

God's Nature and the Creation of Logic

In the last twenty years analytic philosophy has seen a rising interest in the philosophy of religion in general and in rational reconstructions of religion related arguments and Christian doctrines. In this short note I like to point to a problem that although cosmological arguments play a great role in the present discussion has not received the attention, I believe, it deserves.

An old objection to cosmological arguments, named “the Carriage Objection” by Arthur Schopenhauer, charges them as being arbitrary: the arguments are employed to carry you to the existence of God, but no further (as the carriage carries you to some destination to be dismissed then, therefore the name of the objection). A simple cosmological argument claims the existence of the universe to require explanation, and offers God as the cause of the universe. The Carriage Objection now asks why the principle of *sufficient explanation* that carried the argument forth to God will not carry us on to a sufficient explanation of God, and then on – *ad infinitum*. The regress is considered to be vicious. If one was to accept some brute fact (like the existence of God) then why not stop with the brute fact of the existence of the universe?

The objection has several weaknesses, as has been pointed out several times. For example, cosmological arguments from fine-tuning argue that the values of the natural constants are still in need of explanation, even if one takes the existence of the universe as a brute fact. As for the application of the principle of sufficient explanation some philosophers have claimed that it does not carry us any further, since God as *metaphysically necessary* is – in contrast to the universe as *metaphysically contingent* – not the type of entity which stands in need of explanation.

Whether these are good replies to the Carriage Objection will not concern us here in detail, what they presuppose, however, is a commitment to assumptions about *God's Nature* – as do several other arguments in the philosophy of religion (like God being wholly good, being outside space, knowing the past completely etc.).

With respect to God's Nature a problem arises that resembles the Carriage Objection. God's Nature seems to be *something* – a structure? – that is *given* even to Him. In the middle ages philosophers argued that God's inability to create the impossible (like a stone that not even He

could lift or a proof of squaring the circle) is no objection to His omnipotence, since one must not demand breaking the laws of logic.

Where then do the laws of logic come from?

A dilemma raises its head:

The one horn sees the laws of logic as necessary in the strictest sense (i.e. at least metaphysically necessary or logically necessary in a sense even beyond that) and given with God's Nature. Arguments against God's omnipotence (because of the inability to create an unliftable stone etc.) do not go through then. Now, however, God seems to be limited by His nature (i.e. by finding Himself possessing this nature and not another). Further on, once we allow for God having just *this* nature to be a brute fact, we are again allowing for brute facts, and adherents of the Carriage Objection may stop somewhat earlier then.

The other horn sees God's Nature as being under His control. Some philosopher argue with respect to time that God committed Himself to be changeable by the creation of beings with free will (and thus unforeseeable actions), and thus changed one of His attributes. One may ask whether immutability was *essential* to Him in the first place then.

Rene Descartes toyed with the idea that whereas logic is necessary for our minds even logic is not beyond God's control. This immediately undermines substantial iterative alethic modalities: even what for us is necessarily necessary isn't necessarily necessary from God's point of view. Proofs of God's existence committed to modal logic and assumptions of their ('metaphysical') immutability are undermined in consequence. One option in face of the Carriage Objections, thus, may be to adopt Descartes' position and to deal with the creation of logic in the manner one deals with the creation of time.

In any case, however, a major problem remains: Even if He committed Himself to, say, *tertium non datur* by creating logic, there supposedly have to be some lawlike mechanisms by which He operates, even if His operations concern changing His own nature. And then *these* mechanisms are beyond His control. The whole argument starts all over again, a vicious regress seems to loom here. If anyone goes along this path God's Nature seems to dissolve: One approaches some being (whatever that now may mean) with undifferentiated structure or nature, one departs from the God of Theism, not to speak of the Christian God.