

Concerning Proofs of God

by

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Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 7, No. 1. (Winter, 1973) © World Wisdom, Inc.
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Editor's note: The following is from an updated translation of the essay, approved by the estate of Frithjof Schuon.

The classical proofs of God seem suspended between two extremes lying beyond their reach—one in an upward and the other in a downward direction, or one through its richness and the other its poverty—namely: direct intellection and materialistic rationalism; there is nonetheless a sufficiently ample area between these two positions to justify the existence of arguments that aim to set forth evidence for the divine Being in the language of logic. No doubt one can immediately accept the supernatural and have no need of such proofs, *Deo juvante*, but it shows a lack of sense of proportion and a certain temerity—hardly compatible with true certainty and rather uncharitable toward the needs of others—to look down upon these proofs as if they were valueless in themselves and could have no possible usefulness; such an attitude would in fact be strangely presumptuous, especially since a logical demonstration in favor of the Eternal and of our own final ends always offers some insight and “consolation”,¹ even for those who already possess certainty through intellection or grace. Besides, a man’s spiritual behavior depends not only upon his conviction but also upon its perspicacity and depth.

To be sure, one must not underestimate the possibility of a spontaneous intuition: if authentic, it necessarily contains in an infused manner the certainty transmitted by the proofs of God or the supernatural; but under no circumstances is it acceptable for lukewarm people to claim that they are themselves *de jure* above syllogisms when there are so many who have lost their faith while imagining they could do without any sort of “scholasticism”. This shows that below a certain spiritual level—which it would be most imprudent to attribute to oneself *a priori*—one should beware, not exactly of intuitive faith as such, but of its seeming imperviousness to every test, for faith can be effective only insofar as it is sheltered *de facto* from temptations. Obviously doctrinal arguments

¹ Or some “reassurance” (*itmi'nān*), as Muslims would say; Muslims in fact bestow a canonical importance on the proofs of God, and knowledge of them—in the opinion of some—is even obligatory. Thus Fudali declares, “One is a believer (*mu'min*) only if one knows each of the fifty dogmas [nine of which concern the Prophet] with its particular proof”; this is an exaggeration, but not without its point.

do not constitute a complete safeguard for every intelligence or will, but this is not the question at issue, for neither do religions save those who reject them; what matters is that these arguments have their own value and constitute by their own nature a possible support, which is infallible from the intellectual or purely logical point of view; and *pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*.

In order to clarify the function of metaphysical proof, it is necessary to begin with the idea that human intelligence coincides in its essence with certainty of the Absolute; if this does not appear self-evident to the majority of our contemporaries, it is because an awareness of “accidents” has stifled the intuitive awareness of “Substance”, and from this has come an intelligence that is systematically superficial, fixed upon a fragmentary reality. If anyone objects that the innateness of metaphysical ideas—assuming this is admitted—does not prove the reality of the content of the ideas, we reply that such an opinion is equivalent to the destruction of the very notion of intelligence and that, were it true, our intelligence could never prove anything at all; to speak of intelligence is to speak of innateness, for innateness is at the root of every intellectual and mental operation: man is obviously incapable of “starting from zero” since zero is nonexistent. The optic nerve cannot be replaced with some external light, and with all the more reason one cannot have a substitute for the Self or God, from whom are derived the notions inherent in the human spirit.

It is in light of these axioms that one should approach the question of the proofs of God; such proofs, far from being apologetic aids alone, can serve as keys for restoring to intelligence its characteristic and integral nature. First of all, however, it is necessary to respond to a curious objection put forward by rationalists, even though it has already been mentioned elsewhere in this book. The objection is this: whoever asserts that “God exists” is under an obligation to prove it, whereas the skeptic is in no way obliged to prove the contrary since—so it seems—only he who makes an affirmation owes his critics a proof, while he who denies it is under no such obligation; the skeptic therefore has a right to reject the “existence” of God without being required in his turn to prove the “nonexistence” of God. Now this line of reasoning is completely arbitrary, and for the following reason: a man who finds himself unable to verify a statement undoubtedly has the right not to accept it as certain or probable, but he has by no means the logical right to reject it without providing valid reasons for doing so. It is not difficult to discover the basis of this objection: it starts with the preconceived notion that the affirmation of God is something “extraordinary” whereas the denial of God is “normal”; the skeptic obviously begins by thinking that the normal man is the atheist, and from this he deduces a kind of one-way jurisprudence.

In the spiritual order a proof is of assistance only to the man who wishes to understand and who, because of this wish, has in some measure understood already; it is of no practical use to one who, deep in his heart, does not want to change his position and

whose philosophy merely expresses this desire. Some people suppose that it is up to religion to prove itself in the face of the utmost ill will—that “religion is made for man”,² that it must therefore adapt itself to his needs, and that through its failure to do so it has become “bankrupt”; one might as well say that the alphabet has become bankrupt in a class where the pupils are determined not to learn it; with this kind of “infralagic” one could declare that the law is made for honest people who are pleased to conform to it and that a new law is required for others, a law “adapted” to the needs of their maliciousness and “rejuvenated” in conformity with their propensity for crime.

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To be able to accept the ontological proof of God, which deduces the existence of an objective reality from an innate concept corresponding to it, one must begin by understanding that truth does not depend on reasoning—obviously truth is not created by reason³—but that it reveals itself or becomes explicit thanks to the key provided by the mental operation; in every act of assent by the Intellect there is an element that escapes the thinking process rather as light and color elude the grasp of geometry, which can nonetheless symbolize them indirectly and remotely. There is no such thing as “pure proof”, for every proof presupposes knowledge of certain data; the ontological proof—formulated in particular by Saint Augustine and Saint Anselm⁴—carries weight for the person who already has at his disposal some initial certainties, but it has no effect upon the willfully and systematically superficial mind. Such a mind no longer understands the profound nature of causality; it regards intelligence as proceeding not from the outward toward the inward but from the inward toward the outward, until it forgets the very reason understanding exists.

As is well known, those who belittle the ontological argument claim that the existence of a notion does not necessarily involve the objective existence of the content of the notion; the answer to this is that it all depends on the nature of the notion in question, for what is plausible in the case of a notion relating to a fact is by no means so in the case of a notion relating to a principle. Some will no doubt point out that Buddhism

² Which is false if one does not immediately add that man is made for religion; the falsity is in the isolation of the proposition. Religion is made for man insofar as it must be accessible to him according to the measure of his goodwill—and not regardless of it since man is free—and man is made for religion insofar as it represents the sufficient reason for human existence.

³ “Only thought can produce that which has the right to be acknowledged as Being,” one of the pioneers of post-Kantian totalitarian rationalism has dared to say.

⁴ Some of the Scholastic philosophers were too Aristotelian to accept the usefulness of the ontological proof; they thought that reason leads to a certainty that is in some way new rather than to Platonic “recollection”.

proves that the notion of God has nothing fundamental about it and that one can very well dispense with it in both metaphysics and spirituality; they would be right if Buddhists did not possess the idea of the Absolute or of transcendence, or of immanent Justice with its complement, Mercy; this is all that is needed to show that Buddhism, though it does not possess the word for God—or not our word—nonetheless possesses the reality itself.

* * *

The cosmological proof of God, which is found in Aristotle as well as in Plato⁵ and which consists in inferring the existence of a transcendent, positive, and infinite Cause from the existence of the world,⁶ finds no greater favor in the eyes of those who deny the supernatural; according to them the notion of God merely compensates for our ignorance of causes; this is a gratuitous argument if ever there was one, for the cosmological proof implies a profound knowledge of causality and not a purely logical and abstract assumption. If we know what integral causality is—namely, the “vertical” and “descending” projection of a possibility through the various degrees of existence—then we can conceive the First Cause; otherwise we cannot. Here again we observe that the objection results from ignoring what is implicit: rationalists forget that at the level in question “proof” is a key or symbol, a means of drawing back a veil rather than of giving light; it is not by itself a leap out of ignorance and into knowledge. The principal argument “indicates” rather than “proves”; it cannot be anything more than a guideline or *aide-mémoire*, for it is impossible to prove the Absolute outside itself. If to “prove” means to know something only by virtue of a particular mental stratagem—without which one would necessarily remain in ignorance—then there are no possible “proofs of God”, and this explains moreover why one can do without them in symbolist and contemplative metaphysics.

Divine causality may be said to have two dimensions, one relating to the static nature of things, the other to their destinies: God is at once the cause of perfections and the cause of their ultimate limit; He makes the sun shine but also causes it to set, both phenomena being proofs of God.

This divine causality implies the homogeneity of the Universe, which brings us back to Substance, the divine fabric by virtue of which things are in God and God is in things with a kind of discontinuous continuity, if such a paradoxical ellipsis is permitted. This notion of Substance furnishes the key to eschatological mysteries such as the Last

⁵ In Islam all the proofs of God—which, according to certain authorities, form a part of faith (*imān*)—are basically developments of the cosmological argument.

⁶ When the word “exist” is applied either explicitly or implicitly to the divine Principle, it has only a provisional logical function and means “to be real”.

Judgment and the resurrection of the body: formal—hence both material and animic—Existence is like a desiccated substance that has become too compressed, and the final coming of God is comparable to rain, which causes seeds to germinate;⁷ Essence turns back toward form, Substance toward accident, the Center toward the periphery, Life toward death; the Inward vivifies the outward and resurrects the kernels of which we are composed—products on the one hand of creation but also, secondarily, of our own attitudes and actions. To speak in a metaphysically more adequate manner—although in terms further removed from the terrestrial aspect of things—it could be said that the outward flows back toward the Inward:⁸ *Ātmā* “breathes”, creation is renewed and expands, the divine proximity causes bodies to be reborn and gives them the forms that belong to them according to the measures of heaven, universal desiccation calling down the “blessed rain”; there can be no resurrection “unless a corn of wheat die”. All the seemingly senseless enigmas of the traditional eschatologies are explained in part—for nothing of this order ever gives up its whole secret—by the homogeneity of Substance, the divine *Māyā* or *Prakṛiti*, and by the rhythms proper to it, rhythms prefigured in the very nature of the relationship between the Principle and its manifestation. Human standards are shattered; divine standards endure.

According to the Koran all natural processes, such as the growth of creatures or the alternation of day and night, are “signs” or proofs of God “for those endowed with understanding”; the cosmological proof is combined with the teleological proof, which is founded not simply upon the existence of things but upon the inward order of creation, hence upon the immanent forethought governing it.

* * *

No proof can be founded on a void: those who dismiss the teleological proof of Socrates—and the moral proof related to it—should begin by finding out what universal harmony really implies and what human virtue is in its deepest meaning; since they know nothing of this,⁹ whether from a lack of doctrinal knowledge or a lack of intellectual intuition, the proofs founded upon universal order and the virtues remain inaccessible to them; this ignorance is no excuse, however, since it springs from a willful perversion of the spirit. Skepticism and bitterness have nothing spontaneous about them; they are the

⁷ On this subject the Koran says: “And We send down from the sky blessed water whereby We give growth unto gardens and the grain of harvest. . . . And We give life thereby to a land that is dead; so will be the resurrection” (*Sūrah Qāf*, 9, 11).

⁸ “We will bring them together,” says the Koran, or “to Us is the returning”, which indicates the flowing back of the periphery toward the Center.

⁹ As is proved *ad nauseam* by the “pessimism”—or “dysteleology”—of Schopenhauer, Haeckel, and the existentialists.

result of a supersaturated and deviant civilization—of a “culture” that sets itself up as “art for art’s sake”—and they therefore presuppose a whole jungle of detours between man and the Real.

The teleological proof of God is supported, for example, by the extraordinary combination of conditions that make life on earth possible; another demonstration results from the biological homogeneity of the organic world and the equilibrium between species, an equilibrium derived from this homogeneity precisely. And this leads us to the Hindu myth of the primordial sacrifice of *Purusha*: all living beings issue from the sacrificed members of the celestial and “prematerial” body, and from this arises both the differences between creatures and the equilibrium of creation. *Purusha* contains all possibilities: luminous and dark, fiery and cold, violent and peaceful; from these comes the opposition between certain species in the world, an opposition—between carnivores and ruminants, for example—corresponding nonetheless to a biological equilibrium, which cannot be explained apart from the existence of an underlying unity. Man can upset this balance—at least abnormally—and he does this by means of his machines and serums, in short by all those inroads into nature that come about through the acquisitions and misdeeds of modern civilization; this does not prove that the teleological proofs lack validity but on the contrary that man has something of the divine about him, and this something—which in the preceding example is manifested in an evil form—shows that man is in reality an “exceptional” being, that his position is central because he is situated beneath the divine axis, and that his final end can therefore be found only beyond the material world. Man is made for what he is able to conceive; the very ideas of absoluteness and transcendence prove both his spiritual nature and the supra-terrestrial character of his destiny.

The teleological proof does not save believers who are not metaphysically minded from the difficulty posed for them by an awareness of the sufferings of this world: the weakness is not in the proof, which is perfect in its order and which no believer can take exception to; it is rooted instead in a superficiality of understanding, which is all too often the result of simple negligence or mental laziness. Some believers appeal to mystery and claim that our reason is inadequate to explain the imperfections present in creation, but this is entirely without justification, for in fact there is nothing incomprehensible or ineffable here; the fissures of the world cannot but exist since the world is not God and since this difference or distance cannot fail to be manifested in varying degrees in the very flesh of creation; even Paradise could not be without the serpent. Atheistic rationalists respond to the religious argument based on the insufficiency of reason by saying that if this were true it would simply prove that our reason is also absurd since it falls short of its goal. Setting aside the fact that *ratio*, if truly inspired, can reach much further than some theologians suppose, it is nevertheless not its aim to storm the true mysteries, so that the rationalist objection in any case misses the mark, reason having no

more than a provisional function, at least as far as the supernatural is concerned; it is in any case far from being the whole of intelligence. Marked as he is by the fall, man needs to proceed in a somewhat roundabout way in order to activate intellectual “recollection”; to be more precise, he must exteriorize for the sake of interiorization: to become wholly what it is or to become aware of its innate content, intelligence has to make detours through more outward modalities.

The teleological proof also embraces the “aesthetic” proof—in the profoundest sense of the term. In this form it is perhaps even less accessible than in its cosmological or moral forms, for to be sensitive to the metaphysical transparency of beauty, to the radiation of forms and sounds, is to possess already—as did Rumi and Ramakrishna—a visual and auditive intuition capable of ascending through phenomena to the essences and eternal melodies.

In the context of this particular aspect of the teleological proof, let us note that the modern world has been unique among civilizations in creating—on the foundations of Greece!—a world in which ugliness and triviality are the order of the day and are shamelessly put forward as the “genuine” and “real”; beauty and outward dignity are consigned to the sphere of dreams, luxuries, and playthings, whence the reproach associated with the words “poetic”, “picturesque”, “romantic”, and “exotic”. There is no such thing as chance, and the significance of this strange phenomenon is that it eliminates a natural argument in favor of God while at the same time eliminating the human capacity to be responsive to the argument. We would note in this connection the sharp distinction that is made between the “romantic” side of traditional civilizations and their “real” side, namely their misery; we would not dream of denying that such misery exists—it is in any case impossible that it should not—but to attribute “reality” to it, and to it alone, is quite simply diabolical. The devil indeed sees creation in a shattered or distorting mirror, and he always reduces the essential, which is the symbol and which has the quality of beauty, to the level of some accidental infirmity; for him man is the body under its aspect of misery, and the world is impure, cruel, and absurd; beyond that there is nothing else: proportions and compensations do not count, nothing has any sense in it, everything is a kind of senseless play of chance, and only those who believe this to be true are accounted intelligent and honest. This way of seeing and feeling things is totally opposed to the nobility of soul presupposed by the teleological argument, which shows once again that every proof calls for a subjective qualification, not of an exceptional kind but simply normal according to the criteria of Heaven.

* * *

There remains the experimental or mystical proof of God. While one must admit that

from a strictly logical standpoint and in the absence of doctrine it proves nothing to anyone who has not undergone the unitive experience, there is nonetheless no justification for concluding that it must be false simply because it is incommunicable; this was the error of Kant, who went so far as to give the name “theurgy” to what is simply a direct experience of the divine Substance. The mystical proof of the Divinity belongs to the order of extrinsic arguments and carries all the weight of these arguments: for the unanimous witness of the sages and saints—throughout the world and down the ages—is a sign or criterion that no man of good faith can belittle, unless he chooses to think that the human species has neither intelligence nor dignity; and if this were so, if truth had never been within its grasp, then it could not hope to discover truth *in extremis*. The idea of the absurdity of both the world and man, supposing it true, would remain forever inaccessible to us; if modern man is so intelligent, ancient man cannot have been so stupid. Much more is implied in this modest reflection than perhaps appears at first sight.

Before setting the mystical or experimental proof aside as unacceptable, one should therefore not forget to ask what kind of men have invoked it; there is no comparison between the intellectual and moral worth of the greatest of the contemplatives and the absurdity that their illusion would imply were it nothing but that. If we have to choose between some Encyclopedist and Jesus, it is Jesus whom we choose; of course we would also choose some infinitely lesser figure, but we cannot fail to choose the side on which Jesus is found.

In connection with the mystical proof and in view of the assurance displayed by those who deny the supernatural—and who deny that others, whose principles of certainty completely elude them, have any right to a similar assurance—let us emphasize the following: the fact that a contemplative may find it impossible to furnish proof of his knowledge no more proves the nonexistence of the knowledge than the spiritual unawareness of the rationalist annuls the falseness of his denials; as we have already remarked, the fact that a madman does not know he is mad obviously does not prove he is not so, just as the fact that a man of sound mind cannot prove his sanity to madmen in no way proves his mind to be unsound; these are practically truisms, but their significance is too often missed by philosophers—as well as by men without their pretensions.

It has been claimed that a prophet has no possible proof of the authenticity and truth of the revelations he receives; this merely shows an ignorance of the criteria that the gift of prophecy itself implies, and it amounts in practice to saying that no proof of anything is possible since every argument can be invalidated verbally by some sort of sophistry. Those who maintain that nothing can confer absolute certainty on a celestial Messenger nonetheless do not require proof of their own conviction that they are not dreaming when they are awake and when their own interests are at stake; it is obviously possible to say in theory that—strictly speaking—no such proof exists, but it is impossible to deny that the conviction exists and that no one ever questions it in his own case.

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Modern science denies in practice or in principle all that is really fundamental, and thus it rejects the “one thing needful”;¹⁰ it is therefore like a planimetry, having no notion of other directions; it shuts itself up entirely in physical reality—or unreality—and there it accumulates an enormous mass of information while at the same time committing itself to ever more complicated conjectures. Beginning with the illusion that nature will eventually yield its ultimate secret and allow itself to be reduced to a mathematical formula, this Promethean science repeatedly collides with enigmas that invalidate its postulates and appear as unforeseen fissures in its laboriously erected system; these fissures get plastered over with fresh hypotheses, and the vicious circle continues unchecked—together with the threats one knows too well. Some of its hypotheses, such as the theory of evolution, actually become dogmas because of their usefulness or at least plausibility—a usefulness that is not only scientific but also philosophical or even political, according to the circumstances.

In reality, evolutionism—to stress this point once again—is a pale imitation of the traditional theory of emanation;¹¹ it consists on the one hand in denying the periphery-center relationship, hence the very existence of the emanationist Center, which is the source of the radii leading to it, and on the other hand in attempting to situate every hierarchical relationship along the curve that describes the periphery: instead of proceeding upward—starting from the corporeal level, passing through the animic sphere, and then mounting toward realities at first supra-formal and finally principial or metacosmic—an evolving hierarchy is imagined, advancing from matter, through vegetable and animal life, to human consciousness, which is itself considered a kind of transitory accident. With a thoughtlessness that is infinitely culpable when they call themselves “believers”, some people imagine a superman who is destined to take man’s place and who would therefore render Christ’s humanity of no account;¹² moreover a certain “genius” imagines something which he is not ashamed to call “God” but which is

¹⁰ Scientistic atheism is affirmed indirectly by the postulate of empty space and thus of discontinuity, though this cannot be maintained with complete consistency. Now to deny plenitude and continuity, including rhythm and necessity—and thus the providential element—is to deny universal Substance, together with all its implications of homogeneity and transcendence.

¹¹ This must not of course be confused with the emanationist heresy, which has nothing metaphysical about it and which reduces the Principle to the level of manifestation or Substance to the level of accidents.

¹² For God manifests Himself directly only in a support which marks by its very nature the presence of the Absolute in relativity and which for this reason is “relatively absolute”. This “relative absoluteness” is the sufficient reason for the possibility *homo sapiens*. Man could disappear if God wished, but he could not change into another species; the Platonic ideas are precise possibilities and not just swirls of fog: each possibility is what it is and what it ought to be.

no more than a pseudo-absolute decked out in a pseudo-transcendence, coming at the end of the evolutionist and progressivist chain; for the Eternal will always be Alpha and has always been Omega. Emanating from the Center and thus from on High—in a manner that is at once continuous and discontinuous—creatures are crystallized in the corporeal zone; they do not “evolve” by coming from matter, hence from the periphery and from below; at the same time, however—and beyond the reach of our human point of view—they are all “contained” in God and do not really come forth from Him; the whole play of relationships between God and the world is but a monologue of relativity.

The mystical proof of God is always in some degree a participation in the profound nature of things, and it therefore excludes and discredits all speculations that tend to falsify the image of the Real in us and that falsely transfer the divine Ideas of the Immutable onto the plane of becoming. Modern men want to conquer space, but the least of contemplative states, or the least of intellections bearing on metaphysical realities, carries us to heights from which the nebula of Andromeda appears scarcely more than a terrestrial accident.

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These considerations permit us to underline certain points that have already been touched on. Promethean minds believe themselves to be creatures of chance, moving freely in a vacuum and capable of “self-creation”, all within the framework of an existence devoid of meaning; it seems to them that the world is absurd, but no one notices—and this is typical—the absurdity of admitting the appearance within an absurd world of a being regarded as capable of noticing the absurdity. Modern men are fundamentally ignorant of what the most childish of catechisms reveals—doubtless in a pictorial and sentimental language, and yet a language entirely adequate for its purpose—namely, that we are inwardly connected to a Substance that is Being, Consciousness, and Life, of which we are contingent and transitory modalities; these men are therefore unaware of being involved in a titanic drama in comparison with which this world, so seemingly solid, is as tenuous as a spider’s web. Invisible and underlying Existence is concrete and not abstract: it “sleeps” and “awakes”; it “breathes” and can make worlds collapse; space, time, man—these are no more than minute fragments of a Being and a Movement that escape all our measurements and all we can imagine. The divine Substance cannot have the limiting properties of matter or those of an animic fluid: its homogeneity implies a transcending discontinuity, the traces of which are indeed apparent both around and within us—the body is not its life, and life is not intelligence—but which we cannot adequately grasp with our terrestrial categories.

Thus the great misconception is to believe that the basis of our existence is space and

that the causes of our individual and collective destinies are somehow contained within it, whereas in reality this basis—at once immutable and in movement, depending on the relationship considered—is situated in a “supra-space”, which we can perceive only through the Heart-Intellect and about which those explosions of total Consciousness, the Revelations, speak to us symbolically; the error is to believe that the causes determining human history or carrying it to its conclusion belong to the same order as our matter or “natural laws”, whereas in fact the whole visible cosmos is resting upon an invisible volcano, though also—at a deeper ontological level—upon a formless ocean of bliss. Men imagine that the earth, mountains, bodies can be destroyed only by forces operating on their own level, by masses or energies belonging to our physical universe; what they do not see, however, is that this world, which is so compact in appearance, can collapse *ab intra*, that matter can flow back “toward the inward” through transmutation, and that the whole of space can shrink like a balloon suddenly emptied of air. They do not see that fragility and impermanence not only affect things within a space naively supposed to be stable; they also affect existence itself with all its categories. Human nature consists precisely in being able to escape in our innermost core and “unchanging Center” from the breaking apart of a macrocosm that has become too solid and in becoming reintegrated in the Immutable, whence we came; what proves this possibility is our capacity to conceive this Immutability, but it is proved as well, in a concordant manner, by the fact—at once unique and multiple—of Revelation.

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To be shocked by the anthropomorphic character of the Biblical God is logically equivalent to being surprised by the very existence of man, for the Reality we call “God” necessarily assumes a human character on contact with the human being, though of course this cannot be taken to imply it is human in its own aseity.¹³ The source of our knowledge of God is at once the Intellect and Revelation: in principle the Intellect knows everything because all possible knowledge is inscribed in its very substance, and it contains absolute certainty because its knowledge is a “being”—or a participation in being—and not merely a “seeing”; but in fact man is a fallen being, who has lost access to his own transpersonal kernel, so that nothing remains to him but the faint light that is

¹³ If the Scriptures describe creation—as they do—in a simple, synthetic, and pictorial language and not in the style of a scientific analysis, this does not mean that they are mistaken, but rather that we have no need of anything else on this level. All Promethean and profane science, even though neutral in principle as a source of exact information, is in fact harmful as far as its human effects are concerned, and this was the real significance of the trial of Galileo, which was the trial by anticipation of scientific euphoria, the machine, and the atom bomb. The theories of astronomy matter little themselves, but the fruit of the forbidden tree poisons humanity *de facto*.

reason and, beyond this altogether indirect and discursive mode of intelligence, an intuition of the Intellect that is purely virtual and fragmentary; if an infant were left to grow up among wild animals, his knowledge of God would be no greater than his knowledge of language, which proves that man cannot draw everything out of himself, at least not under ordinary conditions. It is Revelation that confers spiritual knowledge at different levels, transmitting to some men truths of which they were unaware and awakening in others—by this means—an Intellection that had hitherto remained latent; the most decisive truths concerning our existence—truths referring to the invisible Reality that determines us and to the destinies that await us *post mortem*—are not simply imposed upon us from without; they slumber within us, and with a self-evidence that is at once adamant and dazzlingly brilliant, they form a part of our very being.

For primordial man Revelation and Intellection coincided: contingency was still transparent so that there were as yet neither “points of view” nor “perspectives”; whereas in later times Revelation is multiple because—geometrically speaking—the circumference implies many radii, the “point of view” of primordial man corresponded to the entire circle; the center was everywhere. In the same way the unavoidably limiting aspect of expressions, forms, or symbols did not yet imprison minds; there was therefore no place for a diversity of forms, each expressing the same Truth in the name of the impersonal Self while excluding each other in the name of this or that particular manifestation of the personal God. Now that these diverse manifestations exist, what matters is knowing that intrinsically they speak in an absolute mode since it is the Absolute which is speaking, but that extrinsically they are clothed in the language of a particular mental coloring and a particular system of contingencies since they are addressed to man; now the man to whom they are addressed in this manner is already cut off from the inward Revelation that is direct and “supernaturally natural” intellection.

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Of quite a different order from the intellectual proofs of God and the beyond is a type of proof that is purely phenomenal, namely miracles: contrary to what most people suppose, the conviction brought about by miracles—which are not in the least opposed to reason—is quite unlike that of a physical effect that may prove a given cause, for in this case the certainty offered would be only an approximation since miraculous causation is unverifiable;¹⁴ moreover this is the objection most commonly raised against the conviction in question, setting aside the habitual denial of the phenomenon as such. What

¹⁴ There are magical phenomena that have every appearance of being miracles but without of course having any connection with miraculous causality.

a miracle seeks to produce—and what it does produce—is the rending of a veil; far from discussing things in the abstract, it operates like a surgical intervention, which removes an obstacle in a concrete way. A miracle breaks down the wall separating outward and fallible consciousness from inward and infallible consciousness, which is omniscient and blissful; by means of a “therapeutic shock” it frees the soul from its shell of ignorance. It would amount to nothing, however, if it sought to convince merely by a demonstration of phenomena, for then—as we have seen—many doubts would be permissible as to the level and significance of the prodigy.

Given the supernatural on the one hand and the natural on the other, the miraculous phenomenon cannot help but exist; in any case the supernatural is not the contra-natural but rather what is “natural” on a universal scale. If the divine Principle is transcendent in relation to the world while at the same time embracing it within its unique substance, then miracles must occur; the celestial must sometimes break through into the terrestrial, and the center must appear like a flash of lightning on the periphery; to take an example from the physical realm, inert matter is of little worth, but gold and diamonds cannot fail to appear within it. Metaphysically a miracle is a possibility that must necessarily be manifested as such in view of the hierarchical structure of the total Universe.

This brings us back to the teleological argument: harmony or beauty—whether inward or outward—possesses something that produces conviction *ab intra* and results in deliverance; like a miracle, beauty possesses this alchemical and liberating capacity only when it is linked with truth and the sacred and only for those who are called to understand this language, which may truly be described as angelic. The *Avatāra* does not convince by his words and marvels alone; he also transmits certainty by the visible harmony of his whole being, which allows us to glimpse the shores of the Infinite and revives our deepest yearnings while at the same time satisfying them; it is a superhuman harmony, one perpetuated in sacred art and having the power, without resorting to demonstrations, to seize souls at their center by penetrating the carapace that separates them from Heaven and makes them strangers to themselves.