And this leads me to my point here. Many Christian philosophers appear to think of themselves qua philosophers as engaged with the atheist and agnostic philosopher in a common search for the correct philosophical position vis a vis the question whether there is such a person as God. Of course the Christian philosopher will have his own private conviction on the point; he will believe, of course, that indeed there is such a person as God. But he will think, or be inclined to think, or half inclined to think that as a philosopher he has no right to this position unless he is able to show that it follows from, or is probable, or justified with respect to premises accepted by all parties to the discussion-theist, agnostic and atheist alike. Furthermore, he will be half inclined to think he has no right, as a philosopher, to positions that presuppose the existence of God, if he can't show that belief to be justified in this way.

What I want to urge is that the Christian philosophical community ought not think of itself as engaged in this common effort to determine the probability or philosophical plausibility of belief in God. The Christian philosopher quite properly starts from the existence of God, and presupposes it in philosophical work, whether or not he can show it to be probable or plausible with respect to premises accepted by all philosophers, or most philosophers at the great contemporary centers of philosophy.

Taking it for granted, for example, that there is such a person as God and that we are indeed within our epistemic rights (are in that sense justified) in believing that there is, the Christian epistemologist might ask what it is that confers justification here: by virtue of what is the theist justified? Perhaps there are several sensible responses. One answer he might give and try to develop is that of John Calvin (and before him, of the Augustinian, Anselmian, Bonaventurian tradition of the Middle Ages): God, said Calvin, has implanted in humankind a tendency or nisus or disposition to believe in him:

"There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity." This we take to beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty . . .

Therefore, since from the beginning of the world there has been no region, no city, in short, no household, that could do without religion, there lies in this a tacit confession of a sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all.[2]

Calvin's claim, then, is that God has so created us that we have by nature a strong tendency or inclination or disposition towards belief in him. Although this disposition to believe in God has been in part smothered or suppressed by sin, it is nevertheless universally present. And it is triggered or actuated by widely realized conditions:

Lest anyone, then, be excluded from access to happiness, he not only sowed in men's minds that seed of religion of which we have spoken, but revealed himself and daily disclosed himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As, a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him (p. 51).

Like Kant, Calvin is especially impressed in this connection, by the marvelous compages of the starry heavens above:

Even the common folk and the most untutored, who have been taught only by the aid of the eyes, cannot be unaware of the excellence of divine art, for it reveals itself in this innumerable and yet distinct and well-ordered variety of the heavenly host (p. 52).

And now what Calvin says suggests that one who accedes to this tendency and in these circumstances accepts the belief that God has created the world-perhaps upon beholding the starry heavens, or the splendid majesty of the mountains, or the intricate, articulate beauty of a tiny flower- is quite as rational and quite as justified as one who believes that he sees a tree upon having that characteristic being-appeared-to-treely kind of experience.

No doubt this suggestion won't convince the skeptic; taken as an attempt to convince the skeptic it is circular. My point is just this: the Christian has his own questions to answer, and his own projects; these projects may not mesh with those of the skeptical or unbelieving philosopher. He has his own questions and his own starting point in investigating these questions. Of course, I don't mean to suggest that the Christian philosopher must accept Calvin's answer to the question I mentioned above; but I do say it is entirely fitting for him to give to this question an answer that presupposes precisely that of which the skeptic is skeptical-even if this skepticism is nearly unanimous in most of the prestigious philosophy departments of our day. The Christian philosopher does indeed have a responsibility to the philosophical world at large; but his fundamental responsibility is to the Christian community, and finally to God.

Again, a Christian philosopher may be interested in the relation between faith and reason, and faith and knowledge: granted that we hold some things by faith and know other things: granted we believe that there is such a person as God and that this belief is true; do we also know that God exists? Do we accept this belief by faith or by reason? A theist may be inclined towards a reliabilist theory of knowledge; he may be inclined to think that a true belief constitutes knowledge if it is produced by a reliable belief producing mechanism. (There are hard problems here, but suppose for now we ignore them.) If the theist thinks God has created us with the sensus divinitatis Calvin speaks of, he will hold that indeed there is a reliable belief producing mechanism that produces theistic belief; he will thus hold that we know that God exists. One who follows Calvin here will also hold that a capacity to apprehend God's existence is as much part of our natural noetic or intellectual equipment as is the capacity to apprehend truths of logic, perceptual truths, truths about the past, and truths about other minds. Belief in the existence of God is then in the same boat as belief in truths of logic, other minds, the past, and perceptual objects; in each case God has so constructed us that in the right circumstances we acquire the belief in question. But then the belief that there is such a person as God is as much among the deliverances of our natural noetic faculties as are those other beliefs. Hence we know that there is such a person as God, and don't merely believe it; and it isn't by faith that we apprehend the existence of God, but by reason; and this whether or not any of the classical theistic arguments is successful.

Now my point is not that Christian philosophers must follow Calvin here. My point is that the Christian philosopher has a right (I should say a duty) to work at his own projects-projects set by the beliefs of the Christian community of which he is a part. The Christian philosophical community must work out the answers to its questions; and both the questions and the appropriate ways of working out their answers may presuppose beliefs rejected at most of the leading centers of philosophy. But the Christian is proceeding quite properly in starting from these beliefs, even if they are so rejected. He is under no obligation to confine his research projects to those pursued at those centers, or to pursue his own projects on the basis of the assumptions that prevail there.

Perhaps I can clarify what I want to say by contrasting it with a wholly different view. According to the theologian David Tracy,

In fact the modern Christian theologian cannot ethically do other than challenge the traditional self-understanding of the theologian. He no longer sees his task as a simple defense of or even as an orthodox reinterpretation of traditional belief. Rather, he finds that his ethical commitment to the morality of scientific knowledge forces him to assume a critical posture towards his own and his tradition's beliefs. . . In principle, the fundamental loyalty of the theologian qua theologian is to that morality of scientific knowledge which he shares with his colleagues, the philosophers, historians and social sciences. No more than they can he allow his own- or his tradition's-beliefs to serve as warrants for his arguments. In fact, in all properly theological inquiry, the analysis should be characterized by those same ethical stances of autonomous judgment, critical judgment and properly skeptical hard-mindedness that characterizes analysis in other fields.[3]

Furthermore, this "morality of scientific knowledge insists that each inquirer start with the present methods and knowledge of the field in question, unless one has evidence of the same logical type for rejecting those methods and that knowledge." Still further, "for the new scientific morality, one's fundamental loyalty as an analyst of any and all cognitive claims is solely to those methodological procedures which the particular scientific community in question has developed" (6).

I say caveat lector. I'm prepared to bet that this "new scientific morality" is like the Holy Roman Empire: it is neither new nor scientific nor morally obligatory. Furthermore the "new scientific morality" looks to me to be monumentally inauspicious as a stance for a Christian theologian, modern or otherwise. Even if there were a set of methodological procedures held in common by most philosophers, historians and social scientists, or most secular philosophers, historians, and social scientists, why should a Christian theologian give ultimate allegiance to them rather than, say, to God, or to the fundamental truths of Christianity? Tracy's suggestion as to how Christian theologians should proceed seems at best wholly unpromising. Of course I am only a philosopher, not a modern theologian; no doubt I am venturing beyond my depths.

So I don't presume to speak for modern theologians; but however things stand for them, the modern Christian philosopher has a perfect right, as a philosopher, to start from his belief in God. He has a right to assume it, take it for granted, in his philosophical work-whether or not he can convince his unbelieving colleagues either that this belief is true or that it is sanctioned by those "methodological procedures" Tracy mentions.

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