
UNIT 4 PROMINENT THEISTIC PHILOSOPHERS OF THE WEST

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In the West, many philosophers have seriously debated on the existence and nature of God. There have been various approaches to understand and interpret the problem throughout the history of Western philosophy, which, considered in this Unit, is usually divided by scholars into four periods:

- Ancient Western Philosophy
- Medieval Western Philosophy
- Modern Western Philosophy
- Contemporary Western Philosophy

In this Unit, all the prominent theistic philosophers are treated under one or other period that corresponds to their time of life and activity.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The term *theism* derives from the Greek *theos* meaning “god” was first used by Ralph Cudworth (1617- 1688). It refers to a doctrine concerning the nature of a monotheistic God and God’s relationship to the universe. It conceives of God as personal, present and active in the governance and organization of the universe. The use of the word arose in the wake of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century to contrast with the then emerging deism which contended that God, the transcendent and supreme, did not intervene in the natural world and could be known rationally. The following are some of the most prominent theistic philosophers of the West: Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Whitehead, Marechal, Tillich and Rahner.

4.2 ANCIENT WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Plato (428-348 BCE)

For Plato, God is the efficient cause of the order in the universe. The form or Ideas exist in a world of their own. Demiurge (a god), the efficient cause, makes everything in the world according to the pattern of the forms. In this way, the forms are the exemplary laws of the things in the world, whereas God is the efficient cause.

Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

Every motion requires some principle in act. Every motion requires an act for its movement; then the universe in general, which consists of several acts and motions, requires a First Mover. However, the First Mover is not Creator-God; for the world existed from all eternity without having been created from all eternity. God forms the world, but did not create it. God forms the world, or he is the source of motion, by drawing it, i.e., by acting as final cause. In Aristotle's view, if God caused motion by efficient physical cause, then he would be changed as there would be a reaction of the moved on the mover.

He must act, therefore, as Final Cause, by being the object of desire. The first mover, should move things or cause changes without being moved, without having any potentiality within Himself, otherwise the first mover itself would change, calling for another cause which is a contradiction. Hence, the first mover should be the unmoved mover.

The First Mover, insofar as he is unmoved, is not in potency. If he is not in potency, then he must be in Pure Act, i.e., Pure Perfection. That which is in pure act is not material; for that which is material is always in motion. That which is not material is spiritual. Hence, the first unmoved mover is spiritual. That which is spiritual is Intelligence or Thought. In this way, the First Unmoved Mover is pure intelligence or thought.

Plotinus (c. 204/5-270 CE)

God is absolutely transcendent; He is the One, beyond all thought and all being, ineffable and incomprehensible. Neither essence, nor being nor life can be predicated of the One. It is not because it is less than any of these things but because it is more. The One cannot be identical with the sum of individual things, for it is these individual things which require a source or principle, and this Principle must be distinct from them and logically prior to them.

If the One were identical with each individual thing taken separately, then each thing would be identical with every other and the distinction of things, which is an obvious fact, would be illusion. "Thus the One cannot be any existing, but is prior to all existents." Since God is One, without any multiplicity, there can be in the One no duality of substance and accident, and Plotinus is thus unwilling to ascribe any positive attributes to God, so as to avoid any delimitation of God by predication. He has neither thought nor will nor activity.

God emanates. How can Plotinus account for the multiplicity of things? God cannot limit himself to finite things, as though they were part of Him; nor can He create the world by a free act of his Will since creation is an activity and we are not justified in ascribing activity to God and so impairing his unchangeability. Hence, Plotinus had recourse to the metaphor of emanation.

4.3 MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Augustine (354-430 CE)

According to Augustine, the human mind apprehends necessary and changeless truths which is present to all and gives itself to all alike. This truth is superior to the mind insofar as the mind has to bow before it and accept it. The mind does not constitute it, nor can it amend it. The mind recognizes that this truth transcends it and rules it throughout rather than the other way around. If it were inferior to the mind, the mind could change it or amend it. If it were equal to the mind, it would itself be changeable, as the mind is changeable. The mind varies in its apprehension of truth, apprehending it now more clearly, now less clearly, whereas truth ever remains the same. Therefore this unchangeable truth is neither inferior nor equal to our minds, but superior and more excellent. The unchangeable or eternal truth must be founded on Being which reflects the ground of all truth. For, eternal truth cannot be conceived without a ground of truth, 'the Truth in whom, and by whom, and through whom those things are true which are true in every respect.' Eternal truth presupposes Eternal Being.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE)

The Neo-Platonic doctrine of universals (a doctrine of Realism stating that the universal or general nature of an object exists prior to the particular material thing) was utilized by Anselm in his famous ontological argument for the existence of God. According to this philosophy of Neo-Platonic Realism, the extent to which any object is real depends upon the degree of its universality. Inasmuch as God is the most universal Being, he is the most real of all beings. Anselm's ontological argument (delineated in his book, *Proslogion*) can be paraphrased in this way: That than which nothing greater can be thought exists at least in one's understanding. That than which nothing greater can be thought cannot exist only in the understanding, but in reality as well, which is greater. Therefore, that than which nothing greater can be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality. God is that than which nothing greater can be thought. Therefore, God exists both in understanding and in reality. The monk Gaunilo of Marmoutier criticized Anselm's ontological argument on the ground that the argument did not actually prove its conclusion. For example, said Gaunilo, anyone could claim to possess an idea of an unreal object, such as a perfect island, as proof of its existence. Anselm replied that an idea of an unreal object does not prove its existence but that the idea of God does imply his existence because the idea portrays him not as an imaginary or possible object, but as a perfect, indispensable, necessary Being.

Cosmological Argument: In his work *Monologion*, Anselm accepted the doctrine of Platonic Realism that truth, goodness, beauty, and other universals have an existence of their own independent of the individual things to which the universals may apply. Thus beauty exists irrespective of any specific beautiful object, such as a beautiful sunset. Universals exist in particular objects but they also exist apart from the particular objects in which they are found. For example, many good things exist, some of which possess a greater amount of good than others do. Such things possess only relative good, depending upon their worth, but they are not absolutely good. Inasmuch as some things possess more goodness than others do, there must be an absolute good, a standard which can be used to evaluate their comparative goodness. This absolute good is the *summum bonum* or greatest good, namely, God. Reference to a good or better quality implies God as possessing the highest or best quality. Faith in God must be accepted as the absolute standard for all rational thought. The individual should unconditionally subordinate one's judgment to that of the universal Church. In other words, rational

philosophical thought must give way to revealed theology – ‘I believe in order to understand’ (*credo ut intellegam*).

Aquinas (1225-1274 CE)

Aquinas put forward five arguments for the existence of God. *Arguments from Motion*: The first and more manifest way to prove God's existence is the argument from motion. It is certain that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this must also be put in motion by another. But this cannot go on to infinity, for then there would be no first mover, and hence no mover at all. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other. This first mover is God. *Argument from Causality*: In the world of experience there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known in which a thing is found to be an efficient cause of itself. In such a case, it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Hence, it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause to which everyone gives the name ‘God.’ *Argument from Contingency*: We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to be corrupted. Hence they are possible to be and not to be. But if at one time nothing was in existence but in possibility, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist. Consequently, even today nothing would be in existence – which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible. There must exist something the existence of which is absolutely necessary. Such a necessary being is God. *Argument from Gradation of Perfection*: Among beings there are some more and less good. ‘More’ or ‘less’ are predicated of different things which resemble in their different ways as these are things which are the best, the truest, the noblest etc. Therefore, there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their perfection. We call him God. *Argument from Design*: We see that even things which lack intelligence act for an end. Whatever lacks intelligence cannot move toward an end unless it is directed by some intelligent being. Hence, an intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end. We call this being God.

4.4 MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Descartes (1596-1650 CE)

For Descartes, there are three substances: self, world, and God. Substance is that which needs nothing else to exist. In the strict sense, there is only one substance which is totally independent, i.e., God. However, Descartes avoids pantheism by adding that we could also be called created substances that exist by the help of God. Proving God's existence is basic in Descartes' search for certainty. Descartes gives three arguments for the existence of God. *Argument from the Idea of the Perfect Infinite*: I conceive of God as “an infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful substance, by which I myself and all other things, if they actually exist, have been created;” I, therefore, have the idea of the infinite. But the idea of infinity could not have been produced in my mind by the other ideas (of self and world too) which are finite. It is not by removing the limits that I form the idea of infinity, but it is by limiting the positive idea of infinity that we form the idea of the finite. Consequently, before I form any other idea I have the idea of infinity, which is a clear and distinct idea. It is as obvious or more so than the idea of the thinking self, because I cannot conceive of

anything finite unless I have an idea of the infinite. Therefore, since clear and distinct ideas must have objective value, there is actually something infinite which is perfect. Now this perfect being must exist, how else would I explain the origin of this idea in me? In other words, neither the external world nor am I perfect. The external world is not perfect because it is corporeal and changeable. I am not perfect because I doubt. Therefore, there must exist a perfect being who has put in me this idea of himself. *Argument from Contingency of the Thinking Self*: I must conceive of the thinking self as contingent, i.e., as non-necessary; otherwise it would not be a doubting self. But I could not have the idea of a contingent being unless I had a previous idea of the necessary, because contingency is the negation of necessity. This previous idea of the necessary is not formed through the idea of the contingent self, but is presupposed by the idea of the self. Here again the idea of the necessary is clear and distinct and implies that there is something necessary. *Ontological Argument*: God is such a being that all perfections must be included in his essence. In other words, he must necessarily have all perfections. Since it is better to exist than not to exist, existence is a perfection which must be attributed to God. He, therefore, necessarily exists, in him essence and existence are the same. Descartes did not add anything new to the ontological argument of Anselm, except that he called the idea of the greatest conceivable being, an innate one. And he added the simile of the valley and the mountain. "I cannot conceive a God unless as existing, any more than I can a mountain without a valley." For mountain and valley, whether exist or not, are inseparable. In the same way we cannot conceive God unless as existing.

Leibniz (1646-1716 CE)

Leibniz has also three arguments for the existence of God. *Ontological Argument*: Leibniz represents the ontological argument in a slightly different way. "Only God, or the necessary Being, has this privilege, *that he must exist if he is possible*. And since nothing can prevent the possibility of that which contains no boundaries, no negation and therefore no contradiction, this alone suffices to know God's existence, *apriori*" (Mon. 45). The argument may be explained in this way: There are possible (possible means more than the non-contradictory. All possible things are positively ready to become existent, if there would be a necessary reason for them to do so. God is not only non-contradictory, but he has also in himself the sufficient reason for his existence) or contingent truths. These possible truths may or may not actually occur. Their occurrence is conditioned by certain necessary and actual ground that makes these truths possible. This actual ground cannot lie within the series of contingent and possible truths themselves since they are not necessarily actual. But nothing could even be possible unless there were some actual ground outside itself that could make it so. For possibility implies the capacity under some conditions to become actual. Now the existence of God as an infinite Being is possible, since there is no logical contradiction in the idea of God to prevent it being possible. And the idea of God is that of a being that has no limits, and so there could be nothing outside of such an idea to prevent it from existing actually. Since there is nothing to prevent either the possible or the actual existence of God on the one hand, and on the other the assumption of his existence is necessary to serve as the ground that will account for contingent and possible truths, we can conclude that God does actually exist. *God as the Principle of Sufficient Reason*: God is the only sufficient Reason that can account for the existence of contingent beings. Hence, "there is but one God and this God is sufficient." *God as the Perfect Monad*: God as monad is an individual, a person. But he transcends all monads. He is supernatural and super-rational, the most perfect and most real being. Man cannot form a perfectly clear idea of God, because God is the highest monad and man is limited and imperfect. God, being perfect, does

not undergo change and development as do all other monads. He is complete in himself and his knowledge is complete. He sees all things whole and at a glance. He is reality fully realized. He created the world according to a plan and chose this world as the best of all possible worlds. His choice was determined by the principle of goodness, that is, by moral necessity. He is also determined by logical necessity in so far as the fundamental laws of thought are binding on him as well as on man.

4.5 CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Whitehead (1861-1947 CE)

Alfred North Whitehead makes an attempt to distinguish between the two modes of being as *actuality and potentiality*, i.e., the type of actuality, and the type of pure potentiality which require each other as actuality is the exemplification of potentiality and potentiality, the characterisation of actuality. The notion of 'process' is intelligible only when the notions of 'potentiality' and 'actuality' are taken into account. For the very nature of process implies that there is transformation of potentiality into actuality resulting in evolution. The process of evolution is constantly expanding. Through every actual entity, the world perpetually perishes and recreates itself. Whitehead does not believe in mechanism as none of the laws of nature give the slightest evidence of necessity. Though every actual entity is guided by its own subjective purpose, yet on a cosmic scale, God is the ultimate principle and directing force. He is called the 'principle of limitation' or 'the principle of concretion', the substratum of the eternal objects. God is not only the creator but also the companion of the world which emanates from God and is also enjoyed by Him. God and world evolve together side by side without ever reaching a static completion. The evolution of God together with that of world exhibits a dualism left unbridged. The relation of God with the world is not the relation of the world with God. The world depends on God, but by that it does not follow that God depends on the world. However, God's nature is both primordial and consequent. *Primordial* nature reveals him as changeless and timeless; whereas *consequent* nature reveals him as dynamic, constantly in process of becoming and is continually enriching himself through the universal prehension of new elements. As God is both primordial and consequent, he is also both transcendent and immanent. God is *transcendent* in the way every event transcends another event; he is also *immanent* insofar as he is present in every being. Hartmann's ontology, like Whitehead's metaphysics, continues to hover between the empirical and the *apriori*, between science and ordinary experience.

Marechal (1878-1944 CE)

A more acceptable approach for a validation of the existence of God is suggested by Joseph Marechal, a Belgian philosopher, in the fifth cahier of his classical work: *The Point of Departure of Metaphysics*. A single formulation of the argument is the following: A limited being, as such (that is by virtue of its very limitedness) depends totally on the unlimited Being. His method is known as transcendental method by which an analysis of a given human activity is carried out in view of exposing its necessary conditions experienced in direct judgment. This direct judgment is an existential act which cannot be denied. We shall seek to uncover its necessary conditions, and among these we will discover the validity of the principle of transcendental causality, which is the unlimited Being or God.

Direct judgment is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object as presented to (us) our sense. It is the immediate affirmation or denial that something does or does not exist. For instance, 'There is something,' is direct judgment. But 'God exists' or 'there is no such thing as a soul,' are not direct judgments for they are not immediate affirmations or denials. Rather, they are conclusions based on other more immediate affirmations or experience. Now, no one can deny direct judgments. To deny direct judgment would mean denying immediate affirmation which is impossible. For instance, if one says 'there is nothing,' at least that 'nothing' should be there which is again 'something.' Hence direct judgment of 'there is something' is an inescapable and undeniable fact of human experience.

Direct judgment is a movement, a dynamic process: In every judgment, my intellect goes beyond the finite to the infinite, beyond the relative to the Absolute, beyond beings to Being itself. Hence, my intellect and direct judgment are dynamic.

Affirmation in Direct Judgment Experiences a Limit: In every direct judgment as presented to our senses we affirm two kinds of things about something; what it is (its essence, its 'thisness') and that it is (its existence). I experience the 'is-element' as actually limited by the 'this' element (i.e., I experience the limitation of existence by essence). To be this means not to be that. For example, to be a cow means to be just a cow and not a non-cow. There are millions of things excluded by this restriction. Essence is, then, a limitation in itself. But 'to be' does not imply any limitation by itself: 'to be' means just to be and the only thing it opposes itself to, or cuts itself off from, is 'not to be,' nothing. When I make an existential judgment and say: 'This is,' what I am expressing, in effect, is that the unlimitedness of 'to be' is, in this situation, restricted to being the 'to be' of just this particular essence. In other words, the dynamic movement of my intellect experiences a limit, a check to its movement.

This means that my intellect, in every affirmation, is ultimately tending towards the unlimited Being. I do experience the limitation of existence. In experiencing the limitation, I do tend toward the unlimited existence. For, in recognizing a limit, one goes beyond that limit. Now, we have seen that existence does not imply a limitation in itself. If existence is limited, it is limited by something other than, outside of itself, i.e., essence. In other words, I am tending towards pure existence, absolute and unlimited existence, unrestricted by any essence.

The unlimited Being, ultimate end of my intellectual dynamism, really exists. We may establish it along three distinct paths: *Starting from the reality of the observable world around us:* We accept the world around us as real. If the world is real, then the ultimate end of this world should also be real. For, if one is willing to accept that the world (the immanent object) is real, one must accept logically and honestly the reality of the unlimited Being in as much as it is one of the constitutive conditions of our world or proximate object. *Starting from the fact that the unlimited being is not consciously sought:* My striving after the unlimited Being in all my intellectual activity is not a conscious or explicit desire. I am so unconscious of it that I need to undergo a long interior analysis and reflection before I become explicitly conscious of it. The fact that I am not explicitly aware of it is a fact that I did not fabricate it for myself. If its existence is not something I have fabricated and yet it attracts me, it must exist independently of me. *Starting from the fact that the unlimited Being can be no mere ideal:* Our analysis has deduced the possibility of the unlimited Being – not from a mere analysis of the concept of unlimited or perfect Being, but from an undeniable fact, the activity of my direct judgment, there

is a link of real dependence of the former on the latter. They depend, as beings, on the unlimited Being totally. *Something is Being and direct judgment is dynamic, a movement*: The unlimited being as transcendental means that which is present in each and every experience. Direct judgment of 'something' is transcendental in so far as it is present in all human experience, in so far as it is the *a priori* condition of further experience. *Transcendental is the unconditioned*: This transcendental dynamic process is the condition of further experience and advancement in knowledge. Since it is the condition of all other experiences, it must be unconditional. In this way it is the unconditioned condition of all other conditions. *The unconditioned is unlimited*: It is unconditioned, for there is no other condition to limit it. What is not limited by another condition is always the unlimited. *The unlimited is the Absolute*: What is unlimited does not depend on another for its existence. It is self-subsistent, i.e., it exists by itself. Such self-subsistent Being is the Absolute or God.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965 CE)

Tillich's fundamental approach to God seems to be ontological since both phenomenological and epistemological approaches presuppose the ontological. Phenomenologically God is human's ultimate concern. The divine is a matter of passion and interest for human, avoidable only by being completely indifferent. The epistemological approach consists in the search for truth in which the ultimate concern (God) is identified as the ground of truth.

According to Tillich, human thought begins with being and it cannot go behind it. Thought is founded on being. However, thought can imagine the negation of everything that is, and it can describe the nature and structure of being – ontological structure consisting of individuality and universality, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny – which give everything that is the power of resisting non-being. "If one asks why there *is* not nothing, one attributes being even to nothing." The question of being is the ultimate question raised by mythology, cosmology, and metaphysics. These have asked the question of being both implicitly and explicitly and have tried to reason it out. For, the world is a structured whole, which is objective reason; the self is a structure of centredness, which is subjective reason. "Reason makes the self a self, namely, a centred structure; and reason makes the world a world, namely, a structured whole." Being would be chaos without reason, without the *logos* of being. That is to say, being would not be being but only the possibility of it (*me on*). Where there is reason there are a self and a world in interdependence. The function of the self in which reason actualizes its rational structure is the mind, which is the bearer of subjective reason, and the world is reality, which is the bearer of objective reason. The dynamic character of being and reason implies that every being has the tendency to transcend itself and to create new forms. Nevertheless, everything tends to conserve its own form as the basis of its self-transcendence. It is impossible to speak of being without also speaking of becoming since every being tends to unite identity and difference, rest and movement, conservation and change. Becoming is as genuine in the structure of being as is permanence in the process of becoming.

The question of being implies the question of God. The finitude of being drives us to the question of God, which concerns human ultimately. Whatever concerns a human ultimately is God. The being of God is being itself, which does not mean 'highest being' as superlative places God on the level of other beings while elevating him above all of them. On the contrary, being

itself refers to the ground of being, the power of being, the power inherent in everything resisting non-being. Hence it is better to say that God is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being. For if God is not being-itself he is subordinate to it. As being-itself God is beyond essence and existence. Logically, God as being-itself is 'before,' 'prior to,' the split which characterizes finite being. As power of being, God transcends every being and also the totality of being, namely, the world. Consequently, God cannot be objectified, cannot be brought into the subject-object structure of being. For, an object is that toward which the cognitive act is directed, be it God or a stone, be it one's self or a mathematical definition. The problem of logical objectification is that it never is merely logical as it carries with it ontological presuppositions and implications. God ceases to be the ground of being and becomes one among others if he is brought into the subject-object structure of being. God cannot but be the subject, even if he becomes a logical object, just as being itself is beyond every subject-object structure by going beyond finitude and infinity. Being-itself is beyond finitude and infinity; otherwise it would be conditioned by something other than itself and the real power of being may escape it. Being itself limitlessly transcends every finite being. On the other hand, finite being participates in being-itself and in its infinity. Otherwise the finite would not have the power of being, and it would be swallowed by non-being. This double relation of all beings to being itself provides being-itself with a double characteristics: creativity and 'abysmality.' Being-itself is creative as it enables every finite being to participate in the infinite power of being. Being-itself is also abysmal as it enables every finite being to participate in it in a finite way, i.e., all beings are infinitely transcended by their creative ground. God – being-itself or the absolute – is the creative ground of the ontological structure of being without being subject to this structure. That is, God is the structure that has the power of determining the structure of everything that has being.

Rahner (1904-1984 CE)

For Karl Rahner, Being (*esse*) is the 'wither' (*Worauf*) of the pre-apprehension which is the condition of the possibility of abstraction. Hence it is also the condition of the possibility of complete return which makes possible an objective knowledge. It follows from this that the 'wither' of the pre-apprehension as such is not an object of the first order. It is also not the object of a metaphysical intuition. For on the one hand, it is the wither of the pre-apprehension which describes its scope. It is given only in the consciousness of the pre-apprehension itself. On the other hand, it is not given as such in the finite real. But it is given and realized in the absolute Being. Here Rahner denies of Being both metaphysical intuition and objective or thematic knowledge. The only possibility is that of a pre-apprehension of Being in and against its own all-encompassing horizon which is the condition of the possibility of abstraction (hence of finite knowledge). Thus the pre-apprehension of Being is at the same time a pre-apprehension of the absolute. The pre-apprehension of Being would be impossible without this horizon. The pre-apprehension implies certain knowledge of that which is pre-apprehended, i.e., an unthematic knowledge of Being itself. Knowledge is already the Being-present-to-itself of Being. Being-present-to-itself is a self-realization. Therefore, Being realizes itself in its being pre-apprehended in the horizon of the absolute Being, i.e., God

4.6 LET US SUM UP

It is certain that everyone has an experience of 'something.' This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. It can be further demonstrated in the following manner: The most fundamental and radical question which one can pose is this: Is there anything at all? The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: 'There is nothing.' Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something.' Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not,' but 'that which is' or 'Being.' Thus, experience of 'something' or Being is the ultimate starting point of human thought. In other words, human thought begins with Being. However, there can be no realm of Being without the dialectical participation of non-being in Being. This dialectical participation through the categories unites Being with non-being and makes it finite. Although every finite being participates in the structure of Being, only the human is immediately aware of this structure; only the human is that being in whom all levels of Being are united and approachable; and only human is 'Dasein' in whom the structure of Being is disclosed and through whom the question of Being is raised. This question implies the question of God, which concerns the humans ultimately. If anything beyond a simple assertion is said about God, it would point to something beyond itself, i.e., it is *symbolic* (Paul Tillich). A symbol not only points to something beyond itself, but also participates in that to which it points. The symbol 'God,' points to something beyond itself, to the absolute reality to which it points, while participating in the power of the absolute reality itself. As this reality is absolute, it is the ultimate depth, the 'abyss,' which includes within it, everything that is not absolute. The finite beings have no existence apart from this ultimate depth. This ultimate depth 'underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies' (Bernard Lonergan) every segment of the finite, elevating it to the realm of the divine. It follows that every attempt to separate the finite from the power of the infinite absolute is futile (as attempted by the atheists). There is no finite without the infinite. Thus we can say that finite is essentially and inevitably in the infinite. Human, 'a being-in-the-world' (Martin Heidegger), is essentially and fundamentally a being-in-God too. Hence, human should no longer strive to 'prove' the existence of God, but to realize the meaningfulness of one's own existence, along with other non-human beings, in the all-encompassing power of the being of God, who is the absolute ground and goal of one's own existence.

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