be said to be the *πρώτον ψεῦδος* of Scholasticism. This becomes still clearer when we observe that Anselm, in answering the objections of Gaunilo, is obliged to use language about the difference of the idea of God from other ideas, which implies that it is nothing else than that consciousness of the whole to which we must carry back all determination of the parts; and further that in Descartes we have a still more distinct movement in the same direction, towards the restoration of the speculative meaning of the idea. The Cartesian view, therefore, as we have seen, led immediately to the Pantheism of Spinoza, which, whatever its defects, first distinctly makes the unity of all things the presupposition and starting point from which alone we can reach a true determination of all particular and finite existence, whether natural or spiritual.

Let me put this in another form. The essential error of Scholastic philosophy is, that in it the analytic spirit is not controlled by the consciousness that every distinction is also a relation and therefore implies a unity beyond it. The consequence is that it admits—or at least consciously admits—no synthetic movement of thought, no movement that goes beyond the notions or beliefs with which we start, or crosses the boundary of any distinctions we have once made. Its thought is ruled by the principle of identity, in the sense in which that principle is understood by formal logic. Applied to the opposition of thought and reality, this means that we cannot in our argument cross from the one to the other, but must, as Gaunilo said, move only from thought to thought, from existence to existence, since the one is not analytically contained in the other, and there is no logical possibility of reaching any conclusion not analytically contained in the premises.

To this, as we saw, Anselm has no answer, except that *in this one case* thought analytically contains existence, i.e. *in this one case* the gulf between the two has been already crossed. But this means that in the very idea of God it is involved that the distinction is not absolute, and that the fact that we have that idea shows that for us there is a unity beyond the distinction, though revealing itself in it. But if this be so, the appearance of a movement from thought to existence, which was essential to the argument, is seen to be illusive, and what we really have is a recognition that in the distinction between thought and existence their ultimate unity is still presupposed. This is concealed from Anselm by the fact that he does not yet perceive, what Descartes perceived, the necessity of the idea of God and its priority to the consciousness of self; or, in other words, by the external way in which he conceived of the relations of God, the world and the self. It was natural, therefore, that St. Thomas, adhering as he did to the analytic conception of logic, should reject Anselm's *tour de force*. But in so doing, he was simply rejecting the Christian idea of God, or at least, refusing to admit it except as an unintelligible mystery.

The moment we realize what is the $\delta\delta\delta\delta\ \delta\upsilon\omega$ and the $\delta\delta\delta\delta\ \kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega$ to which the arguments for the being of God really point,—that they are the imperfect expression, on the one hand, of the process

of thought that carries us from the presupposition of finite existence in all its different forms, through the self-contradiction of such existence when taken as absolute and independent, to the idea of the infinite unity involved in it; and, on the other hand, of the process by which this unity defines itself or manifests what it is in all the forms of the finite, natural and spiritual, as elements in one world and one world-process,—we see that the argument for the being of God can be nothing else than the sketch of a complete philosophy. It is, in the very essence of it, absurd to take God as one Being among others of whose existence you can have a distinct proof, just as the proof of the existence of Caesar is distinct from the proof of the existence of Cromwell. In the first place to say *that* God *is*, is to say that there is a principle of unity without relation to which we cannot finally comprehend anything. It is to say that we can find no standing ground for thought, no criterion of truth or of reality, except in such a principle. And, in the second place, to show *what* God is, is to realize what is the nature of this unity that we have proved. And there is no way to do this except to follow and try to understand the whole process of its manifestation in nature and spirit, till, rejecting all partial conceptions, we arrive at our final conception of what the principle of such a world-process must be. We might, therefore, say that the argument for the being of God can be nothing but the synthesis of the whole of knowledge, the gathering up by philosophy of the whole content of the sciences in their unity. There are, in fact, no *arguments* for the being of God; for all the sciences are steps in the one argument by which we come to understand more or less adequately the unity of the system of the world through all its differences. Or, to put it more in the language of religion, we might say that the argument for the being of God has two steps: one in which we discover the nothingness of the finite apart from the infinite, the other in which we realize how the infinite reveals itself in nature and in and to the spirit of man.

The first of these steps,—I may add to preclude a possible misunderstanding,—is independent of any particular idea of God. It does not involve Pantheism, unless it is Pantheism to say that there is no absolute reality in anything apart from the

whole and its principle; nor does it involve any spiritual or personal conception of that principle; for that cannot be attained apart from a consideration of the whole process in which it is manifested. Obviously we can legitimately reach either of these views of God only by a consideration of the whole connexion of nature and spirit, and of the movement of evolution in which they manifest what *they* are, and what their principle therefore must be. What, so far, we have reached is only that there is such a unity, and that it is essentially self-revealing: and we can find *what* it is only from a consideration of the nature and method of its self-revelation; or, in other words, from the way in which we are obliged to think the world, when we think of it as a unity in all its being and process. For, as we think of the universe, we are obliged to think of its principle.

I may perhaps be asked whether this is Hegelianism? I would be inclined to answer that to say so would be to give Hegel, or any man, too much credit. It is rather the outcome of the whole idealistic movement of thought, and if it is to be attached to any name at all more than another, it would be to that of Plato. Hegel's philosophy is only the most persistent modern attempt to realize it in both its aspects; an attempt which has many obvious imperfections. Indeed, we may fairly say that such an attempt can never be completely successful, since the complete realization of it would mean nothing less than the consummation of philosophy. In Hegel's first work, *The Phaenomenology of Spirit*, he tried to show that it is impossible to stop short of the unity, the absolute unity of all things, in seeking their fundamental truth or reality. That book is a continuous refutation of one dualistic point of view after another, and its aim is—to state the matter concisely—to make us see that no distinctions are absolute. The result it aims at is a consciousness of the unity underlying all things in its simplest form, as the negation of all absolute distinctions. This view, or rather we should say, this point of view, Hegel always maintained to be the point of view essential to philosophy, and therefore it was that he said that 'to be a Spinozist was the beginning of true speculation.' 'The soul,' he declared, 'when it begins to philosophize, must first of all bathe in this pure ether of the one substance, in which all that it had previously held

for true is submerged. This negation of all that is particular, to which every philosopher must have attained, is the liberation of the spirit and the absolute basis of its life.' In other words, as the effort of reason is essentially to see things from the centre and not from some point on the circumference; as, in Plato's language, its aim is necessarily to be a 'spectator of all time and existence'; philosophy, the purest expression of reason, must begin, like religion, by rising above the special forms of finite existence, and doing away with the conception that any of their differences is absolute. But this free ether in which all determination has for the moment dissipated itself is, Hegel maintains, just the atmosphere in which all forms of being will reappear in their due relation and process as moving towards each other and the whole. And philosophy is, therefore, just the attempt to describe the process of the finite without losing sight of the whole in the parts. It is the attempt to realize what was already sketched out by Plato as the development of all truth out of, or in consistency with, the idea of good, which is above the special determinations of being and knowing and is the source of them both.

We conclude, then, that the Anselmic argument for the being of God is the Scholastic distortion of an idea which was first presented in the Platonic philosophy, which was then hindered of its legitimate development, partly by the necessary imperfection of his knowledge of nature and history, and partly by the dualistic strain which was characteristic of ancient idealism; which reappeared in a more adequate form in the Christian doctrine of the *λόγος*, involving as it does, on the one hand, the conception of the self-revealing nature of God, and, on the other hand, the idea that the differences and defects, the contradictions and evils, of the finite are all relative and not absolute, and may ultimately be regarded as steps in the manifestation of the absolute good; and which, after it had been rejected in the inadequate form given to it by Anselm, re-emerged at the dawn of modern philosophy, and in the course of its development has found a new and more adequate interpretation. In this interpretation the argument is seen to be the converse of what it was first presented as being. It is not the proof of God from the thought of Him; but, starting with the presupposition that our

minds are necessarily carried back to the consciousness of Him as the absolute unity to which all things must be referred, it is the proof that that unity must be conceived as a spiritual principle, not in the narrow sense in which that is sometimes opposed to a natural principle, but in the sense that only in spirit can the original unity return to itself through all the differences of the finite.

Another point may be added with reference to a view that has recently been maintained by some eminent writers, who follow Lotze in holding that, as our intelligence is discursive and not intuitive, the unity of all things is essentially beyond its grasp ; and that therefore our knowledge must end in the recognition of a limit in itself, which at the same time it can transcend so far as to recognize that there *is* an absolute unity which it cannot further know. I cannot enter now upon the discussion of this view, which seems to me to involve a contradictory combination of belief and unbelief in the possibility of our knowing the Absolute. I shall content myself with indicating what I think the weakness of it. It seems to me to separate what in our thinking is never really separated, the intuitive and the discursive, or, as we might phrase it, the static and dynamic aspects of our intelligence. Our intelligence is always, as I conceive it, an *Anschauender Verstand*, discursive and intuitive at once: it always involves a discernment of distinctions and a movement by relation between the elements so distinguished ; and always also, this movement has for its conscious or unconscious presupposition the unity of the whole within which the distinguished parts, things or beings, are contained. Hence if we talk of discursive or intuitive thought, we are talking not of what Spinoza calls *res completæ*, of real independent entities, but of abstractions, of things that could not exist by themselves but only as elements in a whole ; and indeed in the present case in a whole which has nothing beyond it from which it can be distinguished, or to which it can be related. Hence also the doctrine of Malebranche that 'we see all things in God' is capable of a true interpretation, and it is literally the fact that as rational beings we 'live and move and have our being' in God. Unfortunately such language is capable of being misunderstood, and, indeed,—when we take it in connexion with

other views of the Cartesian school to which I have referred,— it directly leads to the Pantheistic conclusion that nothing is or is known but God, a God in whom the reality of the finite world is entirely lost. In this way the intuitive view of intelligence would be fatal to the discursive, as with Lotze the discursive is fatal to the intuitive view of it. But we cannot reduce our intelligence to either, without depriving it of its essential nature, and producing a contradiction as great as if we supposed absolute motion to exist without rest or absolute rest without motion in the material world. Our thought, by the very fact that it is the expression of the universal activity of intelligence, rests upon and presupposes the consciousness of the whole: it is thus *voûs*, reason, the intuition of the Absolute. But, on the other hand, as it always moves from finite to finite, from part to part, distinguishing and relating, it is equally *διάνοια*, understanding, the discourse of reason. And, though one of these aspects may be more prominent than the other in particular cases, it is impossible that they should ever be divided. To use a phrase borrowed from Kant, reason without understanding would be 'blind'; it would be a blank gaze at the whole as an undifferentiated unity, an immersion in the whole in which nothing particular could be distinguished, a mystic intuition of being in which thought had expired. And understanding without reason would be 'empty': it would be a futile play of ratiocination 'about it and about it,' a restless movement from part to part, without any insight into their real meaning or connexion as elements of one whole. It would be the formal inference of the Scholastic which, with all its process and activity, never gets any deeper into the subject it discusses. It is perhaps needless to say that no actual Mystic or Scholastic ever quite reaches the extreme to which they severally approximate.

E. CAIRD.