Philosophical Theology, Vol. II.: The World, the Soul, and God. By F. R. TENNANT. Cambridge University Press, 1930. Pp. xiv, 276. 15s.

IN this book Dr. Tennant completes the task which he began in the first volume, published last year under the title of *The Soul and its Faculties*. That was occupied mainly with general questions of psychology, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics; this contains the application of the results there achieved to the establishment, defence, and delimitation of theism. The author justly claims that the characteristic conclusions of the first volume were reached by impartial reflexion on facts open to everyone's inspection, and were not specially sought out and selected in order to form the premises of a theistic conclusion. Certainly Dr. Tennant, the philosopher, cannot fairly be accused of making things too easy for Dr. Tennant the theologian. All theistic arguments which make use of *à priori* premises, or which start from purely ethical data, have already been rejected; and all claims to direct acquaintance with God in mystical or religious experience have been set aside as unproven. So we are left with some form of the *Argument from Design* as our only resource.

The book falls into five main divisions. Theism is to be defended as being, on the whole, the 'most reasonable explanation' of the world when *all* the known facts are fairly taken into account. So we begin by arguing that the world does demand some kind of 'explanation'; that it is not self-explanatory; and that the kind and degree of 'explanation' given by natural science is not adequate. In connexion with this part of the argument Dr. Tennant finds it necessary to distinguish different senses which have been given to 'explanation' and to the statement that the world is 'rational'. This first division is contained in Chapters I. to III. inclusive. Chapter IV., entitled *The Empirical Approach to Theism: Cosmic Teleology*, constitutes the second division. It contains the argument that the theistic hypothesis does provide an explanation of the kind required. The third division consists of Chapters V. and VI., on the *Idea of God*. In these Dr. Tennant discusses a number of honorific titles, such as 'creative', 'eternal', 'infinite', 'perfect', etc., which theists have been wont to ascribe to God; and considers what precise 'cash-value' an empirical theologian, like himself, can allow to them. He also discusses the notion of divine personality, and the limitations which this imposes on God. The most serious objection to any kind of theism is of course the amount and distribution of evil in the world. Dr. Tennant deals with the *Problem of Evil* in Chapter VII.; and this chapter forms the fourth main division of the book. In Chapter VIII., on *Divine Immanence and Revelation*, the author discusses the various senses of 'immanence' and of 'revelation'; the relation between the two; and, in connexion with alleged revelations of truths above reason, certain specifically Christian mysteries,

such as the Incarnation. This may be taken as the fifth and last main division. The last chapter—*God, the Self, and the World*—is a recapitulation of the argument and results of the two volumes. There is also an *Appendix*, consisting of five notes in which certain subjects mentioned in the text are more fully treated. This includes notes on the doctrine of the *Trinity* and on *Immortality*. I will now say something further about each of the five chief topics of the book.

Chapter I. is concerned with Natural Laws and the conformity of the world to them. The suggestion, made in various forms by Kant, by Prof. Karl Pearson, and by Prof. Eddington, that the appearance of regularity in the outer world is wholly read into, or imposed upon, lawless data by human observers, is rejected. The regularities which we find among our sensations must be transcriptions, though they may be subjectively tinted and distorted ones, of regularities among independent existents. On the other hand, we must not think of the laws of nature as having the kind of necessity which belongs to the laws of mathematics or logic. It appears from what Dr. Tennant says on page 22 that he distinguishes causal laws, as does Mr. Johnson, both from mathematical or logical laws and from mere statements of *de facto* regularity. 'If we rule out the *prius* of necessary law we must also rule out ungrounded coincidence. . . .' Again: 'Unvarying concomitance or sequence . . . points to Actual connexion and necessitation'.

Chapter II. contains a rather elaborate discussion of mechanical explanation and its connexion with natural laws. So far as I can see, the contention of this chapter is as follows. It has been claimed that mathematical physics gives us the whole truth and nothing but the truth about those existents which appear to us as matter. And it has been claimed that mathematical physics, when fully developed, teaches that these existents have only geometrical, kinematic, and kinetic properties. Dr. Tennant thinks that, if this were admitted, there would be nothing left in the external world to demand a theistic explanation. He has, of course, no difficulty in showing that the notion of 'mechanical explanation' is highly ambiguous; that, even when we confine ourselves to the inorganic, there is much that cannot be 'mechanically explained' unless that term be so stretched as to be almost meaningless; and that the existents which appear as matter, and appear to obey mechanical laws, may quite well have other characteristics and obey other laws in addition. There is nothing in the teachings of physics inconsistent with the view that the existents which appear as matter are minds or collections of minds.

In Chapter III. Dr. Tennant distinguishes the various senses in which 'explanation' has been used in science, and the sense in which natural theology claims to give an explanation of the world which science does not give. To 'explain' may mean (i) to reduce the unfamiliar to the already familiar, either in the sense of what

has already been perceived, or in the sense of what can easily be pictured on the basis of past perceptions. Or (ii) it may mean to state the concrete conditions which were antecedent to an event and which will have to be fulfilled again if a similar event is to be repeated. These are both rather crude kinds of explanation. (iii) The next sense of 'to explain' is to reduce the facts to a form in which they can be grouped and handled by the methods of formal logic and mathematics. Under this head comes the attempt to reduce qualitative difference and change to mere arrangements and rearrangements of qualitatively similar and qualitatively unchanging elements. Dr. Tennant regards our taste for this kind of explanation as a specifically human demand which the world cannot be trusted to satisfy without limit. (iv) Another sense of 'explanation' is to elicit the noumenal originals of which the facts and laws recognised in daily life and science are projections distorted and tinged to some extent by personal or racial peculiarities. (v) There is a sense of 'explanation' in which it means a description of a whole region of phenomena in the simplest and most workable set of symbols, without regard to whether the individual symbols correspond point for point to factors in the *explicandum*. Dr. Tennant argues that the assumption that the laws of nature must be simple is probably an unjustifiable extrapolation from the fact that the laws which were first discovered were simple, as indeed they must have been to be discernible in the infancy of science. (vi) When we come to biological phenomena it seems that new explanatory categories are needed, *e.g.*, emergence, inner teleology, etc. (vii) Finally, we have teleological explanation, in the strict sense; *i.e.* where we explain the existence of something by pointing out that it was foreseen, desired, and brought into being by an active intelligent mind. We know that this kind of explanation is applicable within human life and history, and that it gives us intellectual satisfaction. It is not incompatible with the other kinds of explanation, but it can be applied where they cannot. The world, taken as a whole, is certainly not completely explicable in any of the other six senses; it is the claim of natural theology that it is explicable in this seventh sense.

Dr. Tennant's argument in Chapter IV., which is the turning-point of the whole book, is as follows. From page 81 to page 103 he considers in turn five sets of facts, each of which has been held to furnish an adequate basis for a teleological argument for theism. These sets of facts are (i) the adaptation of human thought-processes to the objects with which they are concerned; (ii) the adaptation of parts to whole within each living organism; (iii) the adaptation of the inorganic world to the production, maintenance, and development of living organisms; (iv) the beauty and sublimity of nature; and (v) the facts of moral obligation, moral value, etc. He considers that, whilst none of these five sets of facts excludes a teleological explanation and whilst some of them rather definitely point to one, yet none of them taken by itself would suffice to make it unreasonable

to reject such an explanation. It is the co-existence and mutual connexion of all these facts which seems to demand the hypothesis of an intelligent over-ruling mind.

Dr. Tennant, of course, realises that there are objections to this kind of argument. He considers that the most serious is the suggested possibility that 'our ordered fragment may be but a temporary and casual episode in the history of the universe' (p. 80). His answer is that the fragment is not isolable from the rest of the universe. 'It is because the desert is what it is that the oasis is what it is.' This is surely insufficient. The question is whether a universe of vast extent in time and space might not be reasonably expected to contain occasional small 'pockets' in which the rather special conditions needed for the production and temporary flourishing of life and mind are realised, without deliberate design on the part of anyone. If holding the five best trumps be compared to an 'oasis' and holding anything worse than this be compared to a 'desert', it will be true that my 'oasis' and the other players' 'deserts' are interdependent. Yet the 'oasis' is not a product of design.

On page 88 Dr. Tennant deals with the objection that 'if the world be the sole instance of its kind . . . there can be no talk of . . . antecedent probability in connexion with our question'. His answer seems to be a *tu quoque* addressed to science and common-sense. We are concerned here, he says, 'not with mathematical probability . . . but the alogical probability which is the guide of life and which has been found to be the ultimate basis of all scientific induction.' And, at the bottom of the page, he suggests that each man's belief in the existence of his fellow-men is in the same logical position as the empirical theist's belief in God. To this I should be inclined to make the following answers.

(i) At best this argument could be used only to convict a dogmatically atheistic scientist of inconsistency. It would be of no avail against a sceptical philosopher who took the line that he could see no more logical justification for science than for theology, but found that in practice he could not help believing the results of the former and could quite easily help believing those of the latter. (ii) The Design Argument really makes *two* uses of the notion of antecedent probability. It has to contend both that it is antecedently *improbable* that the world should be such as it is *without* being the product of the design, and that the existence of a world-designer has an appreciable antecedent probability. Now, as regards the first point, I cannot see that Dr. Tennant has answered the objection by his distinction between 'mathematical' and non-mathematical probability. Is there *any* sense of probability, mathematical or 'alogical,' in which a meaning can be attached to the statement that the antecedent probability of one constitution of the world as a whole is greater than or equal to or less than that of any other? I very much doubt if there is. As regards the second point, Dr. Tennant's comparison with our belief in the existence of other human minds

seems hardly fair. I do know directly of the existence of at least one human mind, *viz.*, myself. I can see that it is the kind of existent of which there might be many instances. This does presumably give some finite antecedent probability to the hypothesis of the existence of other human minds. But I have no such grounds for assigning a finite antecedent probability to the existence of a single divine mind on which the whole world depends.

Dr. Tennant holds that we might be able to recognize that the world is probably the product of a designing intelligence without being able to conjecture what end is being pursued. But he thinks that the ethical data, which are inadequate by themselves to establish Theism, strongly suggest, when once Theism is established, that God's end in creation is the production and development of finite moral beings. The only instances of such beings with which we are acquainted are ourselves; and, to this extent, empirically established Theism is anthropocentric. In a footnote on page 114 Dr. Tennant seems prepared to accept the view of Prof. Eddington that life and mind may exist only in one or a few small regions in a vast lifeless universe. If so, it is difficult to see the relevance of enormously the greater part of the physical world to God's presumed intention. And, when stress is laid on the superabundant beauty of nature unspoilt by man, two questions arise. Is there the least reason to believe that the bulk of the stellar universe is any more beautiful than Wigan or the Sahara? And, if most of the ugliness that we know of is due to the large-scale operations of man, would it not be safer to argue from natural *ugliness* than from natural *beauty* to the existence of a mind which operates on a still larger scale?

The teleological argument is, of course, an argument by analogy with our own minds and their productions. The question therefore arises whether God, as designer of the world, could have enough analogy with us, who live and operate within the world, to make the argument a reasonably strong one. At the end of Chapter IV. and the beginning of Chapter V. Dr. Tennant considers the analogies and differences. At once a most serious difficulty arises. He insists (p. 122 *et seq.*), that God must be conceived as a *creator* who brings into existence genuine *continuants*, which afterwards live their own lives, and which are not mere rearrangements of pre-existing continuants. Now he admits that we have no such power ourselves and no clear conception of it. 'The notion of creation . . . is not derivable from experience.' (p. 125). This is a very awkward admission for anyone who is basing his argument for the existence of God on analogy with ourselves and our designs and operations. And it is particularly awkward for a writer, like Dr. Tennant, who insists that *all* our concepts are of empirical origin. I cannot imagine whence, on Dr. Tennant's view, the notion of creation can have come into the human mind. And I cannot see how a theory which has to use this concept can claim to be 'explanatory' in the sense in which a scientific theory or an historical reconstruction of a past

situation is 'explanatory'. Dr. Tennant attempts to deal with this latter objection on page 125; but I cannot see that he is successful. It may be that 'the ultimate mystery of the origination of the world confronts all theories alike'. But surely the essence of Dr. Tennant's defence of Theism is that it does, and rival theories do not, give an intellectually satisfactory explanation of this mystery. And, if it involves the admittedly unintelligible notion of creation, it is an unintelligible hypothesis supported by a superficial analogy which dissolves away when exposed to critical reflexion.

When Dr. Tennant goes into further details, as he does in Chapter V., the dissimilarities between 'design', as ascribed to God, and 'design' as known in men, become still more marked. We must not suppose that God's design existed before its execution, that God used means to bring about his proposed end, or in fact that God ever existed without the world existing too. 'If we are to speak in terms of time . . . the world is co-æval with God and is contingent on his determinate nature, inclusive of will' (p. 129).

Dr. Tennant's doctrine about time and eternity is summed up on page 139. God, being an existent, is certainly not eternal in the sense in which a truth or fact is so. And, if 'eternal' means 'lasting through endless time', it has no special significance for theology. Sometimes 'eternal' is used merely as an honorific expression of spiritual value; it then has no special reference either to duration or to timelessness. It is quite certain that the experiences of finite beings appear to have temporal qualities and relations. This appearance must be a manifestation of a certain characteristic kind of quality or relation among noumena. And there is no reason to think that the appearance misrepresents fundamentally the characteristics which it manifests.

Dr. Tennant points out the many ambiguities which lurk in the term 'infinite', and concludes that there is no sense in which it is both true and important to apply it to God. He deals also with the ambiguities of the terms 'perfect' and 'immutable'; and concludes that the only immutability which can be ascribed to God is immutability of purpose, and the only perfection which can be ascribed to God is moral perfection. But he admits that God's situation is so different from that of any finite being that 'his moral nature is largely incomparable with ours' (p. 148). It appears in fact that, when we assert that God is 'morally perfect', we are merely denying, under an affirmative verbal form, the presence in him of certain features, such as conflicting desires, which are *imperfections* in us. We are not asserting anything, so far as I can see, that has a clear positive meaning.

Chapter VI. begins with a severe, and, in my opinion, largely justified, attack on *à priori* speculative theology and metaphysics, as exemplified by Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and modern Absolute Idealists. McTaggart's pluralistic form of Absolutism is treated with rather more respect. But Dr. Tennant naturally cannot

accept its axioms or its general method of procedure; and he very much dislikes the doctrine, which is essential if McTaggart's conclusions are to be reconciled with the appearances, that we seriously misperceive ourselves and our mental processes when we introspect.

As regards the personality of God, Dr. Tennant holds that theology cannot decide whether God should be regarded as a single person or as a society of persons. But he thinks that one or other of these alternatives must and can be accepted, provided it is recognised that personality involves that degree of limitation which is implied by relation to an Other, which is not a mere part of, or occurrent in, the Self. Since Dr. Tennant makes God to be a creator of genuine continuants, which, when created, have lives and wills of their own, he has not the same difficulty as Lotze in providing God with the relatively independent Other which he needs in order to be a person.

The nature and limitations of God's knowledge are discussed in the latter part of Chapter VI. The argument is as follows. God cannot have a body, and therefore cannot perceive other things indirectly, as we do by means of their effects on our bodies which cause sensations in our minds. It is concluded that God has the same kind of direct acquaintance with the existents which appear to us as matter as we have with our own sense-data. But there is a further difference. An archangel might differ from us, and agree with God, to this extent. But there would remain the difference between him and God that God did, and the archangel did not, create the continuants with which he is now acquainted. In spite of these advantages God's knowledge is limited. He cannot experience the feelings, desires, etc. of his creatures, though he knows all about them. And, whilst he can *infer* anything that can be inferred, he cannot know in detail beforehand how any creature to which he has given free-will will use this gift. The notion that there might be non-inferential knowledge of events which have not yet happened seems to Dr. Tennant to be unintelligible. The only comment that I have to make on all this is that I do not see that it follows from anything else in Dr. Tennant's book that God has *no* body rather than that he has the *whole world* for his body. In the latter case his acquaintance with any object in the world would be analogous to our acquaintance with parts of our own bodies by organic sensation.

The *Problem of Evil* is dealt with in Chapter VII. It is certain that evil exists; this is 'knowable with much more immediacy and certainty than is the being of God' (p. 181). And all attempts to minimise evil by calling it merely negative are idle verbiage. In considering whether a better world than this was possible we must begin by stating what we mean by 'best'. Not all kinds of value are compatible. If 'best' means 'happiest' no lefence can be made. But, if 'best' means 'most productive of good character and conduct', a case can be argued. As regards moral evil Dr. Tennant's defence is based essentially on the doctrine that the

highest kind of moral good is impossible without undetermined free-will. It was logically impossible to create a world having the highest kind of value without creating beings who are responsible for their deliberate choices. And such responsibility would be impossible unless they were free to choose evil as well as good. This leaves it possible that there will always be moral evil, and conceivable that it might someday become supreme. But the latter contingency seems most unlikely when we fairly reflect upon and compare the nature and consequences of moral good and moral evil. Dr. Tennant's defence of God on the score of physical evil is as follows. The world could not be a training place for the development of moral character unless it consisted of things with fixed properties subject to general laws. And it is impossible that the world should be of this nature without at times inflicting pain on innocent sentient beings. Such pain is not willed by God either as an end or as a means, but it is tolerated by him as an inevitable collateral consequence of the only conditions under which free agents can exercise their virtues and develop moral values. In outline the validity of this line of defence may be admitted; but, when we come to details, it is all a question of degree. Must *every* possible system of things with fixed properties and subject to general laws involve so widespread, so intense, so unjustly distributed, so useless, and so morally detrimental suffering as there seems to be in the actual world? He would be a bold man who would attempt to answer this question in the affirmative. Of course, if our present life be a short section of a life of much greater, or even endless, duration, there is at least a possibility that the problem of physical evil may be much less serious than it appears. This Dr. Tennant recognises on page 205, and discusses further in Note E. of the *Appendix*. He there concludes that 'the world . . . cannot safely be regarded as realising a *divine* purpose unless man's life continues after death'. Whilst I agree that theism without human survival can hardly be ethically satisfactory, I should conclude from this that we have no right to postulate the existence of an ethically satisfactory God *unless* and *until* we have some *independent* evidence for human survival. And Dr. Tennant denies that we have any such independent evidence.

I leave it to professional theologians to discuss the more strictly theological topics with which Dr. Tennant is concerned in Chapter VIII. I must end by congratulating Dr. Tennant on the completion of a solid and valuable treatise on a subject of perennial interest. I cannot, indeed, pretend to believe that ethical theism has been, or could be, established by such arguments as these. But, considering how heavily Dr. Tennant has felt obliged to handicap theism, he has certainly given it a very good run for its money. If a system of speculative philosophy cannot be established by Dr. Tennant's method, I agree that it is still less likely to be established by any other. Dr. Tennant's method at least ensures those who use it *against nonsense, enthusiasm, and credulity; it leads to a form of*

theism which is intellectually and morally respectable and in practice inoffensive; and, if one *must* try to explain the ultimate and formulate the ineffable, Dr. Tennant's type of conclusion is perhaps the least unintelligible explanation and the least misleading formulation available to us here and now.

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Essays in Honor of John Dewey, on the occasion of his Seventieth Birthday, October 20, 1929. New York: Henry Holt & Co. Pp. xi, 425.

WILLIAM JAMES used, half seriously, to declare that most philosophers were secretly devoured by an ungratified craving for 'recognition', by which they meant *praise*. If there is truth in this contention, John Dewey must be the happiest of philosophers. For he has been praised without stint, and officially recognised as America's greatest living philosopher; and the great banquet tendered him in New York on the day he completed his three score years and ten was plainly intended as America's declaration of philosophic independence. If he were not among the most modest of men he might well be elated also at the celebration of his seventieth (that is, presumably, seventy-first) birthday by this stately volume. Its nine and twenty contributors (all former or present colleagues) all acclaim him as their friend, colleague, and in some sense, master; and even though their contributions (as might have been expected) vary considerably in interest and value, their average quality is high. It is moreover somewhat noticeable that all the essays are in some sense independent contributions to philosophy, and that none of the contributors is content to be a mere interpreter of his master's doctrine, or sets himself merely to expound or explain its difficulties. For this feature the reason may be only that it is neither safe nor profitable for any one to set up as a commentator till his subject (or victim) is *dead*: but still pragmatists do not seem to be capable of the faithful and so often pathetic discipularity of the Hegelian school. In the appended reflections I have not attempted to abstract and appraise all the essays, but have merely selected for comment arguments and points which impressed me specially.

Dr. Felix Adler leads off the (alphabetical) array with an essay on Personality, which agrees with Kant (though the author disclaims Kantism) that "every human being is an end *per se*" (p. 7). Next, Prof. E. S. Ames, of Chicago, discusses 'Religious Values and Philosophical Criticism' in a thoughtful and well-written essay which uses the social side of religion to bring out the need for a reconstruction also of the spiritual values under changing circumstances. Prof. Harold Chapman Brown of Stanford, in an essay