KANT AND THE CLASSICAL METAPHYSICAL PROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE: HOW THE PROOFS CAN PLAY A REGULATIVE FUNCTION IN THE SPHERE OF PURE/SPECULATIVE REASON

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Abstract

In this paper, I question Kant's wholesale rejection of the classical metaphysical proofs of God's existence. I argue that the metaphysical proofs can play a regulative function even in the sphere of pure or speculative reason and without us necessarily invoking practical reason. I contend that the metaphysical proofs have a value beyond polemics as they help throw light on the question of existence in general. I note that evidence of the fine-tuning of the universe raises the plausibility level of the metaphysical arguments. Adopting the method of philosophical analysis, I conclude that the metaphysical proofs reinforce faith in God in those who think God exists even as they enhance the intelligibility of the concept of God, thus conferring non-polemical value on them, regardless of their failure to conclusively demonstrate God's existence.

Keywords: Metaphysical proofs, ontological proof, cosmological proof, teleological proof, regulative function.

Introduction

In this paper, I will closely examine Kant's criticism of the classical ontological, cosmological, and teleological proofs of God's existence and argue that as compelling as Kant's argument against these proofs is, they yet have a continuing relevance for the speculative theist/believer. Much has been written about Kant's critique of the classical metaphysical proofs developed over the centuries by Western philosophers from Plato to Spinoza. While scholars like Allison (2004) and Malcolm (1960) either consider the Kantian critique adequate or logically illuminating, others find faults with the structure and presentation of the critique (Shaffer, 1962; Tooley, 1970; Wood, 1978).

This paper advances the line of reasoning suggested by Wood (1978, p. 99) that Kant's failure to *conclusively* discredit the argument adduced for a "necessary being and intelligent designer of nature" emboldens the speculative theist. In

advancing this idea, this paper will argue that the contested metaphysical proofs are valuable as they serve a justificatory and regulative function for the believer (the speculative theist) in particular and, also, the unbeliever (the atheist) even as these proofs can fit harmoniously into Kant's transcendental philosophy with no intervention from practical reason. The term 'speculative theist' is used interchangeably with the term 'believer' to indicate the person who believes in God and thinks that the classical metaphysical proofs shed light on the idea of God in a way that strengthens belief in God's existence. Section one is the introduction. Section two presents Kant's refutation of the metaphysical proofs while section three provides a critical evaluation of Kant's stance. Section four shows how the metaphysical proofs play a regulative function in the sphere of pure reason for the believer. Section five is the conclusion.

2 Kant's critique of the classical metaphysical proofs of God's existence

This section will present Kant's arguments against the ontological, cosmological, and teleological proofs as concisely as possible with particular emphasis on the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The ontological proof

Kant's scepticism about pure reason establishing God's existence is most fully developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which he comprehensively criticises the metaphysical arguments for God's existence. Kant (1970) understands pure reason with regard to the existence of God to mean the employment of human intellectual powers beyond the limit set by our experience of the phenomenal world that is accessible through the senses. Kant sets out the framework of the problem of God's existence in the thesis and antithesis of the fourth antinomy of pure reason. An antinomy arises out of reason's inclination towards the completion of our experience of the world in unconditioned necessities which, however, transcend the boundaries of our discursive cognitive faculties. When reason purports to prove God's existence this same reason can also be made to disprove God's existence. The fourth antinomy, discussed by Kant in the Transcendental Dialectic section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, produces a thesis which is countered by an antithesis.

Thesis: *There belong to the world, either as its part or as its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary*. (Kant, 1970, A452/B480, p. 415)

Antithesis: *An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause*. (Kant, 1970, A453/B481, p. 415)

The ontological proof (OP) is an *a priori* proof, resting on the clarification of concepts like necessity and reality. Kant's grouse with this proof which was favoured by Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza is that it is based on a conceptual necessity. OP requires that a necessary being is conceived in the mind which possesses all perfections due an existent thing with the utmost reality, the most real being (the *ens realissimum*). For Kant OP indeed establishes a necessity; but this necessity is absolute only in thought and is, therefore, conditioned.

Kant is particularly dismissive of the Cartesian version of the argument. Even if we say, like Descartes, that a triangle has three angles it does not follow that the three angles are absolutely necessary as Descartes supposes. The proposition merely affirms that *if* there is a triangle it will have three angles. This is the case since we can reject the existence of a triangle with its three angles without contradiction. The contradiction envisaged by OP can only subsist if we reject the predicate and retain the subject. In other words, if I accept the existence of a triangle, it will be contradictory to reject its three angles. In like manner, if I reject the existence of God the envisaged contradiction disappears. The statement "God is omnipotent" is an analytical judgment. If I accept the subject the predicate must follow. If I reject the statement by countering "There is no God" no contradiction arises (Kant, 1970, A595/B623, p. 502). Here what is in question is logical consistency and validity.

For Kant, the concept of an *ens realissimum* moves from possibility to necessity. The concept assumes that to contain all reality means to encompass existence. If a being is defined as that which contains all reality, then – with respect to this being – the notion of existence is already contained in the very concept of its possibility. According to Kant, the defenders of the ontological argument assume that the rejection of such a conception of this being leads to the rejection of its internal possibility, which is absurd. Thus, it is assumed that the notion of an *ens realissimum* is logically consistent. Here Kant dissents. It is true that the logical criterion of possibility implies that a concept is always possible. Yet, this is not all there is to the matter. Kant notes that such a concept can be empty, unless it has its basis in sensible experience. It is therefore risky arguing "directly from the logical possibility of concepts to the real possibility of things" (Kant, 1970,

A597/B625, p. 503). The sphere of thought cannot be conflated with the sphere of actually existing things.

Kant reminds us that a determining, or real, predicate must add something to the subject and therefore should not be already embedded in the concept itself. Kant thinks that the term "being" is not a real predicate as it is implied in statements like "God exists" or "A Being exists." The term is merely the copula of a judgment. OP makes a mere verbal claim when it asserts, "There is a God." As a logical predicate, 'is' does not add anything to 'God'. Kant (1970) continues:

> If we think in a thing every feature of reality except one, the missing reality is not added by my saying this defective thing exists ... When, therefore, I think a being as the supreme reality, without any defect, the question still remains whether it exists or not. (A600/B628, pp. 505-506)

The cosmological proof

The cosmological proof (CP) is so named because it begins with the consideration of contingent features of the world and concludes with the postulation of an absolutely necessary being that is the transcendental grounds of this contingency (Kanu 2018). Since necessity involves existence and necessary existence implies something real, indeed a most real being, Kant believes that CP is ultimately reducible to OP. Kant restates the cosmological argument formally:

If anything exists, an absolutely necessary being must also exist.

Now I, at least, exist.

Therefore an absolutely necessary being exists. (Kant, 1970, A604/B632, p. 508)

While Kant accepts the second premise, he considers the first premise to be unjustified. Therefore the conclusion is false. CP begins with an observable feature of the world and must remain restricted to the immanent world-series to retain its legitimacy. Kant insists that we cannot argue from one set of order to a different set of order, from a contingent series to an intelligible series beyond sense-experience. The world is constituted by an empirical order while God belongs to a non-empirical or intelligible order.

Kant argues that empirical contingency and intelligible contingency are opposites and therefore contradictory. Kant introduces the idea of an intelligible

or supersensible contingency to show how God can be the terminus of a contingent series. The contingency involved must not be an empirical contingency if the argument for God's existence is to be valid. The very concept of alteration does not require that when change occurs the opposite of an event should occur at the same time. Rather, the alteration of A makes possible the reality of state B at another time, not simultaneously. Consequently, "the succession of opposite determinations, that is, alteration, in no way establishes contingency of the type represented in the concepts of pure understanding; and cannot therefore carry us to the existence of a necessary being, similarly conceived in purely intelligible terms" (Kant, 1970, A460/B488, p. 421). The chief problem with the claim of the thesis of the fourth antinomy, which contains the cosmological argument, is that it only considers the absolute totality "of the series of conditions determining each other in time, and so reaches what is unconditioned," while the antithesis considers "the contingency of everything which is determined in the temporal series … and from this point of view everything unconditioned and all absolute necessity completely vanishes" (Kant, 1970, A459/B487, pp. 418-419). The thesis tries, illegitimately, to make the leap from an empirical series to a non-empirical series while the antithesis ignores the question of ultimate causation and considers contingency a brute fact.

Kant's more cogent refutation of CP, however, arises from his assertion that CP is, in fact, a variant of OP and must therefore fail. While pretending to be based on experience, CP is "not based on any particular property of this experience but on pure principles of reason, as applied to an existence given through empirical consciousness in general" (Kant, 1970, A615/B643, p. 514). It is, thus, only a slight improvement on the ontological argument. Continuing, Kant asserts that CP, just like OP, "retains the connection of absolute necessity with the highest reality, but instead of reasoning, like the former proof [the ontological proof], from the highest reality to necessity of existence, it reasons from the previously given unconditioned necessity of some being to the unlimited reality of that being" (Kant, 1970, A604/B632, p. 508).

Kant's argument against CP proceeds in two stages.

Stage 1: Here the proponent of CP claims to proceed with the theistic argument from an empirical premise like the existence of a contingent thing or feature of experience, a human being or motion, for instance. However, the believer is stuck with the concept of necessity and realises that she cannot continue to use

empirical categories. All that the speculative theist manages to establish is the claim that experience does lead us to the idea of a necessary being.

Stage 2: Since experience cannot exhibit the properties or determinations of this necessary being, the speculative theist is compelled to abandon the pretext of proving God's existence *a posteriori*. The second stage sees reason falling back on the *a priori* procedure employed by the speculative theist in OP. Reason tries by itself to discover the predicates experience cannot furnish and finds the conditions that support the affirmation of an absolutely necessary being.

According to Kant, the proponent of CP finds the conditions of a necessary being in the concept of the *ens realissimum*, which is then equated with the absolutely necessary being. Thus the proponent of CP falls into the error of the proponent of OP in assuming that the notion of an absolutely necessary being can be deduced from the idea of the most real being by mere analysis (Kant, 1970, A605/B633-A608/B636, pp. 508-510). He asserts that "experience may perhaps lead us to the concept of absolute necessity, but is unable to demonstrate this necessity as belonging to any determinate thing" (Kant, 1970, A607/B635, p. 509). CP purports to prove God's existence from empirical premises only to proceed in a wholly *a priori* manner. The proposition *every absolutely necessary being is likewise the most real of all beings* is the very basis of CP. If this proposition is taken to be true, Kant points out that it must be convertible, *per accidens*, or contingently, to the form *some entia realissima* [most real beings or objects] *are likewise absolutely necessary beings*. If some *entia realissima* are absolutely necessary beings, then all *entia realissima* are necessary beings too since one *ens realissimum* is identical with the other. Consequently, from the proposition *every absolutely necessary being is likewise the most real of all beings* we get by conversion the proposition *every ens realissimum is a necessary being*. Therefore CP = OP.

The teleological proof

The teleological proof (TP) argues from the apparent design in the world to a creator of the world. Kant thinks that the comparison of the world to a watch and God to a watchmaker does not present God as the creator of the world but merely as a designer who is limited by the materials at his disposal. Nevertheless, Kant accords TP great respect and considers it the one proof most compatible with common sense. Indeed, Kant never succeeds in completely abandoning the teleological argument, which features prominently in his

discussion of the relation between teleology and mechanism in the *Critique of Judgment*. Before commencing his criticism of TP, Kant makes it clear that if it too fails like the previous two arguments, then it follows that speculative reason can never demonstrate the existence of God.

Kant admits that there is an abundant evidence of design and order in the world, with beings and things so numerous that we are lost in awe. The natural response to the majestic spectacle of nature is to suppose the reality of a supreme being behind nature. We suppose that the spectacle of nature cannot be the product of "a blindly working all-powerful nature" but rather a product of mind working through freedom, or rational will (Kant, 1970, A625/B653, p. 521). While it is true that the world manifests a profuse variety of things and admirable harmony, human reason cannot take the leap from this contingent empirical sphere to another sphere we cannot know through our natural faculties. To prove that the order in the world is of the making of a supremely wise being, it would be necessary to show that this order could not have emerged naturally in accordance with universal laws. To achieve this difficult task we will be compelled to adopt procedures quite different from that derived from the analogy of watch and watchmaker, that is, the notion that the world is like a watch and God the watchmaker. Kant thinks that TP does not go beyond showing that there is a designer of the world, an architect limited by the materials he uses since the world he designs is not a perfect world.

According to Kant, TP retains a connection to OP just like CP. When we assume the reality of a Supreme Being behind the immanent order in the world, we grant it such predicates as "very great" and "immeasurable". These predicates are informed by pure reason exceeding the limits of experience. We thus find ourselves no farther away from the *a priori* necessity of OP. Consequently, Kant finds cause to rebuke those who think TP is superior to OP. He says that after realizing that TP does not make God more real than the two sister arguments, its champions abandon empirical justifications and return to the realm of possibilities. TP fails and with it also fails the entire endeavour of speculative reason to prove God's existence. Speculative knowledge should be concerned with what *is*. The *is* (empirical state of affairs) fails to take us to God, being materially conditioned and subject to the categorial framework that objectifies the manifold of intuition. Kant (1970) warns that speculative knowledge can "have no other object than that supplied by experience; if we transcend the limits thus imposed, the synthesis which seeks, independently of experience, new

species of knowledge, lacks that substratum of intuition upon which alone it can be exercised." (A471/B499, p. 427)

Kant's pessimism about TP in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is ameliorated in the *Critique of Judgment*. Kant points out the example of a bird while discussing the tension between teleology and mechanism. A bird has wings for flying, light bones to facilitate flying, and a tail for steering. It is easy for us to account for this purposiveness naturalistically, without invoking a supersensible cause. Yet, to determine the unity underpinning this natural organisation of living matter we must go beyond nature. It is our reflective judgment that compels us to read purpose into nature. Kant's love of system is in play here, for he extends the conflict of pure reason discussed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the *Critique of Judgment* in the search for a solution to the conflict of teleology and mechanism.

The reflective judgment, unlike the immanent determinant judgment which refers to objectively existing things, is only subjective thought about objects. The antinomy of reason in the subjective judgment presented in the *Critique of Judgment* yields two contrary maxims, namely:

i. "All productions of material things and their forms must be judged to be possible according to merely mechanical laws.

ii. Some products of material nature cannot be judged to be possible according to merely mechanical laws. (To judge them requires quite a different law of causality, namely that of final causes)." (Kant 2005, p. 174)

We cannot prove that the first maxim (the mechanical claim) is impossible since we have no access to the inner workings of the multiplicity of things in the world and the natural laws governing them. Kant believes that the inner grounds of nature must lie in the supersensible. Hence, he rejects the idea of an immanent panpsychism (the notion that all matter, living and non-living, possess an inner life or mind) and the idea of a blind chance at work to produce the seeming designedness of nature. Still, the theistic thesis cannot succeed since mechanical causality opposes teleological causality, according to Kant. All that the most thorough-going teleology can demonstrate is that the human mind is so constructed that it cannot adequately comprehend the world as a totality without incorporating the element of belief in a creator God. In itself teleology does not prove God's existence; it only shows that His existence must be postulated for the world to become intelligible to rational beings like us.

Nevertheless, Kant holds out hope that we can move from absolute moral conditions to an absolute moral author of the world – God. The practical viewpoint introduces Kant's notion of the *summum bonum*, the highest or supreme good. The postulation of the *summum bonum* as the perfect harmony of virtue and happiness legitimises the leap from the empirical order to the transcendental order since the operation is achieved non-dogmatically through the postulation of freedom as a causality of a morally Supreme Being.

However, the idea of God, as a postulation of practical reason, is a regulative principle. The regulative use only presents a rule mandating us to consider the possible extension of the sphere of experience into the sphere of the supersensible. The regulative sense is an *as if* type; it is not dogmatic. The idea of God as a regulative principle "directs us to look upon all connection in the world *as if* it originated from an all-sufficient necessary cause" (Kant, 1970, A619/B647, p. 517). Kant admits that the idea of God is not based on certain knowledge.

3 Critical perspective on Kant's stance

Wood (1978) points out that Kant is wrong in dismissing 'existence', in referring to it as not being a proper predicate. OP, according to Kant, uses the term 'existence' as if it is a real predicate. Wood thinks that Kant's error arises from the way he formulates the idea of "an almost perfect being" while trying to show the emptiness of the term 'existence'. Kant notes that if we think of a thing with every feature or quality of reality except one missing feature, this particular missing feature is not added to this thing by the mere declaration that this thing exists. What has been declared as existing is still the same incomplete thing. Otherwise, there will be no logical-ontological correspondence between what has been thought and this thing as it exists (Kant, 1970, A600/B628, pp. 505-506). In other words, violating this principle makes what has been thought different from this thing as it exists. Therefore the predicate 'existence' is empty. Wood interprets Kant as saying that taking 'existence' as a true predicate leads to a contradiction *vis-à-vis* the concept of an almost perfect being. From the beginning we would not know which reality is missing in an almost perfect being. But if 'existence' is the reality missing and is what we are seeking, then this 'almost perfect being' would be a 'completely perfect being', which is a contradiction given the logical-ontological dichotomy. Thus, Kant infers that 'existence' cannot be the missing feature. Existence is not a real predicate at all. To show how Kant's analogy is wrong, Wood replaces the term 'existence' with 'omnipotence'.

By Kant's reasoning, if 'omnipotence' is the missing reality we are seeking and we add it to the 'almost perfect being', this entity will no longer be almost perfect but completely perfect because it will have the missing reality (Wood, 1978, pp. 108-109). We will have the same result if we use any other predicate in the place of 'existence'. The implication is that if 'existence' is not a real predicate, then nothing else can be.

Shaffer (1962, p. 309) accuses Kant of logical inconsistency in his understanding of what a real predicate is. Kant defines a real predicate as one that adds something to the concept of the subject and enlarges it. Shaffer thinks this conception of a real predicate subtly clashes with Kant's assertion that existential propositions are always synthetic. By Kant's definition of a real predicate, 'exists' should be a real predicate which adds to the concept of the subject. Thus, Kant contradicted himself. For Shaffer, the claim "God exists" is an existential claim impressing an existential tautology. However, he agrees with Kant that the problem for theism is determining whether God actually exists.

Wood (1978) follows Shaffer in thinking that philosophers who have all chorused that existence is not a real predicate have done so to legitimise their rejection of the ontological argument, not because the Kantian notion of existence being an empty predicate has any internal merit. Millican (2004, pp. 442-444) adds that the predication objection is ambiguous and cannot invalidate OP.[1] But Allison (2004) mounts a challenge to Wood and Millican in defence of Kant. Allison says those who prefer to see existence as a real predicate assume that real predication changes an object in a sense without us concluding that it is no longer the same object that is encountered prior to the predication. For example, when I say a thing is red or omnipotent, I add the predicate to my concept of this thing while the thing remains the same. Allison (2004, p. 415) asks rhetorically: "But if this holds of manifestly real predicates, such as 'redness' or 'omnipotence', why should it not hold of 'existence'?" In other words, there is no good reason why existence should not be a proper predicate if terms like redness and omnipotence function as proper predicates.

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[1] In a highly abstract discussion of OP, Millican asserts that the predication objection targets the foundation of OP – especially the Anselmian presentation that affirms God to be a being a greater than which nothing can be conceived – rather than its logical exposition. He is of the opinion that attacking the foundation of a theory is hardly the best way to refute it.

Defending Kant in the face of the charge of trivializing the predication problem, Allison responds that thinghood presupposes thorough determination. Without this presupposition the question of the existence of a thing becomes quite meaningless. For Allison, if we say that 'existence' is as real as 'redness' or 'omnipotence' it means whatever exists, exists necessarily. He notes: "Consequently, the Kantian retort to the objection sketched above is that one must either deny that 'existence' is a real predicate or admit that everything that exists does so necessarily" (Allison, 2004, p. 416). What if someone says necessity only applies to the most real being? Allison thinks the question achieves nothing because the case of a most real being demands that both the concept of the thing and the thing itself be assured of being thoroughly determined before the question of existence can be raised.

Wood (1978, p. 112), however, agrees with Kant that Descartes' presentation of OP is unconvincing. The existence of God cannot be demonstrated by the mere definition of God as the highest reality. To believe this inference, one has to first believe that God exists[2] (Wood, 1978, p. 112). Plantinga (1974, p. 112) reveals the hollowness of the ontological argument with the following formal argument:

Either God exists or 7 + 5 = 14.

It is false that 7 + 5 = 14.

Therefore God exists.

Plantinga resorts to the argument for polemical purpose. The above is no proof. *Anyone who never accepted the conclusion would reject the first premise*. The first premise submits a proposition not only empty of empirical content but also contrived. The atheist can as well replace the first premise with the proposition "Either God does not exist or 7 + 5 = 12" and work towards her pre-determined conclusion.

In his resolve to demolish all three classical proofs, Kant makes CP and TP dependent on OP. Since OP fails spectacularly – according to Kant –, it follows that the other two proofs must fail, being dependent on OP. But if it can be shown that the relation between OP on the one hand and CP and TP on the other

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[2] This anterior assumption of the existence of God is important for my claim that the metaphysical 'proofs', as constituting a hypothesis about the world, have a value for the speculative theist in the sphere of pure reason notwithstanding their logical shortcomings which Kant exposed so brilliantly. See section four of this paper.

hand is not one of dependency, then we can accuse Kant of hasty conclusion. If this can be done, then CP and TP must be evaluated independent of the ontological argument.

Wood rejects Kant's claim that acceptance of CP invites acceptance of OP. For Wood, the latter is wholly analytic. Every true predication, if analytic, surely refers to a subject. Being analytic, OP is not special and need not be true. He concludes that "to reason, as Kant does, from the second stage of the cosmological proof to the ontological proof is to reason in a way which even Descartes would have regarded as fallacious" (Wood, 1978, p. 130). Tooley (1970) affirms the invalidity of Kant's reduction exercise because of the presence of the proposition 'some *entia realissima* are absolutely necessary beings" in the argument. Since this proposition is an *a posteriori* premise, Kant's conclusion that "every *ens realissimum* is an absolutely necessary being" cannot be an *a priori* truth (Tooley, 1970, pp. 419-420).

Kant treats the second stage of CP as if he is dealing with OP, which suggests a predetermined resolve to link the two proofs by every means possible. The first part which evaluates CP's claim of showing how a necessary being can exist based on the contingency of the world is not dependent on OP. At most the relation that exists between the two ways of demonstrating God's existence is conceptual since both claim to prove the existence of the same substance. Thus, we are allowed to evaluate the individual merits of the two proofs.

The basic claim of CP is that:

Everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence.

The universe began to exist.

Therefore the universe has a cause of its existence. (Craig, 1979, p. 63)

The claim above makes sense because it invokes the principle of sufficient reason. We exist in a world whose origin we do not know. It is rational for us to seek the sufficient reason of the world beyond the empirical order of the world since science, our most reliable source of knowledge, has not fared well when faced with questions of the origin of the world and life. The quest for intelligibility, rather than the very difficult quest for certainty, becomes all-important. On this score the speculative theist is just as right in embracing the metaphysical proofs as Kant is in rejecting them. The interest of the speculative

theist then becomes not winning the argument (which is unwinnable, anyway) but, more importantly, securing intellectual backing for an anterior faith and having her appreciation of the question of existence enlarged from her debate with the atheist.

4 The regulative function of the classical metaphysical proofs

Can we make Kant accept the classical metaphysical proofs as playing only a regulative rather than dogmatic function in the sphere of pure reason, or theoretical speculation, just like his favoured moral argument in the sphere of practical reason?

Not only does Kant's rigorous standard of proof demand the complete conceptual determination of the idea of God in the mind but it also requests that there be a correspondence between what has been determined in thought and the actually existing object. The impossibility of this strict demand being met accounts for the endeavour to prove God's existence by force of argument in the first place.

I suspect that the nominal force of the word 'proof' contributes to the willingness to see the metaphysical arguments in a decidedly dogmatic light when all that they amount to is defending the idea of God's existence, firstly to support the believer's faith and secondly to throw light on the question of existence in general. An argument purporting to prove God's existence need not be interpreted as dogmatic by the mere declaration that it is going to demonstrate God's existence. The declaration itself immediately exposes the project to doubt since such an endeavour indicates that something is not known, in this case something considered as possessing immanent and transcendental qualities but which is inaccessible to the senses. Thus any 'proof' of God's existence is already in the sphere of possibility from the very beginning and we are not to be worried by disgust for 'dogmatism'. All that is required is to point out the exaggerations inherent in 'proofs' without dismissing the entire content of the proofs as valueless. In a telling passage, Kant (1970, A612/B640, p. 513) writes that:

> We may indeed be allowed to *postulate* the existence of an all-sufficient being, as the cause of all possible effects, with a view to lightening the task of reason in its search for the unity of the grounds of explanation. But in presuming so far as to say that such a being *necessarily exists*, we are no

longer giving modest expression to an admissible *hypothesis* [emphasis mine], but are confidently laying claim to apodeictic certainty.

Kant's ire seems to arise in part from the affirmative locutionary force of the speculative theist who, carried away by an anterior faith in God, exaggerates the power of the metaphysical proofs which must remain mind-mediated claims about the origin of the world and may have no rigid basis in reality as it truly is. But Kant's ire is matched by Wood's smirk when the latter writes that:

> By leaving virtually unchallenged the arguments for a necessary being and an intelligent designer of nature, Kant is in effect conceding some very controversial point to the speculative theist...it is entirely possible that speculative theologians might disagree with him, and it is hard to deny that if we could demonstrate that there is a necessarily existent cause of the world and intelligent author of its order, this result would have considerable philosophical interest, even if it could not be shown that this being is an *ens realissimum*. (Wood, 1978, p. 99)

Indeed, theistic philosophers like Collins, Leslie, and Craig have strongly and persuasively argued for the existence of a necessary being and intelligent designer (see Copan & Moser, 2004) in their discussion of the finetuning argument (a species of TP), as we will soon see. But the opposite effort from atheistic philosophers has been just as determined and persuasive. Given the crowded field of contestants and contestations, my interest in this paper is to show how the metaphysical proofs supply grounds for the speculative theist's preference for the claim: *it is very reasonable to believe in God, and perhaps more reasonable to believe than not to believe*.

According to Kant (1970), the regulative function of reason helps us find some kind of common ground between experience and what is beyond experience in a totality called the world, consequent upon which we posit the existence of a Being as the *possible* cause of all things (A689/B717, p. 561). In the Transcendental Dialectic section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant repeatedly hammers on the *as if* status of epistemic propositions about God. We cannot employ reason constitutively since it cannot supply a thorough determination of the concept of God; it only gives us an idea of God as a possible Being whose postulation completes the system of nature, the immanent and the transcendental, the seen and unseen, appearance and reality. The idea of God as

a regulative principle "directs us to look upon all connection in the world *as if* it originated from an all-sufficient necessary cause" (Kant, 1970, A619/B647, p. 517).To say God exists is to make a claim about the world, implicating the concepts of immanence and transcendence, the one concerned with the phenomenal and the other entertaining the appeal of the phenomenal to supersensible realities in a bid to complete what is obviously contingent. Bennett (1974) adds that a regulative principle, as used by Kant, is one that cannot be proved or disproved. It functions chiefly in guiding us to verify or falsify knowledge claims. It provides causal explanations of events or seeks without finding such causal explanations. A regulative principle can, therefore, serve as a maxim by advising us "never to despair of going further in the verifying direction" (Bennett 1974, p. 271). In other words, a regulative principle places premium on probability, plausibility, and predictability.

The assumption that God exists implies existence outside time and in time, since He is conceived as a creator. If His effects are presumed to manifest in time, we can speculate about His existence and characteristics without arriving at a thorough or complete determination of the nature of God. His actual existence will then be probable, like the existence of physical objects. The metaphysical arguments will then be relevant by reason of their capacity to raise the probability that God exists, firstly as an epistemic pillar of faith for believers and those inclined to believe in God and secondly as shedding light on the question of existence, with the positing of God providing a teleological account of the universe.

We need not appeal directly to practical reason and morality to see how the proofs are relevant beyond the academic debate between the theist and the atheist calculated to score polemical victories. Their speculation in the sphere of pure reason achieves the goals of buttressing faith and illuminating the question of being. The capacity of these metaphysical arguments to justify belief and enlarge our appreciation of the question of being shields them from Kant's criticism and reconciles them with his transcendental philosophy.[3]

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[3] Kant appears to have seen things in this light because after diminishing the metaphysical proofs in the *Critique of Pure Reason* he reinvents them in his moral argument in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Arguing that the postulation (as distinct from any so-called proof) of God's existence on the basis of the required harmony of nature with morality for the *summmum bonum* (the highest good) to be possible, Kant (2002, p. 159) asserts that: "Therefore the supreme cause of nature, insofar as it must be presupposed for the highest good, is a being that is the cause of nature through *understanding* and *will* (and hence is its originator), i.e., God. Consequently, the

One may ask how the transcendental is implicated in the immanent, how God who is outside time is at once in time. The question is pertinent since this assumption of the dual aspect of God motivates us to conceive Him as a probable being, with the metaphysical arguments raising the probability that He exists. This is a difficult question, but we can invoke the solution Craig invokes when faced with a similar dilemma. While clarifying the relation of a transcendental God with the physical time of the Big Bang (the primeval explosion that marked the beginning of the universe), Craig (2004, p. 8) notes that God operates in metaphysical time (here transcendence is implicated) but falls into physical time at the moment He creates the world (here immanence is implicated). Thus, God exists necessarily as an uncreated being and is outside the world-series but connected with the world as creator. However, a deeper discussion of God's relation with the world is beyond the scope of this paper.

The enduring value of the metaphysical proofs for the speculative theist, in particular, is their justificatory significance. The proofs, in truth, merely seek the intellectual justification of a fundamental position that humans take on the basis of faith. Philosophical arguments cannot prove (or even disprove) God's reality. What we can have is the justification of that which is intuited based on experience (for example, the order and structure of the universe) and which faith makes a belief.

The classical metaphysical proofs render more intelligible the concept of a being who is the transcendental grounds of existence in general, either as the first existent thing or contemporaneous with the totality of existence that it grounds (cf. Agada, 2015, pp. 112-115). If this line of reasoning is compelling, then the metaphysical proofs have a non-polemical value regardless of their speculative or probabilistic status. The speculative theist as a believer finds that they render the concept of God intelligible in a manner that consolidates faith in God. The unbeliever finds that these proofs render the concept of God meaningful in a manner that strengthens faith in God's non-existence. Thus, for both the theist

postulate of the possibility of the *highest derivative good* (the best world) is simultaneously the postulate of the actuality of the *highest original good,* viz., [the postulate] of the existence of God." Concepts like highest derivative good, highest original good, and supreme cause implicate the metaphysical proofs. The idea of a being of the highest reality in the postulation of God as the supreme cause of nature persists. The hypothetical scenario that validates the postulation of God on the basis of the desirability, nay necessity, of the highest good implicates the cosmological and teleological arguments. The speculative theist can invoke the metaphysical arguments as epistemic buttress for faith without directly appealing to the highest good but directly appealing to the incompleteness of the world and knowledge about it.

and the atheist, the classical metaphysical proofs have a justificatory value. These metaphysical arguments enhance our appreciation of the immense complexity of the question of being and the closely related question of causality. That these arguments are not on the same empirical level as a Newtonian or Einsteinian theory does not mean they are insignificant in the cosmic context.

The claim that the metaphysical proofs constitute a hypothesis about the ordering of the world is the basis for some philosophers using the argument of a finetuned universe to defend theism. The finetuning argument buttresses TP by arguing that God – as a vastly intelligent designer and establisher of the laws of nature – must be responsible for the finetuning of physical constants (Collins, 2009). Since God is uncreated but creates a world through will and intelligence, He is a necessary being. This is in opposition to Kant's claim that TP goes only far enough to prove a limited architect of the universe. A finetuned universe is one in which physical constants and properties are complexly ordered to support life, such that it appears highly probable that the arrangement was the work of a vastly intelligent mind. Collins (2009, p. 213) defines physical constants as "fundamental numbers that, when plugged into the laws of physics, determine the basic structure of the world." According to Leslie (1989, p. 39), if the mass of the neutron had been higher by up to one part in 700 there would be no stable hydrogen-burning stars and therefore no life-permitting universe. Collins (2009, p. 214) adds that if the weak force were weaker up to one part in 10^9 of the range of force strengths, our universe would have been hostile to complex life such as animal life.

The delicate balance of the physical constants relative to one another is so improbable that theistic philosophers like Collins and Leslie overlook the accusation of invoking a god of the gaps to interpret these anthropic coincidences as providing compelling support for the classical metaphysical proofs, especially CP and TP. The god of the gaps charge, which is usually directed at theists by atheist thinkers, rebukes theists for hastily explaining phenomena not yet accounted for by science with the invocation of God's creative power. But in the light of advances in physics that have thrown up much puzzles about the world rather than solutions such an accusation seems basically polemical. Physics has put the notion of chance under severe scrutiny with its discoveries in the field of cosmology, which support the notion that the universe might not have emerged accidentally. As Collins eloquently avers, the defender of the fine-tuning thesis is only required to point out that all the cases of fine-tuning cannot be explained

naturally in a manner that removes their epistemic improbability without taking this matter of improbability to a higher, more puzzling level. Any attempt to explain the fine-tuning of the constants of physics using the most general laws of physics such as a *theory of everything* or an inflationary universe model "would simply transfer the improbability up one level to the existence of these deeper laws" (Collins, 2009, p. 225). The fine-tuning of physical constants resists a purely naturalistic explanation.

Our examination of the points made by Wood, Tooley, and Shaffer on Kant's claim to having refuted the metaphysical proofs shows that while Kant succeeds in undermining the proofs, he does not succeed in conclusively refuting them. The failure of Kant to conclusively refute the metaphysical proofs – especially CP and TP which empirical evidence of a finetuned universe strengthen – emboldens the speculative theist to affirm the value of these proofs in the sphere of pure reason by invoking them as providing justification for accepting the proposition: *it is very reasonable to believe in God, and perhaps more reasonable to believe than not to believe*.

Conclusion

In this paper, I highlighted Kant's incisive critique of the classical metaphysical proofs of God's existence and evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of his refutation of the metaphysical proofs. I agreed with Kant that the metaphysical proofs cannot rationally convince us that God exists. I argued, however, that for the speculative theist and the atheist, the metaphysical proofs have a value beyond polemics to the extent that they support the faith of the speculative theist and enlarge the intellectual horizon of the atheist. I argued that since the idea of transcendence implicates the concept of immanence with regard to the being of God, the speculative theist is justified in thinking about God's existence in terms of the probability that He exists. I asserted that evidence of fine-tuning in the world raises the probability that God exists and, consequently, the plausibility level of the classical metaphysical proofs, especially CP and TP.

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