Should the World be There?

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Summer 2014 - to be continued

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To Inga

1 Background

This presentation is based upon a number of talks I have given on the topic in recent years: for the Seminary on Philosophy of Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in October 2012, at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte in August 2012, for the Philosophy Seminary at the University of Oslo in October 2011 and in two lectures for Norwegian Philosophy students visiting Prague in April 2011. I articulated ideas approaching confidentialism (*vide infra*) in the lecture *Egalitarion Optimism and Standard Theism* for the Philosophy Society of Malta at the University of Malta in January 2002. Many of my ideas developed during a semester long seminary I held, conjointly with the late Philosophy professor and University rector Fr. Peter Seracino Inglott, for Philosophy and Theology students at the pontifical University of Malta in the fall of 2001. In the fall of 2010 I held a seminary on the topic for Philosophy and Theology students at the University of Oslo. There is also a superseded obscure Norwegian publication from 2004, *Bør Naturen Ødelegges?*, which is available from my web page.

2 Equalitarianism

Equalitarianism is the view that the terrible sufferings of some cannot be defeated, or justified, by the pleasure or happiness of others.

Equalitarianism conflicts with central tenets of utilitarianist views. But equalitarianism is a plausible and substantial moral philosophical view which can be justified by generalizing Rawlsean style reflective equilibrium arguments to encompass more universal considerations.

3 Causal notions

We write ♠p for p is causally necessary and ♣p for p is causally possible. We have the standard interdefinability: ♣p iff $\sim$ ♠ $\sim p$. We say that p causally necessitates q iff ♠$(p \supset q)$

The author does not here commit to any specific theory on causation, so that we might as well have written "physically necessitates" or likes instead of "causally necessitates" above. Moreover it is left open at this stage what kind of semantics we presuppose.

4 Deontics

Op signifies that it ought to be the case that p

Pp signifies that it is permitted that p

Interdefinability: **O**p iff $\sim$ **P** $\sim p$

Deontic closure: $\mathbf{O}(p \supset q) \supset (\mathbf{O}p \supset \mathbf{O}q)$

5 Reliabilism

Reliabilism is the view that moral prescriptions are causally trustworthy in the following precise sense.

$\mathbf{O}p \wedge \spadesuit(p \supset q) \supset \mathbf{O}q$

or, equivalently

$\mathbf{P}p \supset (\spadesuit(p \supset q) \supset \mathbf{P}q)$

6 Pressurism

Pressurism is the view that what is causally necessary also ought to be the case, ($\spadesuit p \supset \mathbf{O}p$), or equivalently that what is permitted is also physically achievable, ($\mathbf{P}p \supset \clubsuit p$).

A reasonable interpretation of pressurism may be summed up in the slogan "may implies can". So taken, pressurism classically entails the slogan "ought implies can" (also called *Kant's law*), which has already been discussed in the philosophical and logical literature.

6.1 Pressurism plus deontic closure entails reliabilism

Assume $\mathbf{O}p \wedge \spadesuit(p \supset q)$. By using pressurism on the second conjunct we obtain that $\mathbf{O}p \wedge \mathbf{O}(p \supset q)$, so by deontic closure $\mathbf{O}q$. We have not used any necessitation rule, so by the suitably restricted deduction theorem we have proved reliabilism from the assumptions of pressurism and deontic closure.

7 On horror

An individual is in horror iff it has suffered so much that it would have been better for the individual not to have been alive.

The world is horrible iff it contains individuals that are in horror.

8 On being there

an object is there iff it is there for someone

an object is there for someone iff the latter is aware of the former

an object is there if a part of it is there

everything is a part of the world

so the world is there iff there is awareness

9 Mundanialism

Mundanialism is the view that it is causally necessary that if the world is there then it is horrible.

10 Caritatism

Caritatism holds that it ought to be the case that the world is not horrible.

11 The apocalyptic argument

r for "the world is not horrible" and s for "the world is not there":

P1	$\mathbf{O}r$	Caritatism
P2	$\spadesuit(r \supset s)$	Mundanialism
P3	$\mathbf{O}r \wedge \spadesuit(r \supset s) \supset \mathbf{O}s$	Instance of reliabilism
C	$\mathbf{O}s$	The Ragnarök verdict

12 The 4 possible reactions to the apocalyptic arguments

Option 0: Consider it sound and accept the Ragnarök verdict

Option 1: Discard caritatism

Option 2: Discard mundanialism

Option 3: Discard reliabilism

To question the logic of the Apocalyptic Argument is a non-starter, as merely the rules *modus ponens* and *adjunction* which are already present in the Kolmogorov-Johansson *Minimallogik* are needed; the apparatus involved in making the premises precise is of course stronger.

13 More on the options

We call those who regard the apocalyptic argument sound, and thus accept the Ragnarök verdict, *rejectionists*. We call those rejectionists who believe it is morally right to strive for the destruction of all awareness *annihilationists*.

Given pressurism and the assumption that it is causally impossible for us to destroy all awareness, rejectionists are not committed to annihilationism; an

entailment from rejectionism to annihilationism can of course be discarded on a variety of moral philosophical grounds.

For the record: the author rejects rejectionism.

14 Excursion: rejectionism vs. antinatalism

Rejectionism, unlike the antinatalist view of (Benatar, 2006), is compatible with the necessitist view that all objects exist necessarily which we discuss and adopt below. Consequently, rejectionism does not, as Benatar's antinatalism, trade upon a collapse of classical logical machinery, as usually understood, in its comparison between the existence and non-existence of an individual.

Rejectionism is not, as Benatar's antinatalism, committed to the view that rather negligible sufferings suffice for thinking that an individual would have been better off had it not been born. It is rather that the horrible sufferings of some is taken as a justification of the Ragnarök verdict by rejectionists, and so rejectionist may even hold that nearly everyone live lives that are wothwhile being lived.

15 In defence of caritatism contra option 1

It seems that caritatism can only be given up if one presupposes some kind of *partialist* point of view which takes the interest of some as more important than that of others.

The author discards such partialist attitudes for moral reasons. As pointed out above, one can articulate such moral reasons as I have in mind by generalizing Rawlsean reflective equilibrium type arguments.

Notice that no anthropocentric presuppositions are made here or elsewhere.

16 In defence of reliabilism contra option 3

Option 3 is to deny reliabilism. But this option does not at all seem reasonable, or even viable. Reliabilism is constitutive for the very meaning of *somehing being permitted* or *something being mandatory*, and is centrally operative in practical jurisprudence.

17 Mundanial considerations

Mundanialism can be denied for reasons which are irrelevant; one may e.g. point out that it could physically have been the case that the world did not contain sentient beings.

But the apocalyptic argument can be sharpened to avoid such counter strategies e.g. simply by having it consider the question whether the world should be there *any more*.

Some would, ignorantly or by lack of empathy or intelligence, deny mundanialism by claiming that empirical evidence does not suggest that some suffer so much that it had been better for them not to have been born; i.e. they would deny that empirical evidence suggests there is horror in the world. We do not preoccupy ourselves with such unreasonable attitudes here, but just record the mildly interesting incidental observation, and humorist remark, that such rare unreasonableness as pointed out may also be rare cases where physical *argumenta ad bacula* could be convincing.

Mundanialism may, however, be false for reasons which transcend the empirically given. Such is the next, and our preferred, strategy:

18   Facets of ameliorism

Ameliorism supports caritatism on equalitarianist ground.

Ameliorism endorses necessitism, i.e. the view that all objects exist necessarily and always.

Ameliorism holds that mundanialism is false because there for all individuals is something which ultimately defeats their suffering.

19   Ameliorism as seen from a traditional view of time

There will for everyone be a time as from which it will be and has been worthwhile to live.

Notice that such an ameliorist scenario could, logically speaking, obtain even though the world would always appear to be horrible. However, such an eventuality would presuppose an infinite temporal future for sentient beings in the universe, which contradicts contemporary cosmology.

20   A brief excursion on time

I am cautious with committing to temporality as I am not convinced that time is a fundamental notion. We can observe lengths and objects with velocities; time *per se* we cannot observe. There are periodic phenomena we conventionally take to be clocks. But why not rather take length and velocity as fundamental? We then by dimensional analysis construe time as a derived notion through stretches divided by velocity. Such an approach has certain conceptual advantages; one is that we empirically have a natural unit for velocity in the speed

of light, whereas we have no such fundamental natural unit for time. A precaution is that such a way of thinking presupposes that all physical objects have a speed (usually increasing) away from the ultimate origo of the Big Bang. I will like to articulate these ideas more precisely, and cooperate with a young physicist. Preliminary inspection and exchanges, also with very competent and senior physicists, confirm that the changes needed for the equations of the special theory of relativity should be straightforward and that the issues at stake will primarily be of a conceptual and mathematical nature; riddles concerning simultaneity and such may belong to those issues.

21 The Evaluation Semantics I

I use the evaluation semantics (cfr. (Bjørdal, 2012). For classical modal predicate logic with language $\mathcal{L}$ with alphabet including the modal formula operator $\square$, quantifiers, connectives, a set of predicates PRED and a set of variables VAR (e.g. $v_1, v_2, ...$), let a *model* $\mathcal{M}$ be a triple $\langle \mathbf{D}, \mathbf{E}, \mathbf{R} \rangle$ where $\mathbf{E}$ is an *evaluation*, $\mathbf{R} \subset \mathbf{E}^2$ is the *accessibility relation* on $\mathbf{E}$ and $\mathbf{D}$ is the domain of discourse. An evaluation $\mathbf{E}$ is a set of *valuations*, and the latter we denote by V, V' and its kins. Valuations are monadic *properties* or *attributes* which only hold of some formulas of $\mathcal{L}$ and some ordered pairs $\langle l, d \rangle$ where l is from $\mathcal{L}$ so that either $l \in VAR$ or $l \in PRED$ and d is required to be as follows: If $V \in \mathbf{E}$ and l is a variable then $\mathrm{V}(\langle l, d \rangle)$ only if $d \in \mathbf{D}$ and if $V \in \mathbf{E}$ and l is a predicate of arity $n > 0$ then $d \subset \mathbf{D}^n$. Valuations are functional in that for $V \in \mathbf{E}$ and $l \in VAR \cup PRED$, $\mathrm{V}(\langle l, d \rangle)$ and $\mathrm{V}(\langle l, d' \rangle)$ only if $d = d'$, so we write $Vl = d$ for $V(\langle l, d \rangle)$. For any variable $x \in VAR$, $(x) \subset \mathbf{E}^2$ is such that $V(x)V'$ iff V and V' at most differ in that there is a $d \in \mathbf{D}$ so that $V(x) \neq V'(x)$.

22 The Evaluation Semantics II

With these notions we require for any model $\mathcal{M} = \langle \mathbf{D}, \mathbf{E}, \mathbf{R} \rangle$, variable $x \in VAR$, n-ary predicate $F^n \in PRED$ ($for\ n > 0$), and formulas $\alpha, \beta \in \mathcal{L}$:

Variable denotation:	There is a $d \in \mathbf{D}$ so that $Vx = d$
Valuation plenism:	If $d \in \mathbf{D}$, *exists* $V' \in \mathbf{E}$ *s.t.* $V(x)V'$ & $V'(x) = d$
n-adic predicates:	$VF^n \subset \mathbf{D}^n$
n-adic atoms:	$VF^n(x_0, ..., x_{n-1})$ iff $(V(x_0), ..., V(x_{n-1})) \in VF^n$
Consistency:	Not both $V\alpha$ and $V \sim \alpha$
Completeness:	$V\alpha$ or $V \sim \alpha$
Disjunctivity:	$V(\alpha \vee \beta)$ iff $V\alpha$ or $V\beta$
Generality:	$V\forall x\alpha$ iff *for all* V' *s.t.* $V(x)V'$, $V'\alpha$
Apodicticity:	$V\square\alpha$ iff *for all* V' *s.t.* $V\mathbf{R}V'$, $V'\alpha$
Rhombicity:	If $V\mathbf{R}V'$ & $V'(x)V''$, *exists* $V''' : V(x)V'''$ & $V'''\mathbf{R}V''$
Quadrangularity:	If $V(x)V'$ & $V'\mathbf{R}V''$, *exists* $V''' : V\mathbf{R}V'''$ & $V'''(x)V''$

23   The Evaluation Semantics III

As I see it the evaluation semantics has a number of important advantages over possible worlds semantics:

- the evaluation semantics simplifies matters ontologically as it operates with just one domain of discourse

- the evaluation semantics does not in the semantics postulate anything like *possible worlds*, which are just prone to lead philosophical and other discourse astray

- the valuations of the evaluation of any model are just descriptions of the *properties*, *states* or *situations* the world, *mundus*, may be in; there is nothing ontologically untoward by committing to such properties which are not instantiated by the world

- accordingly the evaluationist semantics induces a replacement of the slogan that necessary truths are to be identified with "truth in all possible worlds" with the slogan that a necessary truth is a statement that is true in all possible states of the world

- the world itself may be in our domain of discourse, and the evaluation semantics may be compatible with more type free approaches

24   The Evaluation Semantics IV

Unlike conditions stating domain inclusions between *possible worlds*, which are rather ontologically committed ways of speaking, in the evaluation semantics the (converse) Barcan formula is validated if we adopt (*quadrangularity*) *rhombicity* as per above; the conditions rhombicity and quadrangularity on models, which I dubbed "Barcan-plenism" and "converse Barcan-plenism" in (Bjørdal, 2012), are reasonable assumptions, given the above, as it may be taken to just postulate a certain plenitude of states the world might be in, or properties it might have. However, if we, as I suggest, adopt yonder formulas in our thinking, we commit to necessitism, i.e. the view that all objects exist necessarily. I suggest that this is as it should be.

For a distinct argument for necessitism based upon possible worlds discourse, see (Williamson, 2002).

25   Necessitism and afterlife

In the philosophy of religion and metaphysics the topic of afterlife has been important since the time of Plato. If necessitism is true, as the author thinks,

there is not an additional problem of re-creating an individual to secure new life for the individual. If the individual could be born to life once, there is, as far as necessitism is concerned, nothing to prevent it from coming to life again.

We underline that we do not here or elsewhere commit to any view concerning the nature of mind.

Note: The evaluation semantics does not commit to essentialism as e.g. in the idea that there is an essence of origin. This is relevant as an excursion here in a future elaboration, and in the end involves a defense of S5 as the appropriate modal logic for necessity against the arguments against S5 by (Salmon, 1989).

26   The semantics for the logic of *better*

If we require the accessibility relation $\mathbf{R}$ on an evaluation $\mathbf{E}$ to be such that $V\mathbf{R}V'$ iff V' describes a situation which is *better than* that of V, this induces, by plausible philosophy, that i) $\mathbf{R}$ is serial, ii) $\mathbf{R}$ is transitive and iii) $\mathbf{R}$ is directed, i.e. if $V\mathbf{R}V'$ and $V\mathbf{R}V''$ then there is a V''' such that $V'\mathbf{R}V'''$ and $V''\mathbf{R}V'''$.

By known results of first order modal correspondence theory, models where $\mathbf{R}$ on $\mathbf{E}$ is serial, transitive and directed correspond to the normal modal logic we may call $D4.2$ as it has the following characteristic schemas:

D $\blacksquare\alpha \supset \blacklozenge\alpha$
4   $\blacksquare\alpha \supset \blacksquare\blacksquare\alpha$
.2 $\blacklozenge\blacksquare\alpha \supset \blacksquare\blacklozenge\alpha$

27   Interpreting deontic S5 in D4.2

We used black square and diamond above to avert the usual interpretation of modal logics in terms of e.g. necessity and possibility. $\blacksquare\alpha$ holds in a situation iff α holds in all better situations, and we in this case say that α is *optimal*. $\blacklozenge\alpha$ holds in a situation iff α holds in some better situation (valuation), and we say that α is *satiable*.

We now define $\mathbf{O}\alpha$ as $\blacklozenge\blacksquare\alpha$ and $\mathbf{P}\alpha$ as $\blacksquare\blacklozenge\alpha$. It is a straightforward exercise to verify that the modal logic D4.2 contains the theorems of the modal Deontic logic S5 under this translation, which means that

D $\mathbf{O}\alpha \supset \mathbf{P}\alpha$
5   $\mathbf{P}\alpha \supset \mathbf{OP}\alpha$
4   $\mathbf{O}\alpha \supset \mathbf{OO}\alpha$

We verify normalcy: $D4.2$ is normal so that $\vdash \alpha$ only if $\vdash \blacksquare\alpha$; as $D4.2$ is serial $\vdash \blacksquare\alpha$ only if $\vdash \blacklozenge\alpha$; by normalcy of $D4.2 \vdash \blacklozenge\alpha$ only if $\vdash \blacksquare\blacklozenge\alpha$, so that combined with the preceding we have $\vdash \alpha$ only if $\vdash \blacksquare\blacklozenge\alpha$; by our deontic interpretation that is $\vdash \alpha$ only if $\vdash \mathbf{O}\alpha$.

28 "ought" from "better"

In accordance with this interpretation of deontic $S5$ in $D4.2$, we express the following conceptual analysis:

> It is in situation mandatory that an event e obtains iff for all situations better than it there is a situation yet better wherein e obtains.

> Dually:

> It is in a situation permitted that an event e obtains iff there is a situation better than it and such that e obtains in all situations which are yet even better.

Comment: we here commit to an ontology which includes events, and acts by individuals are to be considered events. Notice that to say that an event obtains is stronger than to say that the event exists as by the lights of necessitism all events exist.

29 Situations, worlds and incorporation

In order to be more precise about some matters we adapt some ideas from hybrid logic. The domain $\mathbf{D}$ of an evaluation $\mathbf{E}$ is for each valuation $V \in \mathbf{E}$ to contain situation $s(V)$ as the situation described by V. The language of our logic is to contain the predicate $\mathcal{I}$ so that $\mathcal{I}(s(V))$ expresses that the situation expressed by V is *incorpored*, i.e. obtains. $s(V)\colon A$ signifies that A holds according to situation $s(V)$. There are now two more conditions on valuations: (1) $V'(\mathcal{I}(s(V)))$ iff $V' = V$ and (2) $V'(s(V)\colon A)$ iff VA.

30 What is better?

We give an account of the relation 'better' on situations and valuations in terms of a Rawlsean inspired type of plenaria involving all subjects. Let $\mathbf{E}$ be the set of all valuations and $\mathbf{I} \subset \mathbf{D}$ the set of all subjects in the domain. We take it as given that $\mathbf{I}$ is infinite, so surely there could be no original situation with a conversation involving all subjects in $\mathbf{I}$. Groups with five members seem optimal in forming decisions, so we consider the set $\mathcal{P}^5\,(\mathbf{I})$ of all five membered subsets of $\mathbf{I}$. The set $\mathbf{I}$ contains just those objects that could suffer and enjoy. Only some plenaria $\mathbf{p} \in \mathbf{P}$ contain just rational *coincorporable* subjects able to form verdicts, of course; we call the set $\mathbf{P}^D$ of those plenarios so able *deliberative plenarios.*

For $p \in \mathbf{P}^D$, V and $V' \in \mathbf{E}$ and $i \in \mathbf{I}$, the *task* of p is to decide whether $s(V)$ is better than $s(V')$ for i or not. In performing its task the rational agents of the deliberative plenario are behind a veil of ignorance as to whether they shall share the fate of i or not, so the members of the deliberative plenario

have the interest of maximizing the utility of subject i; notice that i can be an incorporable subject of any sentient species.

31 On the problems with rules

The discussions in moral philosophy make it abundantly clear that it is not easy to give precise rules for what is prescribed and what is proscribed in given situations: perhaps some over arching principle as the Golden Rule best captures many or most moral matters, or perhaps the attitude *ama et fac quod vis* ascribed St. Augustin (7th Homilia of St. John's Letter) better sums things up? (From Wikiquote: "Once for all, then, a short precept is given thee: Love, and do what thou wilt: whether thou hold thy peace, through love hold thy peace; whether thou cry out, through love cry out; thou correct, through love correct; whether thou spare, through love do thou spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good.")

The same difficulty is of course inherited by what I here take to be the more fundamental question, viz. to distinguish between two situations in terms of holding that one is better than the other, or neither. However, one will find assumptions which partially answer this question by analyzing the points of view I offer.

32 The pressurist caveat

The notion of *better* must be tempered appropriately in order to avoid the invocation of what we must regard as physically impossible valuations in our moral reasoning. I suggest that the following *pressurist caveat* (here stated in two equivalent versions), expresses a right axiomatic relationship between physical necessity and the mandatory:

The pressurist caveat, formulation 1 $\quad \vdash (\spadesuit\alpha \supset \mathbf{O}\alpha)$
The pressurist caveat, formulation 2 $\quad \vdash (\mathbf{P}\alpha \supset \clubsuit\alpha)$

The rule version of the pressurist caveat, i.e. $\vdash \spadesuit\alpha$ only if $\vdash \mathbf{O}\alpha$, holds in our combined logic. For the logic of physical necessity extends the modal logic T so that $\vdash (\spadesuit\alpha \supset \alpha)$, hence if $\vdash \spadesuit\alpha$ also $\vdash \alpha$; by the normalcy of our deontic interpretation $\vdash \alpha$ only if $\vdash \mathbf{O}\alpha$; combining the preceding we have $\vdash \spadesuit\alpha$ only if $\vdash \mathbf{O}\alpha$.

This lends the pressurist caveat quite some credence. It seems difficult to find a similar justification corresponding precisely to the weaker principle "ought implies can" (*Kant's law*), as discussed above.

33 Contra Leibniz' optimism

Notice that we have isolated an interpretation of Deontic S5 without an appeal or commitment to deontically perfect possible worlds, which are highly dubious

entities. It is inter alia here that we part company with Leibniz' optimism and utilize properties of ameliorism instead.

Translated to more ordinary philosophically discourse, what we have achieved is to analyse the statement *it ought to be the case that* α semantically so that it holds in a given situation (valuation) V iff for some better situation (valuation) V', all situations (valuations) V" that are better than V', V" α. Given this, the hereafter may justify that the world is there without it being true that there even *is* a best possible valuation or state or situation the world could have been in; of course, here some measures of comparison between valuations are extraneous to those needed for everyday affairs and involve a level of abstraction that most likely commit to infinitary objects in such a way that standard rules no longer apply.

34 Concerning the adequacy of deontic S5

The author thinks of deontic S5 as adequate for ethical discourse, and is not convinced by alleged counter examples and puzzles such as *Chisholm's "paradox"*. But this is not the occasion to articulate such a defense of my rather traditional point of view in this regard.

Nevertheless: if one does not share the author's convictions concerning deontic S5, notice that the evaluation semantics is quite flexible enough to accommodate alterations; from our present perspective, such alterations should harmonize with the ameliorist point of view.

35 Confidentialism beyond ameliorism

Ameliorism is strictly speaking only committed to the claim that it is permissible that the world is there and is thus compatible with the view that it is also permissible that the world is not there. We adopt the stronger *confidentialist* point of view that it *ought* to be the case that the world is there, and we take this in accordance with the foregoing to mean that in all situations better than ours there is a situation yet better wherein our world is there.

36 Matters eschatological

In as far as a confidentialist thinks that there is punishment for some in a hereafter, the confidentialist is committed to a pedagogical understanding of punishment. Confidentialism is incompatible with the view that some are tormented forever. Interestingly, in recent years the Russian orthodox metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, and other representatives of quite traditional Christianity, have defended a similar view. One important source for this thinking is St. Isaac the Syrian.

37 Matters theistical

Confidentialism as such is neutral with respect to some versions of theism. The term "theism" is the name of a variety of ontological views that posit the existence of one or more divine entities. Obviously, then, "theism" is almost maximally imprecise, as are the accompanying terms "atheism" and "agnosticism". In some interpretations of the word "theism" we are all atheists, and only in few interpretations of the word are some of us theists. Given this militant atheism may well be a plausible position when it concerns itself with some forms of theism while not being plausible if it relates to more elevated concepts of 'God'. These are matters one must be aware of and deal with if one wants to discuss the question as to whether a version of theism or atheism should be adopted. Given the profound imprecision of terms many heated polemics in modern discourse may in light of this be seen as rather unhelpful.

When one discusses the question as to whether there is a God one better phrase this question in terms of whether there are objects which has the property of being divine, i.e. we ought to take "God" as a predicate and not as a name. This is partly because there are some rather confounding issues with respect to so-called empty names, and also because taking "God" to be a name would skew the discourse unfairly in favour of monotheistic versions of theism. Theists and atheists should furthermore not disagree as to whether the property 'God' exists, but theists unlike atheists believe that the property 'God' has a non-empty extension.

Notice incidentally that the existence of God is toned down in much modern theology, as witnessed e.g. in the writings of Paul Tillich and in much other modern theological discourse as in the work of Karl Rahner where it is emphasized that God is not a person amongst other persons or a thing amongst other things. The point is perhaps even a biblical one as the bible several places emphasizes that no-one has seen God; probably on account of this there is a vigorous prohibition against depicting God in the tradition of writing icons in the orthodox and catholic churches, though there are nonetheless a few exceptions. Perhaps a point of view to be explored, using modern though perennial philosophical and logical terms, is the idea that God is an abstract object; such a point of view would replace Rahner's rather Kantian attitude with a more Platonist attitude. At any rate, as I see it the most important religious question is not whether there is a divine being, but whether it is a good thing that the world is there. As a confidentialist I think the answer to that question is affirmative.

The philosophical, theological and ontological question concerning the existence of God appears to me to be on a par with the ontological question as to whether there are holes. Let us take *cavists* to ontologically commit to holes whereas *acavists* think that there are no holes but only holed objects. Consider the train transit under the channel from Britain to France; acavists and cavists agree that one may pass under the sea-level from Britain to arrive in France, though the acavist will maintain that there is only the ground which is tunneled to let the trains pass through whereas the cavist will claim that the very tunnel

under the channel itself really exists. The ontological disagreement between confidentialist theism and confidentialist atheism seems to me in a similiar vein rather remote from practical concerns and, moreover, to not affect the central concern as to what we may rationally dare to hope.

38 Some noncommittals

ameliorism is **not** committed to

- the view that some live eternally

39 Some compatibilities

ameliorism is *compatible* with

- reincarnation
- some ecumenical interpretations of Christianity and other religions

40 Some incompatibilities

ameliorism is *incompatible* with

- the view that there is no afterlife or extra-vital awareness-like existence in store for us where past sufferings are defeated
- the view that someone will be tormented forever in a gehenna or hell

41 Some commitments

ameliorism is committed to

- the view that there is life beyond death for individuals
- the view that some are punished and some rewarded in an afterlife

42 Confidentialism, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism

In the philosophy of religion it has become commonplace to characterize *exclusivists* as those who think that just those who belong to a particular religious confession are saved. *Inclusivists* are those who, in the Christian context e.g. as represented by Karl Rahner, think that people of other faiths can be saved if they have the right (religious?) good will through the salvation work of Christ;

in the terminology of Rahner those saved in such a manner are *anonymous Christians*. *Pluralists* are those who, like John Hick and Raimon Panikkar, believe that many faiths may lead to salvation.

With confidentialism this trilemma vanishes, as confidentialism does not assume that the ultimate fate of anyone depends upon having a particular faith, i.e. intellectual or spiritual attitude.

43 Confidentialism as a *minimum religionis*

Although confidentialism does not enjoin having a particular faith as relevant to anyone's ultimate fate, the very possession of a confidentialist conviction is, as it were, a salvific reward in itself as it gives *peace of mind*. In this regard confidentialism may be seen as part of the venerable tradition from antiquity of a philosophy of life.

The way confidentialism postulates a hope in this valley of the shadows of death disposes it towards an openness to the tremendous mysteries of life and being which qualifies it as a *minimum religionis*, i.e. a minimum of religion. As such it is ecumenically open to theological thinking as long as this does not conflict with its central tenets.

On that note I conclude with a famous and inspiring quote from St. Julian of Norwich which can be taken to express a confidentialist conviction:

> "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well!"

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