

NOTES

NEVILLE'S DIALECTICAL ARGUMENT FOR AN INDETERMINATE CREATOR

Robert C. Neville's *God the Creator* needs a ground-floor introduction, since it is the first book of a man virtually unknown in the theological world.¹ It is a privilege to be able to make one of the early evaluations of a book that may be the most important of the decade in its field (philosophy of religion) and which in any case is a brilliant performance by a man destined for greater things. Here we have a work of unexpected maturity which, page for page, compares favorably with the best of Tillich or Ricoeur. Neville conducts his intricate arguments with the courtesy and confidence of a master. There is no rhetoric, no chitchat, no polemic (though his dialectical method continually involves him in strong criticisms of other philosophers), few examples, and never a superfluous word-picture. There are at most four or five humorous touches in 320 pages, e.g., "It is easier to grow roses than to make a group of students wise" (p. 279). The asides on love, art, and statesmanship suggest the experience of a man of sixty. Neville, at the time of publication, was twenty-eight.

Neville's book is a piece of philosophizing—but one that theologians ought to know about, particularly those who have kept alive their interest in the problem of God. The opening words of the preface describe the point of view succinctly (p. vii):

This book is an essay in philosophy, not in theology. It undertakes speculative metaphysics, critical epistemology, and philosophy of religion. This is ambitious enough. Some readers will feel an irresistible urge to interpret it as theology, however, and it cannot be denied that the essay has many theological implications. Its general topic is at the heart of the theological enterprise.

Although my report is aimed at theologians, I will give the philosophical side of the book priority. *God the Creator* consists wholly of careful arguments, replies to objections, and rebuttals. There are so many crucial demonstrations that one could not hope to summarize them, though I will indeed outline a part of the argument and locate a few of the key positions. One thing that will make the book hard for many Catholic theologians is the fact that Neville's philosophy is neither Thomistic nor existentialist nor Neo-Maréchalien. Instead, he leads back from the grave a red-cheeked, though hungry-looking,

¹ *God the Creator: On the Transcendence and Presence of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). References to this book are given in parentheses in the text.

Plato. In short, justice cannot be done to this book even by an oversized review. Neville's achievement is the kind that will have to be worked over gradually by full-dress research.

Two last purely introductory remarks. *God the Creator* is only the upper tip of an unwritten system—for a complete system is exactly what Neville has on his mind. Some plots have already been staked out in essays scattered through various journals.² This brings me back to that phenomenon, Neville's age. His earliest published essay, "Man's Ends," showed up in 1962.³ It must have been written when the author was hardly more than twenty. Yet it already shows the dialectical skill and magisterial manner that characterize the "later" writings. Though all this may be astonishing, it is not without historical precedent. Berkeley, one will recall, had finished all his major writings by the time he was thirty.

The book has three parts. Part 1 unfolds and defends a radically new proof for the reality of the creator-God. The short Part 2 is a disquisition on the kind of dialectical method used in the book, defines the level at which the book is written (the ontological), and runs through some important phases of the main proof from a critical perspective. Part 3 interprets the speculative system back into the concrete world of religious experience. This last part turns out to be just as valuable as the two speculative parts.

There are several features of Neville's strategy that may confuse if they are not adverted to. First, although the form of the arguments is always precise and controlled, the thought proceeds dialectically rather than geometrically. What this entails will be explained later; but briefly, it means that positions are taken only after alternative views have been encountered and eliminated. Thus the posing and disposing of objections become an essential, if sometimes distracting, part of the exposition. Secondly, what Neville has to say is so hard to say, and so involved, that he can never say it all at once; it takes the whole book. Consequently, a preliminary statement of a thesis in an early chapter will likely be clarified or qualified later by rephrasings and restatements in varying contexts. This is standard Platonic method. Sometimes the later formulations add revealing nuances to

² In the course of this review I will give a complete listing of all Neville's major writings to date.

³ *Review of Metaphysics* 16 (1962) 26-44. The subject matter is linked with Part 3 of *God the Creator*, and bears on the problem of competing harmonies mentioned below. To summarize: "All the non-religious ideal ends, whatever they are found to be, have their own integrity, as does the religious end. Moreover, we are responsible to them all and are guilty when we fail our responsibilities; and since conflict is inevitable, so is guilt" (pp. 38-39).

the original statements. Whatever may have been Neville's actual *via inventionis*, his way of explaining things gives the impression of a mind constantly refining its productions. In its most pronounced form, this habit adds up to a third stylistic feature of the book: many pivotal arguments and objections are tucked away in sections less central than the points in question. For example, the whole problem about God as a person is found not in the speculative Part 1, but in the phenomenological Part 3—and there it comes as a subpoint to "providence," which in turn occurs within the discussion of liturgy. This is just another illustration, however, of the dialectical method. And it is here, perhaps, that Neville's debt to Plato (and his distance from Spinoza) is most evident.

One terminological ambiguity ought to be straightened out at the start. Neville sometimes calls his speculation "metaphysics" and sometimes "ontology." Strictly speaking, ontology is the correct term. Metaphysics is used in a somewhat loose and popular sense to distinguish his work from the antimetaphysicism of positivism and historicism, as well as from other branches of philosophy such as ethics and epistemology. But occasionally, and consistently through Part 2, he sticks with ontology as against metaphysics. Metaphysics (or cosmology) is the philosophical discipline that inquires into the first principles of things and explores their exemplifications in reality. Ontology (correlated with "cosmogony") is *meta ta metaphysica*. It is not concerned with the specific principles pervading the things that are, but seeks rather to uncover the underlying ground of being. A metaphysical system, Neville holds, is incomplete unless it is rooted in an ontology; ontology, in turn, needs to be expanded into a metaphysics. The metaphysical expansion of ontology, however, is something that can be done at leisure, and Neville does not attempt it in this book, though he does indicate the lines his metaphysics might take if fully articulated. Metaphysics, on the contrary, cannot wait for ontology, because it needs ontology for its very legitimization. But this point is disputed by those metaphysicians who regard ontology as unnecessary or impossible and consider metaphysics to be the ultimate science. Neville, accordingly, is forced to defend ontology as a program; and this he does through the course of the book, especially in Part 2.

I

The kind of creator whose reality Neville demonstrates is as unique in the history of ideas as the demonstration itself. The creator, identified with being-itself, has two sides—"side," of course, being a limp-

ing metaphor. In its conditional feature or aspect *as creator*, it is relational, determinate, and intelligible. In its essential reality, that is, *in its aseity*, it is independent, indeterminate, absolutely transcendent, and beyond intelligibility. The essential, far, or dark side of the creator cannot be known, for it precedes all intelligible structures (the latter, according to one of Neville's leading ideas, are part of what is created out of nothing). Its reality can only be arrived at dialectically, for it is known "only insofar as it gets incarnated in the created determination of being *creator*" (p. 167). This two-sided creator-God is Neville's original contribution to philosophy, theology, and piety. And it is this particular kind of God that is purchased with the Nevillian proof. If one accepts the proof for the reality of this creator, one must also be willing to abide by the kind of creator proved. Many Christians will be inclined to judge it principally on the basis of whether they can feel spiritually comfortable with such a Janus-like depiction of God. The first response from most of us is likely to be negative, regardless of the finesse of the speculative argument. Before diving in more deeply, therefore, we should pause to consider the religious advantages of such a concept of God.

At first blush the two-sided creator might be taken for the God of Whitehead, with its primordial and consequent natures;⁴ but the similarity is an illusion. Neville, though a careful student of Whitehead and the beneficiary of the most durable aspects of his thought, does not operate from a Whiteheadian base. His position is, in fact, antipathetic to both Whitehead and Hartshorne and had best be read off without reference to Whitehead's divine dipolarity or Hartshorne's divine relativity. This dissociation from the process-God is, in my opinion, a strong point (Whitehead I like, but his version of the divinity has never appealed to me). What Neville has going is something quite different. The conventional process-God lacks the independence, ultimacy, and absoluteness—in short, the holiness—which the religious sensibility must find in its divinity. Neville himself in Part 3 presents these religious requirements with great strictness, showing at the same time how his own creator fulfils them. In this connection Anselm's ontological argument is interpreted as a touchstone of holiness or religious ultimacy: the only worshipful God is "That than which nothing greater can be conceived" (p. 190). Seen from one side, the creator-God has much in common with Tillich's notion of the "God-beyond-God," or the Barthian God who, in its utter transcendence, is immune to the impertinences of philosophers. This is certainly a God that a refined Christian sensibility can be

⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York, 1960) pp. 521-24.

at home with. On the other side, qua creator, Neville's God is continuous with, relative to, and conditioned by the creation it creates. Hence, as creator, God can be known and approached via the intelligible structures of creation. The way lies open to all defensible philosophical avenues to God—and these, Neville holds, may and should be sought out and developed “with all possible dialectical rigor.”⁵ Neville's version of the creator thus makes allowance for the insights of both the rational-scholastic attitude to God and the mystical-skeptical-negative way that puts God out of philosophical reach. If Neville can make his claims stick, it may have to be admitted that he has put up the most all-round satisfying conception of God that anyone has ever proposed. It is the allurements of such a prospect that makes his theory so worthy of close, open-minded examination. If the Socratic midwife finally judges his conception a miscarriage, it will at least have been one of the most auspicious pregnancies in the history of speculation about God. Even in failure its contribution to the ongoing philosophical dialogue will have been immense.

What will inevitably disturb the scholastically-trained mind is the thought that God could have anything like “sides” or “aspects”—and, more than that, the scholastic will balk at the idea that one of these sides is “conditioned” by creation. It could be retorted that at first glance the tri-personed Christian Trinity and the anthropomorphic Hebrew Yahweh suffer from similar liabilities. Neville's case is far more subtle than the stark thing I have presented. It is as precisely reasoned as any scholastic treatise on the unity and distinction of persons (see his “Creation and the Trinity” in this number of THEOLOGICAL STUDIES). Here the reader will get an initial sense of the com-

⁵ “Some Historical Problems about the Transcendence of God,” *Journal of Religion* 47 (1967) 1-9, at p. 8. In this brief article, published about a year before the book, Neville broaches the doctrine of the “two sides.” The “sides” of God are termed “moments.” “In the first moment, when God is transcendent, if he is creator, then his being in itself is *not* dependent on what he creates” (p. 5). “Moment” refers, of course, to ontological status, not temporal sequence. He goes on: “The second, immanent moment of creation comes as God wills the creation of the world and thus becomes creator. For God to have the features of a creator, there must be such a thing as the created product. . . . As creator, God is conditioned by the essential features of what he creates, by the conditions of creation” (p. 5). It is this second moment which gives the “grounds within the created world from which to understand God” (p. 5). Here lies the basis for philosophical approaches to God. However, “because of his nature as creator or ground God must transcend even that nature, since that nature depends on a connection with the created world. But to know that the creator must transcend his nature as creator is still not to know anything about God as he is absolutely in himself, for it is only to know something about what it is to be a creator, God's connective and hence derivative nature” (p. 7). It was this very able piece in *JR* that first aroused my interest in Neville.

plexity of his thought and see how his speculation follows orthodox patterns. A creator like the one he envisions can only be accepted or rejected after all the arguments have been carefully assessed. No such assessment will be attempted in this introductory review. I will, however, risk a tentative personal judgment: *concedo*.

The three-step proof for the creator-God occurs in chap. 3 and can best be put in Neville's own words (pp. 64-74):

One: The determinations of being need a creator in order to be. (This proposition contains two parts: the determinations of being are contingent; this contingency is contingency upon a creator.) Two: The determinations of being are; therefore they are created and there is a creator. Three: The creator provides the unity of the determinations of being, is transcendent and indeterminate; therefore, the creator is what we have been looking for when we have sought being-itself.

The creator of the determinations turns out to be being-itself, which Neville considers to be sufficiently identified with God by philosophical tradition so as not to require elaborate demonstration in the present book (pp. 11, 14). But the meaning of being-itself and its relation to the determinations of being have yet to be made clear. These are the problems that occupy the earlier chapters, and it is these with which we must begin.

"Determination of being" or "determinate being" is a phrase calculated to denote neutrally anything one could bump into or conceive, or which could possibly be in any sense. Anything, that is, except the creator—but then the creator, Neville shows, is *indeterminate*; and, furthermore, cannot properly be said to "be" (p. 93). The term "determination" accords with an analysis of things. Any example one might allege in opposition, including ideas, scientific hypotheses, or mere intelligibles (or surds) proves to be a determinate something (p. 70). Otherwise it would not be distinguishable as anything. A determination of being, moreover, always has its identity "over against or in difference from what is other than that identity" (p. 44). It follows that, if there is anything determinate, there is also a multiplicity of determinate beings; and the multiplicity will require an account. Another fundamental characteristic of a determinate being is that it is complex internally: it must have at least two features, an essential one and a conditional one. The essential feature is that by which a thing is what it is; the conditional feature is that by which it is determinate in contrast to what is really distinct from it. "Without being determinate with respect to something else, a determination cannot be said to be determinate at all, since it would not be intrin-

sically different from anything" (p. 65). Thus any determinate thing even taken alone presents a multiplicity.

There are, then, many determinate beings. But these beings are *together*—they are a multiplicity which at the same time constitutes a unity (they could never be seen together as "many" unless they were in some sense one). The unity need not be a particularly harmonious one, but it will consist at the very least in the fact that determinate beings are together in that they contrast with one another and have enough "in common" to make the contrast possible. There is a basic principle here, which Neville calls the "principle of the ontological ground of differences": "Two differing determinations of being presuppose a common ground in virtue of which they are relevantly determined with respect to each other and from which each delimits for itself a domain over against the other" (p. 24). The manifold togetherness with its underlying ground of unity raises the ancient problem of the one and the many. How does or can a one unify a many? The question starts the quest for the *one*.

The one that unifies the many cannot be any determinate being, and so must be indeterminate being-itself. Neville's tactic for arriving at this conclusion is to show that no traditional solution to the problem of the one and the many really works. He dialectically clears the way for his own answer by eliminating the chief competitors. The search for the one that unifies the many will conclude that the one is nothing else than being-itself; and, in the "proof" which we have read above, this unifying being-itself will be further identified as the creator of determinate being.

The first phase of the demonstration begins with the assertion that being-itself is univocally one rather than analogical (that it cannot be equivocal is shown in passing later on). Thomists will fidget and sound the usual complaint that Neville "has not understood" the doctrine of analogy. Admittedly, six pages is not enough room in which to speak to a subject that is suitably addressed only in the mystagogic tongues of the post-Cajetan pentecost. He will have to follow through with a more recondite *quodlibet* if he hopes to convert any of his Thomist colleagues. As for the argument itself, it is embarrassingly simple. What Neville rejects is a statement of the analogy of proper proportionality such as "God's intelligence is proportioned to his being as our intelligence is proportioned to our being" (p. 18). His objection is not primarily that this proportion might not be true, but that it cannot be *known to be true* without a secret appeal to *univocal* knowledge. Given any three terms of the proportion, the fourth could be inferred through the analogy. Or the relation of the third

and fourth could be compared to the relation of the first and second. But three terms cannot be known, only two. To know a third term, one of the terms of God's side of the proportion, would be to "know the determinate distance between man and God" (p. 18). Such knowledge, if available at all, would have to be derived on other grounds and imported into the analogy from without. Neville then shifts to the ontology underlying analogy. If "analogical predication of a term must have a univocal or non-analogical ground. . . then God and his creatures, or any other kinds of beings, *cannot be said to be in different senses*" (p. 20). He concludes that, "although two things can differ in what they are, that is, in their determinations, they cannot differ in the sense in which they are what they are. . . Hence, however the determinations of being differ, being-itself must be one" (p. 21). The way is then clear for an inquiry into the nature of this being-itself that is one. Especially, is it determinate or indeterminate?

Theories that being-itself is determinate are now ready to be swept away. Against the first of four, Neville maintains that being-itself cannot be *ens commune*, a property common to all beings. If being-itself is a determinate property, what is the ontological status of those other properties with which it contrasts? If they "are," then some higher sense of being-itself, in virtue of which both being-itself and the being of the other properties "are," has been smuggled in (p. 23). Next, being-itself cannot be a determinate *ens perfectissimum*, for it could not be determinately characterized except by something that would contrast with it on its own logical level. But just because it is by definition the *perfectissimum*, there could be nothing on its footing with which it might contrast (pp. 24-28). The third and fourth possibilities are those supplied by Hegel and Royce. These two sections are too technical to summarize, but the countertactics are basically those that have already been brought to light. The criticism of Hegel, incidentally, is both sympathetic and penetrating. The conclusion at this stage, then, is that whatever being-itself is, it is not determinate. There follows a discussion of the nature of "determinate being" in chap. 2 (already touched on above), after which Neville arrives at the heart of his argument, the thesis that being-itself is the indeterminate one that unifies the many.

The problem of the one and the many is stated thus: "However different things in the world might be, their very differences presuppose that they are determinate relative to each other and therefore exist in some more basic unity. . . . Any multiplicity presupposes some rudimentary unity: every many needs a one. . . . How a multiplicity is unified is the classical problem of the one and the many"

(p. 15). Being-itself suggests itself as a likely candidate for the one. It has been shown to be indeterminate by the above arguments, and all that is left is to demonstrate that the one which unifies the many must also be indeterminate. (If one sniffs a faulty syllogism in the air, it should be remembered that there could not be *two* absolutely indeterminate beings.) Once more the attack is dialectical. The field is left to the indeterminate unifier of determinate beings after the most respectable competing theory (Weiss's) has been found wanting. Let the following argument suffice as a sample (it is scarcely a summary) of the complicated second chapter in which the contest with Weiss takes place: "Suppose that being-itself as the one is determinate with respect to the determinations. If it is itself determinate with respect to the determinations even in the least bit, then there is a real distinction [Neville has his own definition of "real distinction"] between it and them. But it is precisely the real distinction that prohibits one determination from being the ontological one for the others from which it is really distinct" (p. 60). If a being is really distinct from another, it must be composed of essential and conditional features, and hence requires some further unity to unify *it*—and so cannot ultimately be the one that unifies the many (pp. 46, 50).

Neville's answer to the problem of the one and the many is that which we have already seen in the condensed "proof" for the creator. The creator is the one for the many by being the one that creates the many. It is their one by being their common ground, their common creator, "the creator of them all, each and every one and all together" (p. 71). The creator and the created many need no further unity over and above or between them (which would initiate an infinite regress), because the creator, which is being-itself, is not determinate, does not determinately contrast with determinate beings, is not "really distinct" (in Neville's special sense) from them, and does not form a manyness or togetherness along with them.

This sketch of Part 1 is far too simple, but it should have given the newcomer a taste of what is being served up. I might be expected at this point to submit some trenchant criticisms of what has preceded. One reason why I shall not is that my response to *God the Creator* has been one of fascination bordering on tremulation. There will assuredly come a time for reneging on this or that in Neville's program. But my frame of mind till now has been that of a man trying simply to absorb and appreciate a work of art. In this review I am attempting a positive *presentation*. I did not want to bewilder a presumably uninitiated readership with an esoteric thematic study of an unfamiliar subject. But the main reason why I do not undertake such criticism here is,

frankly, that I have no fight to pick. Naturally there are question marks and queries in my margins, but I have formed no opinion as to the final weight of these. I will, however, insert one of them at this time just to prove I am not an idolater.

In his paper on the Trinity in this issue Neville says: "Creating them [the determinations of being], God makes Himself creator." The same language is used in the book: "The creator makes itself creator when and as it creates" (p. 72); "the creator gives itself its conditional features [such as that of being creator] as it creates the determinations of being" (p. 75). Now what is the difference between saying the creator *makes* itself creator, and, the creator *creates* itself creator? If there is no difference, as there seems not to be, how would we be prevented from going on to speak of a previous creator (or another creative act) which creates the creator creating (and so on)? Neville's theory requires him to say that the creator becomes creator all at once in the very act of creating, and is in no wise creator "before" it creates. In the indeterminate creator, there is neither act nor positive *potentia* prior to action (neither, of course—be it said in fairness—is there any "prior"). "Power" is a high attribute of Neville's creator—see chap. 10. But power is determinate. What indeterminate power creates the creator's determinate power? But Neville is elusive, while I am always getting thrown by a wanton imagination. The trouble could be with the word "makes." Language may be breaking down here, and there is no use building a counterargument on a disintegrating word. Nevertheless, while still giving Neville the benefit of the doubt, I do wish to register my little complaint.

II

The methodological Part 2 of *God the Creator* is not easy to evaluate. I disagree with the critic in the *Christian Century* when he calls it an unconvincing tour de force.⁶ Yet after reading it three times at leisurely intervals, I have to confess that I have not had enough insights into what Neville really wants to say here, nor have I always been aware of the precise way the methodology is supposed to support and carry on the argument—though that it does both of the latter is evident. Having admitted this, let me go on to say that I feel it quite possible that this part is the most creative of the three. It may be, however, that the *élan créatif* has undershot somewhere between the conception and the expression: the content is still in search of its form.

⁶ *Christian Century* 85 (1968) 758. Charley Hardwick, the reviewer, is mostly enthusiastic, calling the book "one of the most substantial American contributions to the theological enterprise in many a year."

The aim of Part 2 is "critical" in the sense that it asks how the knowledge alleged in Part 1 is possible. The speculation in the previous part had the peculiarity of arriving at an explanation of determinate being in terms of something transcendent. The question now is, why is this kind of explanation required? To answer that, Neville must justify his type of explanation; and since it is a peculiar explanation (in the eyes of modern philosophy), he must generate reasons why his kind of explanation is more explanatory than other kinds. This involves him in a theory of philosophical dialectic, namely, "constitutive dialectic," in which dialectical method will find its justification in the dialectical structure of reality itself: the dialectic "reflects the natural joints of the subject matter as it was articulated in Part One" (p. 123).

In ontological problems there are basically two kinds of explanation. The usually accepted one is the "cosmological," in which "the subject matter to be explained is reduced to the first principles or is shown to exhibit them" (p. 127). The "cosmogonic" explanation, on the other hand, is the kind Neville has used in the speculative theory of Part 1. Cosmogonic explanation regards cosmological explanation as incomplete, for on the former view the first principles themselves also stand in need of explanation—and the explanation is not forthcoming from within cosmology. But cosmogony explains the first principles (the structure of intelligibility) by saying that the creator created them that way. Next in order comes a criticism of Paul Weiss, in which it is shown why the first principles cannot be self-explanatory and need a further explanation, the one supplied by cosmogony. The running argument with Brumbaugh in a later chapter is a continuation of this clash between cosmology and cosmogony.

The matter of the cosmogonic explanation was already given in Part 1. The purpose of Part 2 is to show not only that it is a justifiable kind of explanation, but further that it is in fact the only kind of explanation that accounts for what needs to be accounted for. This move strengthens the argument of Part 1 by showing that the very nature of explanation requires that the explanation of a problem like the one originally set must be in terms of an answer like the one there given. It is in this sense that the "critical" explorations of Part 2 carry the speculative argument forward.

In concentrating on the nature of explanation, Neville certainly is dealing with a fundamental methodological question. But one must not expect to find in Part 2 anything like a formal critical epistemology. Neville, uncowed by the Kantian critique, makes it plain else-

where that he is not a follower of Kant.⁷ In an unpublished paper he has proposed a wholesale alternative to Kant—a theory of knowledge that takes its inspiration from Plato's use of dialectic and from the "divided line" metaphor in the *Republic*.⁸ It is essential to keep in mind, however, that the questions Neville raises in the text at hand are not the most general that could be asked in epistemology. They are only specific points having a bearing on what he has been doing in Part 1. That his handling of them has far-reaching implications is not, of course, to be denied.

A closer look at one example may help the reader grasp Neville's strategy more readily than I did. In the introduction to chap. 6, "Methodological Dialectic," we are told that there are two kinds of dialectic, methodological and constitutive. "The 'critical' examination of the speculation of Part One requires a look at both kinds" (p. 136). Actually one would expect that a "critical" look at Part 1 would call for the treatment of all sorts of stock epistemological questions: how we know, what we can know, etc. But this will not be found, for it is not to Neville's purpose at this time. But note further that he does not even attempt a general or schematic analysis of the very dialectic he is treating. He only goes into "several important questions of method raised by the particularities of our speculation" (p. 136). Now what are these? Again the reader may feel that the points Neville selects are not the ones he himself would have picked. Here is what Neville decides on (p. 136):

In the first place, we must raise the problem of the extent to which our seemingly abstract ontological discussion is based upon experiential confrontations with the subject matter. Second, we must discover the extent to which our reliance on analogy in Parts One and Three is affected by our criticisms of analogy in chapter 1. Third, we must elaborate the nature of the methodological support that dialectic and analogy give each other. Fourth, it must be shown how methodological dialectic involves experience and analogy.

Accordingly there follows immediately a section entitled "Religious

⁷ "Intuition," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1967) 556-90; see p. 572. Thesis: every judgment involves knowledge or intuition of harmony; harmonies are things you either see or do not see. The kinds of intuition (which are always fallible) can best be described on the analogy of Plato's divided line.

⁸ "The Contemporary Problem of Reason in Christianity," unpublished. Thesis: it is unnecessary to follow Schleiermacher or Hegel in their defense of religion against Kant; rather, one must go behind Kant, Descartes, and the modern quest for certainty, and reorientate the problem of epistemology. Neville's alternative defends four complementary functions of reason: imagination, experiential interpretation, speculation, and dialectic. In good dialectical fashion, he discusses each of the four fourfoldly.

Experience," which treats such topics as the relation of religious experience to philosophy, the privacy of religious experience, the problem of psychological reduction, and religion's relation to the philosophical quest. All of this comes as a surprise to one who expected an analysis of "methodological dialectic." More than that, it is not easy to see how this material bears even upon the "particularities of our speculation" in Part 1. This dislocation of the expected schematic arrangement of questions is typical of Part 2, and is partly the reason why it is so easy to lose track of what is going on.

Several things can be said for Neville's procedure. First, one should recall my introductory remarks about his way of arguing. Part 2 is less an explanation of dialectic than an illustration of it. The use of dialectic is fundamental to Neville's whole enterprise, and the sooner this is accepted the better. He describes his dialectic by contrasting it with the "dianoetic" method (note that this way of describing it—through contrast—is itself illustrative of dialectic):

The dialectical tradition says that the fundamental questions are those addressed to a position about a subject matter. This is the tradition which sees reflection as the function of thought bringing knowledge out of error. The erroneous position is essential to the process of thought, since it is that toward which the fundamental questions are addressed The dianoetic tradition holds that the fundamental questions are asked, not about a candidate solution to a problem, but rather about the subject matter itself. The answer to the question then is arrived at either by some kind of "looking" or by testing of candidates by certain criteria, etc.⁹

Neville can be found using the dialectic-dianoetic distinction to advantage elsewhere, though the above passage presents it in its clearest lines. Passing remarks on dialectic and *dianoia* (which is linked with the cosmological type of explanation) can be found in section B of chap. 7 in the present work; but the text there does not give much hint of the explications to be made in later essays.¹⁰

Now the way in which the procedure we have been looking at (dianoetically perhaps) illustrates the dialectic is something like this. The main point of section A on religious experience is that the lack of such experience, or certain skeptical readings of experience, must not be taken as positively disconfirming the speculation about a transcendent God. The section thus has the form of an answer to certain

⁹ "Reply," *Christian Scholar* 1 (1967) 324-25. In response to William Christian on the question of the relation between theology and metaphysics, Neville insists that it is part of theology's subject matter to decide what the subject matter of theology is.

¹⁰ In "Forms and Intelligibility" (unpublished), among others; discusses forms, norms, universals, participation, and the theory of theory. Apparently the old Platonic questions are worth asking anew in the contemporary setting.

objections which might be raised against the whole theoretical program of Part 1. In the background, moreover, lies the general question of the role of experience in philosophy: whether and to what extent it is necessary at the beginning of theory-building, or whether a confirming experience coming at the end of speculation and reinterpreting it back into experiential terms suffices. The raising of these latter questions leads into the next sections on "analogy" (which is only partially rejected after all) and "dialectic." The second thing that can be said in defense of the conduct of the argument is that Neville himself has provided a clarification of it. In section C of chap. 6 there is an explicit treatment of the relation of experience to "methodological dialectic" (pp. 140-41):

Methodological dialectic works in the many ways indicated above to transform the categories of initial reflection into those that fulfill the ideal of system. It proceeds with one eye on the ideal of system that would complete understanding and with the other eye on the categories with which we begin. It is to be doubted, at least for a realist, that philosophy can be *only* dialectical; the categories with which the dialectic begins must first prove their worth in interpreting experience before pure thought can drive their ramifications to conclusions beyond experience. But given a critically developed fund of experience and interpretative categories (which we are never in reality without), a philosopher can draw conclusions that press toward making our knowledge complete and systematic.

A section entitled "Dialectic in Experience" follows, expanding the point slightly. That is why Neville felt obliged to include a treatment of religious experience in a chapter on methodological dialectic—though it does not explain why he put that section first or why he left its rationale to be worried out by the reader. Here, then, is just one example out of many which illustrates why Part 2 is hard to penetrate. The pedagogy is in marked contrast to that of Part 1, in which Neville is at pains to furnish the reader with a tactical overview of every maneuver, and habitually shoots instant replays of surprising action.

III

Part 3 is the freshest treatment of "philosophy of religion" I know. It is a relief to find at last a discussion of religion from which the jargon of existentialism, personalism, and phenomenology is absent. Not that Neville is ignorant of the contributions of these movements to our understanding of human-being. But this is not your exasperating florilegium of Buber, Fromm, Teilhard, Husserl, Sartre, and Heidegger.¹¹

¹¹ Neville is dishing up an American philosophy/theology. Apart from Plato (and his commentator Brumbaugh), Neville's mentors are chiefly Paul Weiss, John E. Smith, Hartshorne, Tillich, Whitehead, Peirce, Royce, and to some extent James and Dewey.

As far as I can tell, it is a brand new way of going at the subject, spinning out a whole string of insights into old problems and opening new prospects onto religion at its most general level.

Part 3 brings "the speculative theory of creation to the experience of religion, in which God's transcendence and presence is an issue. Although all relevant problems cannot be considered, the ones chosen will be illustrative of the interpretive power of the speculative categories" (p. 8). The main category in question is that of creature-creator. Man's attitude toward God depends upon what it means to be a creature. Redemption, reconciliation, and forgiveness—grace, in other words—are explained in terms of how the creator is present in and transcendent of the creature.

Towards the end of Part 1 Neville had asked: "what is there in the creating of the determinations that manifests God's presence?" (p. 116). The answer given there is now made more specific by counting man himself as one of the determinations. This link between the two parts of the book is brought out in an elegant paragraph which fairly typifies the classical tone of his writing (p. 205):

To make connection with the discussion in Part One, we must relate the conception of man to that of a determination of being, for the notion of a determination of being in general is the most concrete thing our speculative discussion has related to the conception of God. Indeed, the characterization of determinateness in chapter 2 was so abstract it did not distinguish between kinds of determination of being. It applied as well to universals and values as to particulars and complex human individuals. What is necessary now is to move from the abstract discussion of determinateness in general to a more specific characterization of how a human individual as a determination of being is related to God. It is impossible to indulge in the proper philosophical anthropology that would be needed for a comprehensively adequate account of the connection between man and God; our purposes are too limited and the discussion so far has not provided sufficient background. Furthermore, we are not even in a position to give a comprehensive metaphysical account of all the elements that go into human life, its actualities and possibilities, freedoms and destinations, ideals and responsibilities—that is, a full-blown metaphysical treatment of all the determinations of being. Still, it is necessary for our present purposes to make use of some conceptions whose full justification would require an anthropology and a metaphysics, and we must acknowledge at the outset that the best that can be hoped is that our statement of these conceptions will convey a *prima facie* plausibility.

It does.

After the central categories of creator-creature, the next most important notion is "harmony."¹² The creator becomes present to the

¹² "Neville's Theory of Harmony" will surely be the title of a forty-page monograph by somebody. Harmony (along with "norm" and "normativeness") is an all-important

creature in a special way when it creates the creature's harmony. "If religion," Neville writes, "is a problem that man has with respect to his creator, then we can begin with the thesis that what God gives a certain determination of being when he creates it is its harmony" (p. 207). "The religious problem," he continues, "is a problem of harmony" (p. 207). Man has a problem of harmony in the two spheres which comprise the whole of his life: his "public side" and his "private side" (p. 209). (The division into public and private is the armature around which most of Part 3 is molded, and is one of its notable virtues.) Since man is primarily a creature, his main religious difficulty is that of being what he is supposed to be: the creature that he is; and so Neville also describes the religious problem as the problem of being fully human. The whole problem of harmony can then be restated in more comprehensive terms: religion has to do with man's effort to achieve a *human harmony* both in his public and in his private side. And the crucial point is not the harmony of either the one side or the other, but the harmonizing of the two competing harmonies, "each of which deals with the harmony of man's whole nature as man" (p. 290). Consequently, there is only *one* religious harmony, in that "each person must harmonize *his* participation in *both* private and public life" (p. 291). It is in his attempt to achieve this harmony, in which one side or the other is bound to be shortchanged due to man's finitude, that man's failure (sinfulness) crops up, a failure that can be made good only by God's creative forgiveness. Man's harmony can never be perfect; but from a religious point of view its imperfection can be redeemed when it embraces the creator's forgiveness. In the divine forgiveness creating harmony in man lies the religious focal point for the creator's presence in the world (pp. 231-36).

Neville is able to gather most of the leading ideas of religion into the shelter of the private/public dialectic. On the interior side come

concept for Neville. In *God the Creator*, however, he has not developed it as fully as in other places. For instance, in the central passage giving the "proof" for the creator, p. 66 is devoted to showing that "no account can be given of why a harmony is a harmony"—this being one phase in the establishment of the first proposition of the proof. But the argument seems jejune. For a more convincing treatment of the same point, one should refer to "Intuition" (n. 7 above), esp. pp. 558-70. Again, the discussion of the transcendentals at the end of Part 1 is closely allied to a doctrine of harmony. Harmony is really the transcendental of transcendentals for Neville; he explains them all in terms of it. See in this connection "Forms and Intelligibility" (n. 10 above), as well as his feature review article on Edward Ballard's *Socratic Ignorance*, in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1967) 340-56, esp. p. 351. In this latter article he bases his criticism of Ballard on the four-level theory of knowledge mentioned in n. 8 above, showing that a problem cannot be treated fully if it is considered only from the viewpoint of "experience."

concern, conversion, faith, certainty, solitude, and bliss; on the exterior, service, liturgy and providence, evangelism, dedication, reconciliation, and brotherhood. The topics chosen smack more strongly of Christianity, especially Protestantism, than of religion in general. Neville acknowledges that this is the case, and justifies himself by saying that this is the domain in which his experience gives him the most competence. I find his explanation satisfactory, and would add that the actual handling of the topics is less evangelical than philosophical, despite his being a Methodist elder.

As a "contemplative" monk professionally dedicated to the inner side of the religious life, I was impressed by Neville's plea for the integration of the private and public sides of religion. In America at present both sides are having a heyday, but they have not come together. Civil rights and other social and political movements have

presented a problem both simple enough in its apparent demands and difficult enough in its solutions to call forth an exhibition of public witness from all religious faiths that is as powerful and poignant as any in history. At the same time the so-called theological revolution is focusing the problems of faith and the inner life as they have not been focused for centuries. Yet the tragedy is that these seem almost to be separate movements. So often the religious advocates of civil rights are theologically naïve and offer public action as a dodge for escaping the problems of faith and the inner life. On the other side the theologians are often so caught up in the internal difficulties of their problems that they fail to give careful consideration to the guidance they offer for public expression (p. 210).

A balance must be struck between these two phases of religion—and not just within the Church as a whole (a view that convinced only as long as the "Mystical Body" seemed more real an entity than the individuals comprising it), but within each member of the Church—at the risk of loss of religious harmony. Each side makes full-time demands, he points out, but a man must learn how to harmonize them. "There is a time to act and there is a time to retreat into the inner chambers of the soul" (p. 210). This is not far from Aquinas' notion of *contemplata tradere* and the "mixed life."

What I have said is by no means a summary of Part 3. If one wishes summaries, there are none better than Neville's own. Nor is my article necessarily a selection of the most important ideas. Least of all is it a search for the underlying presuppositions and operational principles, or an attempt to place *God the Creator* in the mainstream of philosophical speculation. It is just a sampling of thought made with the

hope that it will induce others to discover for themselves, and by their own efforts, the richness and originality of Neville's work.¹³

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¹³The following essays by Neville have not yet been mentioned in this review: "Ehman's Idealism," *Review of Metaphysics* 17 (1964) 617-22 (relates to Part 1, especially the arguments that being-itself is not determinate, and the section on nonbeing in chap. 4); "Philosophy and the Question of God" (unpublished), the Aquinas lecture at Seton Hall for 1967 (summarizes his speculation on the creator, and defends the abstractness of philosophy precisely for the sake of preserving the concreteness of religious experience); "Neoclassical Metaphysics and Christianity: A Critical Study of Ogden's *Reality of God*," in the December 1968 issue of *Una sancta* (Schubert Ogden's process theology is torn apart philosophically in a rather uneven philosophical match; and Neville has a chance to specify some of the points of difference between his thought and that of process philosophers); "A Review of Nine Books by and about Teilhard," to be published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (by way of comment, I take the liberty of quoting from a private communication: "I am quite unhappy with the review of the Teilhard material, mainly because I learned so little from writing it; compared with Alexander, Peirce and Whitehead, Teilhard seems a singularly pedestrian thinker"); "Clues to a Doctrine of Spirit" (unpublished), subtitled "Preface to the Members of the Bea Seminar on Authority and Freedom" (shows Neville moving more firmly into the field of theology, and in an orthodox way; should be read with the paper on the Trinity in this issue of *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*); "Can God Create Men and Address Them Too?," to appear in *Harvard Theological Review* this winter (asserts that man can be both created and free because God creates him freely responding; notes that a free response is always a *critical* response). This last article ties in with the subject of Neville's next book, which is to be on the problem of freedom.