The Transcendental Argument for God's Existence

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See also our blog.

If, therefore, we observe the dogmatist coming forward with ten proofs, we can be quite sure that he really has none. For had he one that yielded . . . apodeictic proof, what need would he have of the others?

–Immanuel Kant

I. Introduction

A. Van Til and the Copernican Revolution of Apologetics

Cornelius Van Til revolutionized Christian apologetics in the twentieth century. His system of the defense of the faith rejected the common practice among Christian apologists of assuming a neutral, autonomous point of view when confronting unbelief. In its place he urged a presuppositional, theonomic approach of establishing the truth of Christian theism. He maintained that because God, speaking in his word, is the ultimate epistemological starting point, there is no way of arguing for the faith on the basis of something other than the faith itself. God's authority is ultimate and thus self-attesting. To argue for the faith on any other authority is to assume there is a higher authority than God himself to which he must give account. But the very attempt to do this is self-defeating. Consequently, the Christian apologist must stand upon God's authoritative word and presuppose its truth when contending for the faith. This stand does not relegate the apologist to fideism. Indeed, the very opposite is the case. Upon the rock foundation of God's word the Christian is able to demonstrate the foolishness of unbelieving thought while at the same time vindicate the greatness of divine wisdom.

Put in historical context, we see in Van Til the confluence of two great streams of Christian thought: the apologetic tradition that seeks to establish as beyond question the truth of Christianity and the epistemological tradition that subjugates man's intellect to God's revelation. Secularists and even many Christians have rejected this synthesis as impossible. Such critics maintain that either Christianity must be based on faith to the exclusion of reason or Christianity must be tested by the deliverances of reasons in order to establish its truth. Van Til showed that only on the basis of faith can there be reason (*credo ut intelligentum*). In thus combining a biblical, Reformed epistemology together with a non-compromising apologetic argument, Van Til brought about a "Copernican Revolution" in Christian thought.

Over the years, however, Van Til's revolutionary thought has been subjected to criticism from many quarters. As a seminal thinker Van Til concentrated on the major components of apologetic system, but neglected to develop and elucidate a number of its more intricate features. Consequently, Van Til bequeathed the task of tying together the loose ends of his system to his followers.

B. Bahnsen's Contribution to Presuppositional Apologetics

It, thus, fell to Van Til's successors to fill the gaps in his seminal and programmatic apologetic system. Unfortunately, while Van Til's followers have been numerous, most have either been uncritical and have contented themselves with merely regurgitating Van Til's slogans or, at the other extreme, have so fundamentally departed from their mentor that their apologetic methodology only bears superficial resemblances to Van Til's approach.i[1]

Of Van Til's disciples that remained in basic agreement with him, only two can rightly be considered to have further refined and elaborated his apologetic outlook: Greg L. Bahnsen and John M. Frame. Since this article is written in honor of the former, it is his contribution to Van Til's apologetic methodology that I will be concerned with.ii[2]

As a student of Van Til, Bahnsen understood from Van Til himself what the fundamental

difficulties or gaps were with his apologetic system.iii[3] Much of Bahnsen's career was devoted to firming up the foundation that Van Til had so carefully laid. Bahnsen's defense and elaboration Van Til's apologetic methodology can be seen in five main areas: the practice of the presuppositional method; the biblical defense of presuppositional apologetics; organizing and explaining Van Til's system; analysis of the phenomenon of self-deception; and the elaboration of the Transcendental Argument for God's Existence.

1. Practice of the presuppositional method

While Van Til wrote extensively about apologetic methodology, he seldom engaged in the actual practice of apologetics. Only in his short track, "Why I Believe in God" does he set forth a defense of the faith directed against the unbeliever.iv[4] Aside from this work, Van Til confined himself to the more theoretical aspects of apologetics. This relative neglect of the practice of the defense of the faith and concentration on abstract and meta-apologetic issues is perhaps one of the main reasons why Van Til's methodology is so neglected and misunderstood in the church today.

Bahnsen realized this lack of practical apologetics was a deficiency in Van Til. "… I … wish that Van Til had given more attention to making practical applications of his presuppositional method – to actually defending the faith against the enemy, rather than debating methodology so much within the family of faith."v[5] To rectify this, Bahnsen dedicated much of his career to the practice of apologetics. He did this by conducting many classes, seminars and conferences instructing Christians how to defend the faith (as he liked to say, "taking it to the street"). He was also involved in numerous debates with such well-known atheists as Gordon Stein, George H. Smith and Edward Tabash.vi[6] Bahnsen's clear and powerful defense of Christianity on these occasions serve as a model of the practice of presuppositionalism. Apart from the pedagogical value of these debates, Bahnsen's performances established his reputation as one of the foremost Christian apologists of his day. Frame's tribute is fitting, "…Bahnsen is one of the sharpest apologists working today. In my view, he is the best debater among Christian apologists of all apologetic persuasions."vii[7]

2. Biblical defense of presuppositionalism

The one criticism that perhaps disturbed Van Til the most was that of G. C. Berkouwer.viii[8] Berkouwer notes, with a good deal of irony, that although Van Til claims to have arrived at his apologetic system from the Bible itself, there is a conspicuous absence of biblical exegesis in his writings. To this charge Van Til readily confessed: "This is a defect. The lack of detailed scriptural exegesis is a lack in all of my writings. I have no excuse for this."ix[9] He later added, "… I would like to be more exegetical than I have been. Dr. G. C. Berkouwer was right in pointing out my weakness on this point."x[10]

Bahnsen helped fill in this lacuna with the publication of a syllabus on biblical apologetics.xi[11] In the syllabus he demonstrates not only must our apologetic methodology come from Scripture, but that Scripture teaches the necessity of defending the faith in a presuppositional manner. Bahnsen furthers this case in his comparison of the Socratic method of philosophy with the presuppositional method practiced by Paul and other biblical writers.xii[12] Socrates' autonomous search for truth is shown to be completely out of accord with biblical principles of epistemology. For Paul, Christ is the foundation of all truth and knowledge and apart from him there is only ignorance and darkness. Beyond these biblical studies of the proper theory of apologetics, Bahnsen's looks at the actual practice of apologetics in in the New Testament in his important exegetical study of Acts 17.xiii[13] This article shows in painstaking detail that Paul's defense of the faith before the Areopagus, far from being a display of the evidential or "classical" method of apologetics, is thoroughly presuppositional in nature. Through these studies Bahnsen demonstrates explicitly what Van Til took for granted: that presuppositional apologetics, when properly understood, is synonymous with biblical apologetics.

3. Organizing and Explaining of Van Til

One of the major obstacles in the way of promoting presuppositionalism has been Van Til's own writing style. Friends and critics alike have expressed chagrin at his "tortuous English," his redundant and unclear style, his penchant for sloganizing and his disorganized presentation of themes.xiv[14] Though he considered these criticism overstated, Bahnsen likewise recognized these shortcomings in Van Til. "'[I]ssues of communication' did sometimes become a problem for Van Til."xv[15] Bahnsen's publication of *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* goes a long way in correcting these deficiencies. In the book, Van Til's apologetic writings are logically organized and given extensive introductions that both

explain and defend Van Til's views. Bahnsen also provides a running commentary in footnotes so that the reader is guided through even the most difficult of Van Til's passages.

4. Self-Deception

One of the central features of Van Til's apologetic system is that it declares the unbeliever to both believe in God and not believe in God. That is, natural man believes that God exists, that he the Creator, is eternal, all-powerful and just and yet he does not, in another sense, believe these things. At first glance, it appears that these two claims contradict each other. How can somebody believe something and at the same time disbelieve the same thing? This problem has not only been seen as a great difficulty by sympathetic followers of Van Til,xvi[16] but Van Til himself recognized the paradoxical nature of this claim posed a problem for his apologetic system. He says of this issue that it "has always been a difficult point"xvii[17] and he recognizes the challenge that opponents of his view put forth:

> It is ambiguous or meaningless, says the Arminian, to talk about the natural man as knowing God and yet not truly knowing God. Knowing is knowing. A man either knows or he does not know. He may know less or more, but if he does not "truly" know, he knows not at all.xviii[18]

The difficulty that the Arminian points out is how can the natural man both believe in God and yet not believe in God? It is apparent that the natural man is engaged in some form of self-deception. He believes in God, but then suppresses this belief (in unrighteousness) in order to allow himself to not believe in God. The difficulty is that he is not merely pretending to not believe in God, but that he actually deceives himself into not believing in God. In other words, the unbeliever lies to himself and believes the lie he tells. Thus two difficult problems emerge. It appears that the natural man both believes p and believes -p. But this is implausible. Except for madmen, nobody consciously believes such contradictory propositions. Furthermore, how is it possible for the natural man to lie to himself and believe the lie that he is telling? After all, if he knows he is telling a lie, why would he believe it? It would seem that such a psychological condition is hardly possible.

Bahnsen tackles these difficult problems in his doctoral dissertation, "A Conditional Resolution of the Apparent Paradox of Self-Deception."xix[19] A more accessible treatment is found in his article, "The Crucial Concept of Self-Deception in Presuppositional Apologetics."xx[20] In these works, Bahnsen shows how natural man can believe that God exists (a first-order belief) and yet can deceive himself into believing that he does not have such a belief (a second-order belief). Thus the natural man does not believe both p and -p, but rather he believes p and also believes (falsely) that he does not believe p. Moreover, self-deception, like falling asleep, is a self-covering intention. When self-deception is successful, the original intention is covered in the process.

The above criticisms and difficulties are all given satisfactory answers and resolutions by Bahnsen. Where Van Til was hard to understand or disorganized or where he was too abstract and theoretical, Bahnsen brings clarity and practical illustrations. Where there were objections to the biblical warrant of Van Til's system or concerns about the apparent paradoxical corollaries that emerge from it, Bahnsen provides a clear defense and analysis.

There is one objection to Van Til's system that has yet to be addressed. And this is perhaps the most serious. This has to do with the nature of the presuppositional or transcendental argument for God's existence (TAG hereafter). It is to this objection that I shall now turn.

II. The Transcendental Argument for God's Existence

A. Van Til On TAG

Despite his many assertions that there is an absolute proof for Christianity, many critics of Van Til have accused him of never actually stating it. Gordon Clark, for example, asserts that if Van Til has a certain argument for Christianity, he ought to state its premises and give the argument step by step.xxi[21] Clark, moreover, contends that the argument has never been formulated by Van Til and that he (Clark) had been waiting forty years for the argument.xxii[22]

Apologists from different camps have offered similar criticisms. "Evangelical Thomist" Norman Geisler alleges, "…Van Til never really spelled out how his transcendental argument actually works."xxiii[23] Reformed epistemologist Kelly James Clark remarks in a similar vein:

> Whenever I read presuppositionalists I almost always think, "Saying it's so doesn't make it so." Saying that Christianity is the criterion of truth (whatever that could mean), that Christian belief is

> the most certain thing we know, that Christian faith is not defeasible, and that Scripture supports these views, does not make it so. There are few apologetic approaches that are so long on assured proclamations and so short on argument.xxiv[24]

Proponents of the "Classical" method such as R. C. Sproul and John Gerstner simply refer to Van Til's approach as fideism.xxv[25] The misguided nature of these criticisms is amply attested to in the writings of Van Til himself. There he clearly sets forth not only the nature of his argument, but how the argument actually proceeds. The lengthy quote that follows is perhaps his best summation:

> Since the non-theist is so heartily convinced that univocal reasoning is the only possible kind of reasoning, we must ask him to reason univocally for us in order that we may see the consequences. In other words, we believe it to be in harmony with and a part of the process of reasoning analogically with a non-theist that we ask him to show us first what he can do. We may, to be sure, offer to him at once a positive statement of our position. But this he will at once reject as quite out of the question. So we may ask him to give us something better. The reason he gives for rejecting our position is, in the last analysis, that it involves self-contradiction. We see again as an illustration of this charge the rejection of the theistic conception that God is absolute and that he has nevertheless created this world for his glory. This, the non-theist says, is self-contradictory. And it no doubt is, from a non-theistic point of view. But the final question is not whether a statement appears to be contradictory. The final question is in which framework or on which view of reality—the Christian or the nonChristian—the law of contradiction can have application to any fact. The non-Christian rejects the Christian view out of hand as being contradictory. Then when he is asked to furnish a foundation for the law of contradiction, he can offer nothing but the idea of contingency.
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> What we shall have to do then is to try to reduce our opponent's position to an absurdity. Nothing less will do. Without God, man is completely lost in every respect, epistemologically as well as morally and religiously. But exactly what do we mean by reducing our opponent's position to an absurdity? He thinks he has already reduced our position to an absurdity by the simple expedient just spoken of. But we must point out to him that upon a theistic basis our position is not reduced to an absurdity by indicating the "logical difficulties" involved in the conception of creation. Upon the theistic basis it must be contended that the human categories are but analogical of God's categories, so that it is to be expected that human thought will not be able to comprehend how God shall be absolute and at the same time create the universe for his glory. If taken on the same level of existence, it is no doubt a self-contradiction to say that a thing is full and at the same time is being filled. But it is exactly this point that is in question—whether God is to be thought of as on the same level with man. What the antitheist should have done is to show that even upon a theistic basis our conception of creation involves self-contradiction.
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> We must therefore give our opponents better treatment than they give us. We must point out to them that univocal reasoning itself leads to self-contradiction, not only from a theistic point of view, but from a non-theistic point of view as well. It is this that we ought to mean when we say that we must meet our enemy on their own ground. It is this that we ought to mean when we say that we reason from the impossibility of the contrary. The contrary is impossible only if it is self-contradictory when operating on the basis of its own assumptions. It is this too that we should mean when we say that we are arguing *ad hominem*. We do not really argue *ad hominem* unless we show that someone's position involves self-contradiction, and there is no self-contradiction unless one's reasoning is shown to be directly contradictory of or to lead to conclusions which are contradictory of one's own assumptions.xxvi[26]

Here we find the basic contours of TAG. It starts with human experience; such things as science, love, rationality and moral duties. It then asserts that the existence of the Christian God is the necessary precondition of such experiences. Finally, it proves this indirectly by demonstrating the impossibility of the contrary.

The criticism that Van Til has not produced an argument is, thus, without foundation. Saying, this, however, is not saying much. That Van Til offers an argument is beyond debate. That he offers a good argument is an altogether different matter. And the question of whether TAG is a good argument is perhaps behind much of the above criticism. Unfortunately, Van Til does not offer much in the way of

detailed analysis of TAG. He was content to present the argument in broad strokes and leave the details aside. More problematic was his failure to address some of the common criticisms of TAG. Like much of his other work in apologetics, he left the detailed work to his followers.

B. Bahnsen's Defense of TAG

In his writings and lectures, Bahnsen addressed a number of the stock criticisms of TAG. These objections fall into four broad categories: (1) the nature of TAG; (2) the uniqueness proof for the conclusion of TAG; (3) the mere sufficiency of the Christian worldview; (4) the move from the conceptual necessity God's existence to the actual existence of the Christian God. I will address these in order.xxvii[27]

Objection 1. The Nature of TAG

The first criticism has to do with the nature of TAG. Specifically, some have argued that TAG is not a unique argument form, but is reducible to the more traditional arguments for God's existence. Frame especially has advanced this criticism in his recent writings on apologetics.xxviii[28]

Van Til claims that only transcendental or indirect arguments bring us to the conclusion that the God of the Bible exists. Van Til states, "The method of reasoning by presupposition may be said to be indirect rather than direct." He explains what he means by this as follows:

> The issue between believers and non-believers in Christian theism cannot be settled by a direct appeal to "facts" or "laws" whose nature and significance is already agreed upon by both parties to the debate. The question is rather as to what is the final reference-point required to make the "facts" and "laws" intelligible.

How is this to be done?

> The Christian apologist must place himself upon the position of his opponent, assuming the correctness of his method merely for argument's sake, in order to show him that on such a position the "facts" are not facts and the "laws" are not laws. He must also ask the non-Christian to place himself upon the Christian position for argument's sake in order that he may be shown that only upon such a basis do "facts" and "laws" appear intelligible.xxix[29]

Against Van Til, Frame argues that transcendental arguments may be either direct (positive) or indirect (negative). For example, in Apologetics to the Glory of God, Frame asks:

> Are indirect arguments really distinct from direct arguments? In the final analysis, it doesn't make much difference whether you say "Causality, therefore God" or "Without God, no causality, therefore God."xxx[30]

How are we to understand this? Interpreted one way these two arguments are really the same. The first is an enthymeme which when spelled-out reads: "There is causality and therefore God exists [for without God there could be no causality]. The second is also enthymematic which when spelled-out reads: "Without God there is no causality [but there is causality] therefore God exists." Understood this way, Van Til would have no disagreement.

This interpretation is not what Frame means by a direct or positive argument though. In his book on Van Til he writes:

> We can certainly conceive of a positive argument that would lead to a transcendental conclusion. We might, for example, develop a causal argument for God's existence, prove that the ultimate cause of the world must have the attributes of the biblical God, and thus establish that all intelligibility in the universe derives from God.xxxi[31]

Notice that he is speaking here of a causal argument. Specifically, he is speaking of the traditional cosmological argument (an argument that concludes there must have been an Ultimate Cause, and this Ultimate Cause is God). And this is certainly something Van Til would take issue with.

The question before us then is, is the traditional cosmological argument (or other traditional arguments for God's existence) a version of the transcendental argument stated in a direct or positive way? Put differently, was Van Til right about the distinctiveness of his argument for the existence of God? or is Frame right in saying that the transcendental argument is just a restatement of traditional arguments? To answer this a few words about transcendental arguments are in order.

Transcendental arguments attempt to discover the preconditions of human experience. They do so by taking some aspect of human experience and investigating what must be true in order for that experience to be possible. Transcendental arguments typically have the following form. For *x* [some aspect of human experience] to be the case, *y* must also be the case since *y* is the precondition of *x*. Since *x* is the case, *y* is the case. The argument mentioned above serves as a clear example of a transcendental argument. For causality to be possible, God has to exist since the existence of God is the precondition of causality. Since there is causality, God exists. A corollary of this is that whenever non-believers employ the concept of causation, they are borrowing from the Christian worldview since only on a Christian worldview does causation make sense.

Does the traditional cosmological argument take this form? A brief sketch of it will prove that it does not. Essentially the argument is outlined as follows. There are causes in the world and these causes are contingent. There is either an infinite number of contingent causes or there is a finite number. Since there could not be an infinite number (an infinite chain of contingent causes is impossible) there must be a finite number. Since there is a finite number, there must be a first cause. The argument concludes by identifying this first cause as God.

Notice that this argument does not show that the precondition of causality is God. Rather, it assumes that the non-believer is perfectly justified in believing in causation and/or using the concept of causation. The non-believer may not have thought through the implications of the world being causally ordered – i.e. there must be a First Cause – but this does not mean he cannot make sense of causation. It is not arguing that the precondition of causation is God. Indeed, it assumes that human experience and understanding in general and causation in particular are perfectly intelligible outside the Christian worldview. Thus, even if the cosmological arguments were sound, the unbeliever is perfectly justified in believing in and/or using the concept of causation.

This leads to a further point. None of the *traditional* arguments for the existence of God (cosmological as well as others) are in fact sound. All have been repeatedly refuted (see the writings of Hume, Kant, Russell and many contemporary philosophers). And the reason for this failure is precisely because they do not presuppose the Christian worldview. Rather, the traditional arguments give the concepts of being, causation, purpose, etc. to the non-Christian; they assume that all of these are intelligible on the unbeliever's worldview. This being the case, the apologist has already conceded to the non-Christian that the world is intelligible without reference to God.

According to Frame, the traditional arguments are better than this, however. He contends that the traditional argument from motion, for example, "does not necessarily begin with the assumption that motion is intelligible apart from God."[xxxii][32] Moreover, he seems to say that the traditional arguments are best understood as making this assumption. Indeed, Frame asserts that Aquinas himself believed that the world is unintelligible apart from God.[xxxiii][33] If this were the case, Frame's assertion that Aquinas and Van Til are not as far apart as Van Til thought would be legitimate.

Is this really the case though? Are the traditional arguments presuppositional after all? While it is certainly true that the cosmological argument (or any other traditional argument) can be presented so as to presuppose the Christian worldview, this is not how it has been historically formulated. There is not one remark in Aquinas or Bishop Butler (Frame's major examples of traditional apologists) that even hints of the idea that the God of the Bible is the necessary precondition of intelligible experience. Why, then, does Frame make this error?

As I alluded to earlier, Frame thinks that because Aquinas's cosmological argument attempts to prove the existence of God on the basis of causation in the world, that this may be construed as the claim that the world is unintelligible apart from God. But this is to equivocate on the word *unintelligible*. Let me explain.

The traditional cosmological argument, for example, tries to show that we could not explain the existence of the world without God. Stated another way, without positing the existence of God we would be ignorant of the origin of the universe. We would not know how it came into existence and so the universe would be, in this sense, unintelligible. The transcendental argument, however, attempts to demonstrate that we could not account for the world, causation or whatever human experience we wish to speak about without presupposing the existence of God. Without this presupposition, the world would be, in this other sense, unintelligible.

This is a difficult point and so an analogy may be helpful. I do not know how jet engines work. In my current state of ignorance, jet engines are, in one sense, unintelligible to me. Does my ignorance preclude me from believing in jet engines and intelligently using the concept in communication? Of course

not. I am justified in believing in them and am quite capable of speaking about them even though I do not know the mechanics of jet engines. And so in another sense, they are perfectly intelligible to me. In the same way, the traditional arguments at best show that non-Christians are ignorant of how the universe came about. It is in this sense that it is unintelligible to them. These arguments do not show, however, that their belief in the universe, causation and so on, are unjustified. In this sense, these things are granted to be perfectly intelligible to them.

Contrary to Frame, then, the traditional arguments do not have transcendental conclusions. They may conclude that God is the *transcendent* cause of the universe, but this is very different from concluding that his existence is *transcendentally* necessary. Though subtle, this distinction stands at the very center of Van Til's methodology.

Objection 2. The Uniqueness Proof for the Conclusion of TAG

Another criticism that has arisen against TAG is that the conclusion, God exists, does not necessarily follow from the premises. This criticism has taken many forms. Perhaps the most famous is John W. Montgomery's "Once upon an A Priori...."xxxiv[34] In this article, Montgomery contends that there is no way to establish that the Christian God is the necessary precondition of human experience since there is no way to eliminate all of the possible alternatives.

> Even Van Til's trenchant decimations of non-Christian positions are rendered ineffective by his ultimate presuppositionalism, since … all the non-Christians whom Van Til chooses to criticize could employ his own two-edged sword against him, crying …: "Such criticisms are irrelevant, for right reason – true interpretation of fact and genuine application of the standards of consistency – begins with commitment to *my* presuppositional starting point!" And even if it were possible in some fashion to destroy all existent alternative world-views but that of orthodox Christianity, the end result would still not be the necessary truth of Christianity; for in a contingent universe, there are an *infinite* number of possible philosophical positions, and even the fallaciousness of infinity-minus-one positions would not establish the validity of the one that remained (unless we were to introduce the gratuitous assumption that at least one *had* to be right!).xxxv[35]

This criticism can be construed in two ways. First, it can be seen as the last resort of a non-Christian who has just been shown the impossibility of his own worldview and also shown that the Christian worldview is able to account for human experience. At this point of desperation he says, "yes, Christianity is able to account for human experience, but there may be another worldview out there that can also provide the preconditions of human experience." This move, however, is of little or no practical value for the non-Christian. In a debate, people argue about actual worldviews not what may possibly be the case. If Christianity is shown to account for human experience and, say, naturalism, Buddhism or Islam is shown to be unable to give such an account, it is of no aid to the naturalist or Buddhist or Muslim to make recourse to some unknown worldview that may, like Christianity, provide the preconditions of intelligibility.

Bahnsen rhetorical comeback hits the mark. Suppose a basketball player, say Michael Jordan, beats every worthy opponent in one-on-one basketball games. He can justifiably claim to be the best individual basketball player in the world. Suppose further that another jealous (and peevish) basketball player who was previously trounced by Jordan resents that he (Jordan) has titled himself "the best player in the world." His comeback is, "just because you have beat every current player does not mean that there is not another one coming who is better than you." Jordan's response can be anticipated; "bring on my next opponent." The theoretical possibility that there may be another player better than Jordan is not a concern to him. In the world of basketball, it is the one who is actually the best player, and not who is possibly be the best player, that is of importance. In the practice of apologetics, things are similar. What matters are actual worldviews not possible worldviews.

Second, while this criticism is of no practical value to the non-Christian, it would be, nevertheless a serious criticism of TAG if correct. The reason is easy to see. If there are an infinite number of worldviews and TAG only refutes a small slice of them, if one may speak this way, then it has not established that Christianity is the *necessary* precondition of human intelligibility. That is, even granting that TAG demonstrates the absurdity of all actual worldviews, it does not follow that all possible worldviews are likewise absurd.

Bahnsen's comeback is to place the one who makes this move on the horns of a dilemma (actually a "trilemma"). The "unbeliever either (1) implicitly assumes the Christian's presuppositions, (2) considers

it a mystery that not everything is mysterious or nonsensical, or (3) offers a worldview in which words and reasoning are meaningful."xxxvi[36] On (1) the imaginary opponent loses the debate. On (3) the Christian proceeds to refute the proffered worldview. As for (2), Bahnsen contends that this is tantamount to acknowledging defeat. He then considers the possibility of one making a blind leap of faith; one who "hold[s] out the hope that someday, somewhere, someone will furnish an adequate autonomous worldview to protect unbelievers against the compelling rationality of Christianity."xxxvii[37] This, he says, is identical with (2) and since this is acknowledgment of defeat, the opponent loses the debate.

There is a problem with this defense, however. The notions of "losing the debate" and "conceding defeat" trade on an ambiguity. In this context these notions can mean one of two things. First, they can mean that since the opponent resorts to a mere theoretical possibility that there is a worldview somewhere out there that can rescue him, this is a concession that he cannot produce a worldview to compete with Christianity. He is thus defeated in the sense that can offer no account of human experience. Taken this way, Bahnsen is correct. Second, these notions can mean that this move is philosophically illegitimate because appeals to mere theoretical possibilities are of no significance when establishing the claim that something is a necessary precondition of something else. Taken this way, Bahnsen is not correct. Winning the debate and proving that Christianity is the necessary precondition of human experience are two different things.

But Bahnsen makes the further point is that this criticism misses the thrust of TAG altogether. TAG argues for the impossibility of the contrary (*the* non-Christian worldview) and not the impossibility of an infinite number of possible worldviews. TAG does not establish the necessity of Christianity by inductively refuting each and every possible non-Christian worldview (as finite proponents of TAG, this is an impossible task), but rather contends that the contrary of Christianity (any view that denies the Christian view of God) is shown to be impossible. And if the negation of Christianity is false, Christianity is proved true. In other words, the structure of the argument is a disjunctive syllogism. Either A or -A, -- A, therefore, A.

At this point the clever opponent will simply deny the first premise. He will contend that it should not be construed as a disjunction of a contradiction, but a simple disjunction. The argument should thus be restated along the following lines: A or B, -B, therefore, A. And once this move is made he will then contend that while the argument is valid, the first premise involves a false dilemma. That is, he will grant that *given* A or B and the negation of B, A does indeed follow, but nevertheless maintain that the argument is unsound because the first premise (A or B) is not true. The reason being that there are more possibilities than just A and B. Given a true first premise, A or B or C or D ... *n*, the negation of B merely entails that A along with the disjunction of other propositions besides B (C, D,...*n*) follows.

In order for this to be successful, it is incumbent upon the opponent of TAG to defend two claims. First, he must defend the contention that the original first premise is not the disjunction of a contradiction and, second, he must show that there are other possible disjuncts besides B (what we can call the view that is opposed to the Christian worldview).

Since, as far as I am aware, there is nothing in the literature on TAG that defends either of these claims I will leave them aside for the present. However, this objection will reappear in a more sophisticated form when we survey the recent philosophical literature on transcendental arguments.

Objection 3. The Mere Sufficiency of the Christian Worldview

Another criticism TAG that has been around for some time is that while it (TAG) demonstrates the sufficiency of the Christian worldview to account for human experience, it does not demonstrate the necessity of the Christian worldview. Before moving to the objection itself, it is important to first understand the distinction between *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions. A necessary condition is a condition that must be met in order to explain whatever it is that one wishes to explain. This explanation can take either a causal or logical form. In terms of causality, a necessary condition for fire is oxygen. However, the presence of oxygen alone is not sufficient to cause a fire; fuel and a struck match are also needed. Taken together, these three things, oxygen, fuel and a struck match are sufficient conditions for fire. In terms of logic, the necessary condition of a categorical syllogism leading to a conclusion is a major premise. A sufficient condition is that such an argument has both a major and minor premise.

Turning back to the objection, the opponent contends that even when it is granted that the existence of God is a sufficient condition for human experience, this does not prove that this is a necessary condition for human experience. Thus far, this objections is the same as (2). The difference, however, is that where (2) merely asserted the possibility of a worldview other than Christianity that could provide the

preconditions of human experience, proponents of this objections claim that while there is no actual worldview (such as naturalism or Islam) that accounts for human experience they claim to have invented a one that can, like Christianity, account for human experience. What then, is this worldview?

The invented worldview is said to be identical to Christianity except for the fact that it differs from it at one (or more) particular points of doctrine. This made up worldview may, for example, hold all things in common with Christianity except that where Christianity teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, this other worldview, call it Fristianity, asserts a quadrinity – one God in four persons. Everything else, the doctrine of revelation, salvation, and so on are all the same as the Christian worldview. Another version of this objection maintains that only the "fundamental" elements of Christianity are needed to provide the preconditions of human experience (the Trinity, the doctrine of creation, etc.), but not the "non-fundamental" elements (the fall, the atonement, the second coming, etc.)

Bahnsen's response to this objection is helpful, but not completely adequate. He contends that this type of worldview merely apes the Christian worldview and, as such, is completely dependent upon it. That is, because this worldview has its intellectual origination in Christianity, it is not a legitimate competitor of the Christian worldview. Moreover, he maintains that it is the entire Christian worldview that provides the necessary conditions of human experience, not just a portion of it. The Christian worldview as a complete and organic system is necessary.

Proponents of this criticism retort that while it may true that Fristianity is a knock-off of Christianity, the origin of the position is not relevant. Just because Fristianity is an invention that just so happens to be intellectually dependent upon Christianity, does not mean it does not pose a serious challenge to TAG. TAG, after all, claims to establish that Christianity is the *necessary* precondition of human experience. The Fristian worldview hypothesis is only an attempt to show that while Christianity may indeed be a sufficient precondition it is not necessary. Fristianity, so it is maintained, is also a sufficient condition. Fristianity, thus, supposedly exposes the spurious nature of TAG's conclusion.

As for Bahnsen's other claim that it is the entire Christian worldview that is necessary, proponents of the Fristianity objection reply that this is a claim not a proof. It is not enough to assert that the complete Christian worldview and only the complete Christian worldview is the necessary precondition for experience.

Objection 4. The Move from Conceptual Necessity to Necessary Existence

The final objection to TAG is perhaps the most uncommon.xxxviii[38] But the infrequent use of this objection should not mislead the proponent of TAG into thinking that it is not of serious consequence. Far from it. I consider this stricture to be the most powerful argument against TAG and the most difficult to answer.

This objection revolves around the consideration that proving the conceptual necessity a worldview does not establish its ontological reality.[xxxix[39]] Kant, for example, argued that the notion of causation is transcendentally necessary for thought (or at least human thought). Without the concept of causality there could be no thought. But just because causality is necessary for thought does not mean, so Kant argued, that the things in themselves (ding an sich) which exist independently of our conception of them, undergo causal relations. Conceptual necessity does not guarantee ontological necessity. In the same way, assuming that TAG is sound, all that is proved, so this objection goes, is that we must, in order to be rational, believe that God exists.

Bahnsen's response to this criticism is, like (3) above not totally adequate. He contends:

> ...because this is an apologetical dialogue (giving reasons, expecting argument, etc.), both parties have assumed that the true viewpoint must affirm rationality. Van Til argues that if the unbeliever's worldview were true, rationality would be repudiated, whereas if Christianity were true, rationality would be affirmed and required. So while the whole argument may be stated in hypothetical terms, the conclusion is actually established as true, since the hypothetical conditions was granted from the outset by both parties. (If the unbeliever realizes this and now refuses to grant the legitimacy, demand, or necessity of rationality, he has stepped outside the boundaries of apologetics. Furthermore, he forfeits the right to assert or believe that he has repudiated rationality, since without rationality assertion and belief and unintelligible.)xl[40]

Bahnsen's answer is that the issue is one of rationality. If TAG establishes that Christianity is the necessary conceptual precondition of human experience (including rationality) it follows that we must hold to the Christian worldview in order to be rational. And if somebody refuses to accept the Christian

worldview or God's existence, he has no foundation for rationality and, without such a foundation, has no rational basis to object that the conclusion of TAG.

This defense carries a great deal of force. It effectively undermines the unbelievers ability to rationally reject the Christian faith. But notice that this defense construes TAG not so much as a proof for God's existence, but rather as a proof for the necessity of believing the Christian worldview. The problem with this, of course, is that although Christianity may be the necessary precondition for experience, it does not follow from this that Christianity is true.

C. Conclusion

From this survey of the critical literature of TAG four major criticisms have emerged. Objection (1) is, in its present form, relatively weak. It is easily shown that TAG differs fundamentally from the traditional arguments for God's existence. Objects (1), (2) and (3), however, are more difficult to answer and Bahnsen's responses to them are not, as they presently stand, entirely satisfactory.

Thus, despite the fact that Bahnsen both clarified TAG and defended it from common criticisms, his defense is programmatic rather than exhaustive. He offers a basic outline of how it works and how it is to be defended against stock criticisms, but he leaves a few questions unanswered. Particularly, he leaves questions as to whether TAG contains a uniqueness proof of the Christian worldview, whether TAG provides the necessary and not merely sufficient conditions of human experience, and whether TAG establishes the necessity of God's existence or merely the necessity of believing that God exists.

In the last section of this paper I shall endeavor to develop Bahnsen's programmatic remarks and offer a fuller defense of TAG. Before I turn to this task, however, it will be helpful to survey the recent philosophical literature concerning transcendental arguments (TAs). This literature contains similar objections to TAs in general that were made against TAG, but are more precisely stated and more vigorously argued.

III. Transcendental Arguments in the Recent Philosophical Literature

Though Transcendental Arguments (TAs hereafter) have been used by various philosophers since Aristotle,[xli[41]] it is with the publication of P. F. Strawson's *Individuals*,[xlii[42]] that TAs have become a prominent fixture in contemporary philosophy. The discussion of the structure and nature of TAs has generated a good deal of controversy. In what follows, I will overview the contemporary literature on TAs with the aim of setting the most common criticisms of TAG in sharper focus.

A. The Nature of Transcendental Arguments

Before plunging into the current debate over TAs it will helpful to first sketch the form TAs generally take as well review a few definitions proffered in the literature. The aim here is not so much to analyze the nature of TAs – this would require a paper of its own – but to get something of a feel for what kind of arguments they are.[xliii[43]]

A TA takes on (roughly) the following form: For *x* to be the case, *y* must also be the case because *y* is the necessary precondition of *x*; since *x* is the case, *y* must be the case. By itself there is nothing particularly distinguished about this form of argument. For with it I could argue that having parents is the precondition of having grandparents and since I have grandparents I must have parents. Though this shares a structure similar to that of a TA, it is not a TA because it appeals to a posteriori knowledge – in this case, knowledge of basic biological facts. TAs are distinguished from this type of argument by the fact that they appeal only to a priori knowledge – what we can know without any appeal to experience. From this it follows that form alone is not the distinguishing feature that sets TAs apart from other arguments.[xliv[44]] Most recent commentators are in agreement with this conclusion. Grayling is representative:

> [T]o argue, or reason, or proceed transcendentally, or to employ standard philosophical techniques transcendentally, is just to argue or proceed, etc., with a certain aim in mind and a certain subject-matter to hand . . . there is nothing distinctive about the form of TAs, and that what *is* distinctive about them is their aim and subject-matter.[xlv[45]]

What, then, is the aim and subject matter of TAs? Before answering this, it is helpful to consider what is not the aim or subject of TAs. TAs should not be confused with paradigm-case and/or polar concept arguments popularized by Austin, Ryle and others of the so-called Oxford school.[xlvi[46]] For while these types of arguments share a similar form with TAs, they differ greatly in the type of conclusion that is inferred. Specifically, TAs have highly generalized conclusions while polar concept arguments are much

narrower. A brief comparison should bring out this distinction. Austin argues that the skeptic's appeal to illusion does not work because the term 'illusion' makes sense only in a context of having some real things to compare with it and thus everything could not be an illusion (or better put, it makes no sense to say everything is an illusion). Assuming this argument works, the conclusion in somewhat parochial: it defeats only one particular skeptical challenge. The skeptic, though, can simply propose to toss away both words and offer a fresh challenge. A TA aims at something more cosmopolitan. Unlike polar concept arguments, TAs attempt to demonstrate that *x* (whatever *x* may be) is a precondition of experience. In a word, then, the difference between a TA and a polar concept argument is one of scope; the latter asks what are the necessary preconditions for the intelligible use of a small set of terms, the former is concerned with the use of a much larger set.

With this aim in mind, we are now in a position to survey a few representative definitions found in the contemporary literature. According to Anthony Brueckner a TA is:

> an argument that elucidates the conditions for the possibility of some fundamental phenomenon whose existence is unchallenged or uncontroversial in the philosophical context in which the argument is propounded. Such an argument proceeds deductively, from a premise asserting the existence of some basic phenomenon (such as meaningful discourse, conceptualization of objective states of affairs, or the practice of making promises), to a conclusion asserting the existence of some interesting, substantive enabling conditions for that phenomenon.xlvii[47]

Brueckner points to three salient ingredients that are involved in TAs. First they begin with some unchallenged or uncontroversial phenomenon or experience (e.g. I speak a language or I have an idea of a single spatio-temporal system of material things). Next, from this phenomenon they proceed deductively to a conclusion. Finally, this conclusion is a non-trivial condition for the possibility of the phenomenon. Grayling further refines the nature of a TA's conclusion:

> ...the aim of transcendental arguments is to establish the conditions necessary for experience, or experience of a certain kind, in general; and, at their most controversial, to establish conclusions about the nature and existence of an external world, or other minds, derived from paying attention to what has to be the case for there to be experience, or for experience to be as it is.[xlviii[48]]

The conclusion of a TA either tells us something about the conditions necessary for experience or something about the nature of reality. That it, the conclusion of a TA may either be conceptual or ontological.

Ross Harrison adds one more characterization of TAs:

> Transcendental arguments seek to answer scepticism by showing that the things doubted by the sceptic are in fact preconditions for the scepticism to make sense. Hence the scepticism is either meaningless or false. A transcendental argument works by finding the preconditions of meaningful thought or judgment. For example, scepticism about other minds suggests that only the thinker themselves might have sensations. A transcendental argument which answered this scepticism would show that a precondition for thinking oneself to have sensations is that others do so as well. Expressing the scepticism involves thinking oneself to have sensations; and the argument shows that if this thought is expressible, then it is also false.[xlix[49]]

According to Harrison, the refutation of the skeptic is the primary objective of a TA. This view is supported by other commentators of TAs. Barry Stroud, for example, maintains, "transcendental arguments are supposed to demonstrate the impossibility or illegitimacy of [the] skeptical challenge by proving that certain concepts are necessary for thought or experience."[l[50]] Similarly, Strawson asserts that one who "advances such an argument [transcendental] may begin with a premise which the skeptic does not challenge . . . and then proceed to argue [what the] necessary condition of the possibility of such experience is."

While it is true that most (though certainly not all) contemporary TAs are used as skepticism-refuting arguments, this aim is not a necessary feature of them. Indeed, the view that TAs are essentially anti-skeptical in nature rests upon a historical mistake. This mistake is revolves around a faulty interpretation of Kant's understanding of a TA. In the next section I offer an analysis of the nature of Kantian TAs.

B. Kant and Transcendental Arguments

Before analyzing and evaluating contemporary TAs, it is obligatory to say a few words about Kant. Contemporary proponents of TAs, such as Strawson, often cite Kant as their inspiration. The TAs they offer, however, differ in at least one fundamental way from Kantian TAs. Whereas Kant's understanding of a priori knowledge, and hence transcendental reasoning, was closely tied to his view that the forms of sensibility and concepts of the understanding in some way constitute experience,[li][51] contemporary TAs tend to avoid anything resembling Kant's transcendental idealism.

Because of this, a number of philosophers have accused contemporary advocates of TAs, such as Strawson, of denuding Kant's TAs of their distinctiveness. Indeed, some go so far as to claim that the contemporary reformulations do not deserve the title of "transcendental argument" at all. Before one is tempted to cast aside this whole debate as a petty etymological squabble,[lii][52] it should be realized that more than nomenclature or lexical proprietorship is at stake. Kant is, among other things, the father of TAs.[liii][53] Thus it would be a rather odd conclusion to state that his arguments were not TAs. Indeed, one is tempted to say that whatever Kant is doing in the first *Critique* he is arguing transcendentally. This is perhaps what Jaakko Hintikka is getting at when he states that "the first order of business in any discussion of such arguments is to try to see what Kant understood by the term."[liv][54] Ross Harrison is even more explicit, "Since Kant invented the label, anything properly called a 'transcendental' argument must have some analogy to the arguments which Kant used."[lv][55] These considerations have weight and so, taking Hintikka's advice, understanding Kant's use of transcendental arguments shall be my first order of business.

In his preface to the second edition, Kant mentions in a note that the only addition to the *Critique* was the Refutation of Idealism (Bxl), the purpose of which was to once and for all do away with the scandal of philosophy: that the existence of things outside us must be accepted merely on faith. A cluster of controversial issues revolve around the interpretation of Refutation that are of import for the contemporary debate about TAs. Should, for example, the Refutation be viewed as Kant's main TA? Much of the recent literature on TAs insists that is the case. But this raises an immediate question. If the Refutation is indeed Kant's main TA, how are we to explain its absence in the first edition? A related issues concerns the Refutation place in understanding Kant's transcendental project. Even it is not Kant's main TA, it appears at least to be the clearest. Should we therefore use it at a heuristic in understanding the more difficult arguments contained in the Deduction? A final issue has to is whether the Refutation is an example of a transcendental argument at all. Since the answer of this last question is needed before we tackle the other questions, it is to this I shall turn.

To help answer this question, a preliminary questions needs to be addressed. What did Kant mean by the term, 'transcendental"? Perhaps the clearest expression is found in the Introduction of the *Critique*:

> I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori* (A11/B25).[lvi][56]

Elsewhere Kant says that the only way we can know something about objects a priori is knowing what we put into them (Bxviii). He also flatly denies that the word 'transcendental' has any reference to knowledge of things; it refers only to cognitive faculties.[lvii][57] Hence, transcendental knowledge is knowledge of what our cognitive faculties "impose" upon the world. From this Hintikka concludes, "Thus a transcendental argument is for Kant one which shows the possibility of a certain type of synthetic knowledge *a priori* by showing how it is due to those activities of ours by means of which the knowledge in question is obtained"[lviii][58] (Hintikka, p. 275).

Hintikka rightly takes Kant's main TAs to be those in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Deduction. Though he admits that they are not as lucid as they could be (a mild understatement), Kant indicates his intention to show that a priori knowledge always involves the active processes of the mind. In a programmatic passage, Kant writes: "But only the productive synthesis of the imagination can take place a priori" (A118). What then of the Refutation? Hintikka (again rightly) maintains that the Refutation should not be viewed as Kant's paradigm TA. Indeed, he thinks it is not even a TA at all. It is an ad hominem argument showing that the idealist contradicts his own position in the very process of stating his position. In other words, this is a very different kind of argument than those found in the Aesthetic and the Deduction.[lix][59]

A further considerations bolsters his claim. It is difficult to construe the Refutation as the paradigm TA in the Critique since it was latter a addition to the second edition. And unless one wants to argue that the first and second editions offer significantly different philosophical outlooks (which nobody

does) it is absurd to think of it as his central TA. The retort to this is that while the Refutation is not Kant's central TA it is his clearest example of one. Thus in understanding it we can better understand his more difficult ones in the Aesthetic and Deduction. I will return to this contention presently. What is important to note now is that Kantian TAs always involve appeals to constitutive or productive knowledge. Appeal to transcendental psychology is thus the sine qua non of TAs.

If Hintikka is right most of passes as TAs today are, as we shall see, unKantian. He further adds that if they are unKantian they are spurious. What this second charge amounts to, though, is not clear. If he uses "spurious TAs" as a synonym for "unKantian TAs" there is no problem. But if he means that "spurious TAs" are not TAs at all then we have to ask why this is the case. The next question we must address, then, is whether his take on Kant is correct.

According to Grayling, Hintikka is wrong – or as he says, Hintikka gets "the wrong end of the stick altogether."[lx[60]] He tries to prove this by pointing to Kant's use of the metaphor of a legal deduction at the beginning of the Transcendental Deduction (A84/B116). There Kant asserts that like a legal deduction which tries to justify a particular claim or possession (i.e. prove that the claim or possession was lawfully obtained) so a transcendental deduction tries to justify the employment of certain concepts. And it does this in a way that is different from an empirical deduction. The latter type of deduction merely shows how a concept is acquired through experience and "therefore concerns, not its legitimacy, but only its *de facto* mode of origination" (A85/B117).[lxi[61]] Grayling immediately concludes from this that "the task [of transcendental deductions] is to provide a vindication of title, not to show where the concepts come from."

The problem with Grayling's reading of Kant is that to Kant, these are not separate questions. In order to vindicate the use of a concept one must be able to demonstrate where the concepts come from. This is shown by Kant's later remarks on transcendental proofs in The Discipline of Pure Reason. There he says that transcendental proofs are always direct or ostensive and explains this by saying that this type of proof "is that which combines with the conviction of its truth insight into the *sources* of its truth" (A789/B817, my emphasis). In other words, transcendental proofs or deductions are ostensive because they point to the source or origin of truth.

As Hintikka has already noted, it is abundantly clear that the main transcendental proofs in the *Critique* are found in the Aesthetic and Deduction. It is also clear that understanding the TAs in them is extremely difficult. This is why many take the comparatively easier argument of the Refutation as a model to help understand them. And since the basic form of the Refutation is a reductio, it follows that the Aesthetic and Deduction must also be reductios. This practice has been a common if not often stated assumption among Kant scholars to approach his more difficult transcendental proofs by comparing them to easier and allegedly analogous ones. That is, they pay attention to Kant's alleged practice rather than his theory.lxii[62] This has resulted in much confusion as to what the exact nature of Kant's argument is.lxiii[63] It is precisely because of the clarity of the passage at A789/B817 that it should be used as a heuristic device to understand Kant's main transcendental proofs.lxiv[64] Thus the way to understand these difficult arguments is via his metatheoretical comments in the Discipline of Pure Reason.

But what then are we to do with the above passage from Kant (A85/B117)? Based on Grayling's reading, Kant must be contradicting himself. This throws doubt on Grayling's reading. Does Kant not contrast a transcendental deduction with a empirical deduction that depends on the "mere" origin of the concept? Does this not clearly state that whatever transcendental deductions turn out to be, they are not concerned with the source of the concept in question? A careful study of the text leads us to a negative answer. Grayling mistakes the gist of what Kant is getting. Kant indeed is making a contrast between transcendental and empirical deductions, but this contrast is not that the latter is concerned with the mode of origination while the former is not. Rather the latter is concerned with only its de facto or empirical mode of origination (e.g. the actual perception of an object) while the latter is concerned with the a priori mode of origination (in this case, the transcendental ego). Grayling's contention is based on a profound misreading of the text. And so it is he, not Hintikka who gets the wrong end of the stick.

Before we acquiesce to Hintikka and claim that contemporary TAs are unKantian because they do not make appeals to constructive knowledge, it is important to point out the obvious. Kant did use an argument analogous to contemporary TAs in the Refutation and the Second Analogy. Even Hintikka admits this much. So in another sense it is not correct to call contemporary TAs unKantian. They are indeed Kantian arguments, but they are not Kantian *transcendental* arguments. What then of the charge that they are spurious? At this point the question has become a mere linguistic matter. Nothing of philosophical import hangs on the answer at all.

Since it has been the practice to call contemporary TAs 'TAs' and since, as Walker has observed,

Kant did not take out a copyright on the term,lxv[65] there seems to be no pressing need for a change in nomenclature. It is little more than schoolmarmism (*pace* Hintikka and Harrison) to insist that all TAs must comply with tight Kantian strictures in order to warrant the honorific title "Transcendental Argument." Thus it is legitimate to continue the practice of calling contemporary TAs 'TAs' bearing in mind that not all TAs are Kantian in nature.

C. Strawson

Over the last century there have been many examples of TAs in the analytic philosophy tradition. Frege, Wittgenstein, Davidson, Putnam and Searle all have offered TAs for conclusions as various as the necessity of senses (meanings), the impossibility of a private language, the claim that beliefs are generally true, the claim that radical skepticism is false and the truth of external realism.[lxvi[66]] It was with the publication of Strawson's, *Individuals* in 1959, however, that transcendental arguments came to the forefront of philosophical inquiry.

Strawson has spent much of his career resuscitating what he thinks are Kant's important insights while at the same time removing the dross. His *Individuals* and later *The Bounds of Sense*[lxvii[67]] make extensive use of TAs while at the same time eschewing synthetic a prioris and transcendental psychology. Strawson thinks that once the swamp of intuition and the rest of Kant's transcendental psychology are put aside, there remains a core insight into how our conceptual scheme works. According to Strawson, Kant's work is best seen as analysis of our conceptual scheme rather than a transcendental deduction of categories. By taking away from Kant what he considers to be this core insight, Strawson employs TAs to solve two tradition problems in epistemology: skepticism about other minds and skepticism about the external world. Since the use of TAs against the latter has a longer pedigree I will concentrate on it. Whatever is said about this TA, however, applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the other.

Strawson's argument against the external world skeptic is deceivingly simple.

> There is no doubt that we have the idea of a single spatio-temporal system of material things; the idea of every material thing at any time being spatially related, in various ways at various times, to every other at every time. There is no doubt at all that this *is* our conceptual scheme. Now I say that a *condition* of our having this conceptual scheme is the unquestioning acceptance of particular-identity in at least some cases of non-continuous observation.lxviii[68]

Except perhaps for the last sentence, Strawson's claim seems to be perfectly correct. It is just a fact that we think that every material object is in some relation to every other physical object – spatially and temporally. Of course we do not usually speak of having a spatiotemporal system of material things, nor are we generally cognizant of this fact. But the way we use language demonstrates that we presuppose this conceptual scheme. A few pedestrian examples prove this rather easily. Think of a father telling his son to move his bicycle off of the driveway so he can park the family car or a dry cleaner who tells the customer to pick his suit up on Tuesday morning. In both of these scenarios, all individuals involved presuppose that material objects share a spatial relation to each other (either the car or the bicycle can be parked in a particular spot but not both) and temporal relations (the suit that is dropped off today will be the same one that will be ready on Tuesday morning). If they did not presuppose these relationships communication would quickly break down.

But now the skeptic comes along and challenges these presuppositions. Perhaps the car disappears when no one is looking and a different (though similar) one appears when it is observed again. What the skeptic is challenging us to do is justify our belief that our conceptual scheme is true. To the skeptic Strawson replies:

> He pretends to accept a conceptual scheme, but at the same time quietly rejects one of the conditions of its employment. Thus his doubts are unreal, not simply because they are logically irresoluble doubts, but because they amount to the rejection of the whole conceptual scheme within which alone such doubts make sense. So, naturally enough, the alternative to doubt which he offers us is the suggestion that we do not really, or should not really, have the conceptual scheme that we do have; that we do not really or should not really, mean what we think we mean, what we do mean. But this alternative is absurd. For the whole process of reasoning only starts because the scheme is as it is; and we cannot change it even if we would.lxix[69]

The claim is that in order to get his doubts off the ground, the skeptic must presuppose the very conceptual scheme he calls into question. And this illicit importation uncovers the very absurdity of his

position.

It is important to realize that Strawson thoughtlxx[70] that this once and for all defeats the external world skeptic. Were this the case it would have been a true mile stone in the history of philosophy. Like most bold claims from well-recognized philosophers, though, it has become somewhat of a cause célèbre attracting many defenders and critics.

D. Objections

1. Stroud

One of the most trenchant critics of Strawson is Stroud. In his elegant article entitled simply "Transcendental Arguments,"lxxi[71] Stroud sets out to show that TAs in general and Strawson's in particular fail to deliver on their promise of silencing the skeptic.

Stroud takes Strawson's argument to be:

1. We think of the world as containing objective particulars in a single spatio-temporal system.
2. If we think of the world as containing objective particulars in a single spatiotemporal system, then we are able to identify and re-identify particulars.
3. If we can re-identify particulars, then we have satisfiable criteria on the basis of which we can make re-identification.
6. Objects continue to exist unperceived.

Stroud thinks the argument stops here. And if this is the case, it is plainly a non sequitur. Stroud has no qualms with the move from (1) to (3). The problem is that they do not get Strawson to (6). Additional premises are, therefore, needed and Stroud is ready to oblige with

4. If we know that the best criteria we have for the re-identification of particulars have been satisfied, then we know that objects continue to exist unperceived.

And

5. We sometimes know that the best criteria we have for the re-identification of particulars have been satisfied.

Without these or similar premises, the argument is not valid. But since (5) is a statement of fact, the skeptic surely would not let Strawson (or anybody) get away with it. So from this Stroud concludes that Strawson is wrong to take the skeptic as denying (6). Instead he should be taken as denying whether we can know the truth of (6); whether we are justified in ever asserting it – and this is far different from the exotic Berkleyan claim that objects cease to exist when not observed. So (5) is superfluous. All that is really need is (1) - (4) which says that if we think of the world as containing objective particulars in a single spatiotemporal system, then we can know whether objects continue to exist unperceived. Or better put, if it is meaningful to speak of objective particulars, then we must have a way of knowing whether they continue to exist unperceived. But this is a verification principle; a principle that maintains that for propositions to be meaningful, there must be a way, at least in principle, of knowing or testing whether they are true or false.

The problem with this is if TAs rely upon an implicit verification principle, then TAs turn out to be superfluous for the skeptic is directly refuted by the such a principle. If we sometimes know that the best criteria we have for the reidentification of particulars have been satisfied, then we know that skepticism is false.

Later in the article Stroud goes on to generalize this point by maintaining that is hard to imagine that there could be any TA that does not in some way rely on a verification principle to bridge the gap between belief and reality. The reason being is that any TA will maintain that denying the truth of a given discourse presupposes that discourse. But this will not do since the skeptic can simply bite the bullet and say that the whole discourse is muddled. And because the skeptic has this route always open, the transcendental arguer will have to make a universal claim and hold that all discourse is meaningless unless a certain set of propositions (Stroud calls it the privileged class) are necessarily true given the general

discourse. There are several problems with this, but the main one is that this does not set the skeptical problem to rest. All this proves is that the privileged class must be believed; it does prove that the privileged class propositions are in fact true. To assure this a verification principle is necessary. But again, why spend so much time discussing the intricacies of a TA when the verification principle itself is all that is necessary to vanquish the skeptic directly?

But if we have the former, the latter is superfluous and, thus, there is nothing special about transcendental arguments. To put it crassly, to divorce meaning from truth is to render TAs impotent, but to conjoin meaning and truth is to render them (TAs) extraneousness.

2. Körner

One of the most prevalent criticisms of transcendental arguments was first raised in the contemporary literature by Stephan Körner.lxxii[72] Körner argues that while Kant's arguments provide sufficient conditions for human experience (in this case the categories of understanding) they are not necessary conditions.

> The person propounding a transcendental argument assumes that every and any thinker employs the same categorial framework as he does himself, and tries to show that, and why, the employment of this particular framework is 'necessary'. The defect of all transcendental arguments is their failure to provide a uniqueness-proof, i.e. the demonstration that the categorial framework is unique.lxxiii[73]

The objection is that while it may be possible to prove that some conceptual scheme is sufficient for experience, it is not possible to prove that it is necessary. The reason that no uniqueness proof is possible is laid out nicely by Körner. Körner contends that there are only three possible ways of establishing a schema's uniqueness.

> First, to demonstrate the schema's uniqueness by comparing it with experience undifferentiated by any method of prior differentiation... Second, to demonstrate the schema's uniqueness by comparing it with its possible competitors... Thirdly, one might propose to examine the schema and its application entirely from within the schema itself, i.e. by means of statements belonging to it.lxxiv[74]

These three possibilities are subject to powerful criticisms, however. The first possibility cannot establish a schema's uniqueness by comparing it with undifferentiated experience since in order for a comparison to be made, statements about the undifferentiated experience would have to be expressed by making recourse to some prior differentiation of experience. That is, there is no way to formulate a statement about experience without differentiating experience. But even if such a comparison could be made all that could be demonstrated is that the schema under consideration does represent or reflect the undifferentiated experience. But this does not establish the uniqueness of the schema since it may be that other schemas also represent or reflect the undifferentiated experience as well.

Körner offers two criticisms of the second possibility. First, in order to establish the uniqueness of one schema, all other possible schemes would have to be exhibited and refuted. But as Rorty has pointed out, we could never know whether all possible schemas have been exhibited. "Nothing in heaven or earth could set limits to what we can in principle conceive."lxxv[75] No matter how many alternative schemas one can conceive and refute, there is always the possibility that there is another schema (or several!) that has not yet been conceived. Griffiths sums up this criticism nicely:

> [T]o establish [the uniqueness of a schema] would involve an examination of all possible conditions. But by what criterion could we determine that all possible conditions had been enumerated? Further, this means an examination of all possible conditions in detail: a humanly impossible task.lxxvi[76]

Second, Körner maintains that the very act of demonstrating a schema's uniqueness by comparing it with another schema is contradictory. Such a demonstration would presuppose that another schema, a schema distinct from the one whose uniqueness is trying to be proved, can possibly represent or reflect undifferentiated experience. But if this is presupposed, the demonstration is self-contradictory. "[This] requires anyone who uses it to admit before the argument begins that what he is trying to prove is false, otherwise he could not even try to prove it."lxxvii[77]

The third possibility (attempting to establish the uniqueness of a schema from with the schema

itself) is quickly dispatched by Körner. All that can be shown by such a proof is how the schema differentiates a region of experience. It cannot show that it is the only possibly schema able to differentiate that region.

E. In Defense of Transcendental Arguments

1. Stroud

Stroud's argument against TAs is that they either rely on dubious factual premises or that they require a verification principle. Either way, the TA will not do the requisite work against the skeptic since he will either reject the factual premise out of hand or reject the verification principle upon which the TA depends. Thus Stroud places defenders of TAs on the horns of a dilemma: either the verification principle must be dropped and with it the claim that the TA gets us to what the world must be like or the verification principle can be maintained, but only at the price of rendering the TA unnecessary – the verification principle answers the skeptic directly. Almost all recent defenders of TAs have tried to meet this dilemma by tackling the first horn.lxxviii[78] Three basic strategies have been employed in this endeavor.

First, Stroud himself puts forth the possibility of denying the skeptic's claim that it is sufficient that we must merely think the world is a certain way (have a certain conceptual scheme) and not that the world must be a certain way.lxxix[79] The skeptic is just wrong in asserting that mere belief is enough. The only way to account for the fact that our conceptual scheme must be believed (or, conversely, to say that it makes no sense to question our conceptual scheme) is that it must be true. Our conceptual scheme is impossible to deny because it "corresponds" to the way in which the world actually is.

Stroud points out that it is extremely difficult to conceive of a defense for the strong modal claim of this position (i.e. the world must be this way in order to make experience possible). "...how can truths about the world which appear to say or imply nothing about human thought or experience be shown to be genuinely necessary conditions of such psychological facts as that we think and experience things in a certain way, from which the proofs begin?"lxxx[80] Not only has no argument been advanced toward this end, but what such an argument would look like is difficult to imagine.

Second, a defender of TAs may accept Stroud's contention that such arguments merely give us the conclusion that we must believe the world to be a certain way and not that it really is that way. In order to bridge the gap from belief to the world, the defender need not make recourse to a verification principle, but can contend that the way in which we conceive of the world constitutes the way the world actually is. That is, there is in reality no gap between our thoughts and the world since the world does not exist independently of our conception of it. This, of course, is a version of idealism. Given idealism, the move from our conceptual scheme to reality is immediate and the TAs that make this idealist assumption do indeed tell us something about the world.lxxxi[81]

Accepting idealism is a high price to pay to get TAs to work, however. Indeed, Strawson's reinterpretation of Kant was motivated by the attempt to purge out his problematic transcendental idealism and preserve his ingenious insights into the analysis of concepts. Idealism is, thus, the very thing that Strawson (and other proponents of TAs) attempts to get away from. Moreover, a move toward idealism will not in actuality strengthen a TA since idealism is itself subject to serious criticisms (e.g. those of Reid, Moore and Russell). And even if a good case can be made for idealism, the assumption of idealism renders the anti-skeptical TAs unnecessary since idealism refutes skepticism directly.

Third, one may concede that Stroud is correct in arguing that TAs must rely on a verification principle to get from our conceptual scheme to the world, but rather than give up on TAs altogether, propose a more modest view of what TAs are supposed to prove.lxxxii[82] Grayling, for example, makes a distinction between two types of TAs – option-A and option-B. These two options differentiate between TAs that have metaphysical conclusions ("The world must be thus and so") and those that have conceptual ones ("We must not deny thus and so because of our conceptual scheme"). For obvious reasons, Grayling is pessimistic about the prospect for option-A TAs. As for option-B TAs, they have troubles of their own. Such arguments attempt to establish that given our conceptual scheme, certain concepts must be presupposed. That is, it makes no sense to question our conceptual since, in so doing, we must presuppose it. But the skeptic's reply to this line can be anticipated: Even if certain concepts are essential for this conceptual scheme, it may not be for another. Our current scheme might indeed presuppose causation, but that does not mean that other possible conceptual schemes must do so as well. This difficulty is addressed in the following section.

2. Körner

Körner 's criticisms of the first and third possible ways in establishing a conceptual scheme's uniqueness are sound. There is no way to prove the uniqueness of a conceptual scheme by comparing that scheme to undifferentiated experience or by testing its application from within the conceptual scheme itself. His criticisms of the second possibility are, however, subject to serious criticism.

Körner, recall, argued that the second type of proof, the proof that attempts to demonstrate the uniqueness of a given conceptual scheme by comparing it with its possible competitors, is impossible for two reasons. The first is that it is "self-contradictory in attempting a 'demonstration' of the schema's uniqueness, by conceding that the schema was not unique." What Körner means by this is that in attempting to establish the uniqueness of a particular conceptual scheme by comparing it with possible competitors, this comparison denies the very uniqueness of the scheme it is trying to establish.

This argument, however, rests upon a confusion. It is true that if such a uniqueness proof assumes that there are other legitimate conceptual schemes that are in competition with the one that it is being established, such a proof would be self-defeating. To say, for example, that such and such a conceptual scheme is the only possible one and then go on to compare it with another genuine conceptual scheme is an absurd affair. However, the other possible conceptual schemes that are compared to the one that is trying to be established by a uniqueness proof need not be considered as genuine competitors. These other conceptual schemes appear to be in competition with ours, but on closer examination, it is show that they are not. Such an argument would look like something as follows: "One would think that this supposed conceptual scheme poses a challenge to our conceptual scheme, but on closer examination, this supposed conceptual scheme is, in actuality, not a genuine conceptual scheme."

The distinction between a genuinely competing conceptual scheme and a merely apparent competing conceptual scheme shows that we can make sense of a uniqueness proof that compares one conceptual scheme with its possible competitors. But here we face a further difficulty. Granted that conception of such a proof is not self-defeating, how could such a proof actually proceed? There are at least to possible ways. First, one can argue that the competing conceptual schemes violate some necessary precondition of experience. That is, the competing conceptual schemes are not genuine because that are unable to account for the experience we have. Second, one can argue that all other possible conceptual schemes are dependent upon (and thus reducible to) the one he is trying to establish as unique.

Schaper contends that the first option (demonstrating that a supposed competitor scheme violates some necessary precondition of experience) is out of the question.[lxxxiii[83]] This is because, on the one hand, if the necessary precondition of experience belongs to the supposedly unique conceptual scheme the argument is question begging. All that is being demonstrated is that because the competing scheme does not adhere to the supposedly unique scheme's necessary preconditions of experience, it is not a genuine competitor. This is hardly a persuasive argument. But if, on the other hand, the necessary preconditions of experience do not belong the supposedly unique conceptual scheme, that scheme is thereby shown to be not unique. Either way, the first option of demonstrating uniqueness is impossible.

The second option is to argue for the uniqueness of a particular conceptual scheme by proving that it is the only possible conceptual scheme. Such an argument is advanced by Donald Davidson.lxxxiv[84] Davidson contends that the notion of a completely foreign conceptual scheme that philosophers such as Quine and Kuhn advance is incoherent. Although his arguments are subtle and tied in with his extensional semantics, the gist of his contention is not difficult to understand. In order to recognize something as an alternative conceptual scheme, we must be able to map it onto our own conceptual scheme. If a conceptual scheme is so different from ours that we are not able to accomplish such mappings, we would not even recognize it as a competing conceptual scheme. This is because the only why for us to recognize something as a competing conceptual scheme is that we compare it to our own. When no such comparison is possible (where two "paradigms" are "incommensurable," to borrow from Kuhn), there would be no way for us to recognize it as a conceptual scheme at all. In other words, the notion of an inconceivable (i.e. unrecognizable) conceptual scheme is thus incoherent.

This brief discussion of Davidson is a nice segue into Körner's second reason why this kind of uniqueness proof is impossible. Recall that in order to establish the uniqueness of one conceptual scheme all other possible conceptual schemes must be refuted. But surely this is an impossible task since we do not have the time, let alone the capacity, to conceive of every possible conceptual scheme and then proceed to refute them one by one. If this were indeed the task, there would be no hope of ever accomplishing a uniqueness proof. But fortunately for TAs and their defenders, this is not what they set out to accomplish. Rather than refuting every possible alternative conceptual scheme, TAs endeavor to simply refute one – the negation of conceptual scheme being defended. Förster's comments are insightful.

> A transcendental argument...in order to establish a particular condition of knowledge or experience, proceeds by considering an alternative, that is, the *negation* of the condition, and subsequently demonstrates its internal incoherence. Clearly, this exhausts the field of possible *alternatives* to *this condition*. For although one may perhaps imagine different philosophical positions or conceptions based on the negation of the original condition, this would not add to the number of alternatives to *it*.lxxxv[85]

Since there is nothing particularly daunting about disproving the negation of a conceptual scheme, a uniqueness proof for a conceptual scheme is certainly not impossible.

An objection may be raised at this point that while this may be what a TA sets out to do, in practice it only refutes a particular competitor of the conceptual scheme that it is trying to establish. So, for example, Strawson's argument that in order to reidentify particulars we must have an objectivity condition proceeds by refuting the sense datum hypothesis. But notice that the sense datum hypothesis is simply one version of the negation of the objectivity condition (the "non-objectivity condition"). In refuting a particular version of this "non-objectivity condition," Strawson intends to refute the "non-objectivity condition" in general. In other words, the refutation of one version of the "non-objectivity condition" is meant to show that all versions of such a condition are reducible to absurdity. Of course one may argue that in refuting the sense datum hypothesis Strawson is only showing a problem intrinsic to it and not the "non-objectivity condition" in general. But in order to make this objection work, an argument must be provided by the skeptic to show that this is indeed the case. If no such argument is provided (and it is difficult to image what such an argument would look like), the refutation of one particular version of the "non-objectivity condition" should is nothing less than a refutation of "non-objectivity condition" in general. And because the "non-objectivity condition" is the negation of the objectivity condition, a refutation of the former provides a proof for the latter.lxxxvi[86]

IV. TAG Again

With the survey of the recent philosophical literature on TAS complete, we are now in a position to see how this debate bears upon TAG. The two major objections, that of KØrner and Stroud, as should be apparent, are similar to objections (2) and (4) above. Specifically, KØrner's argument against the possibility of a uniqueness proof is the identical concern as objection (2). While Stroud's concern about what he considers to be the illegitimate move from what we must believe to be the case in order for us to account for human experience (or a particular slice of human experience) to what must be the case is roughly the same concern as the move from conceptual necessity to necessary existence. I shall turn to these objections in order.

A. Objections 2 and 3 Revisited

Recall that objection (2) against TAG maintains that it is impossible to provide a uniqueness proof for the conclusion that the Christian worldview is the necessary precondition for experience. This is due to the fact that there is no way of refuting all possible competing worldviews. Thus, even if all actual worldviews in competition with Christianity (naturalism, Islam, etc.) are shown to be false and Christianity is shown to be a sufficient precondition for experience, it does not follow that Christianity is the necessary precondition for experience.

But as Förster has pointed out, TAs, and, by implication, TAG, do not set out to provide a uniqueness proof by refuting an indefinite or infinite number of worldviews. Rather the proof is provided by refuting the negation of the conceptual scheme or worldview that one is attempting to establish. It subjects the non-Christian worldview to an internal critique and shows that, on its own terms, it is contradictory, arbitrary and cannot provide sufficient preconditions of experience.

What, then, is the nature of the non-Christian worldview? Simply put, all non-Christian systems presuppose that experience can be accounted for on autonomous lines. The non-Christian worldviews share the common feature that experience can be made sense of independently of God and his revelatory word. Thus all non-Christian worldviews deny the Creator-creature distinction, the doctrine of the Trinity and the biblical doctrine of man as being created as God's image. They deny the fall and the noetic effects of sin. They deny the necessity of Christ's redeeming work for not only personal salvation, but the salvation of the human intellect. They also deny the necessity of divine revelation, the foundation of all of these doctrines.

From this we can see that Van Til is correct, "We have constantly sought to bring out that all

forms of antitheistic thinking can be reduced to one."lxxxvii[87] Bahnsen elaborates on this important insight:

> Despite "family squabbles" and secondary deviations among unregenerate men in their thinking, they are united at the basic level in setting aside the Christian conception of God. The indirect manner of proving the Christian position is thus to exhibit the intelligibility of reasoning, science, morality, etc., within the context of biblical presuppositions...and then to make an internal criticism of the presuppositions of autonomous thought (in whatever form it is presently being discussed) in order to show that it destroys the possibility of proving, understanding, or communicating anything.lxxxviii[88]

Thus the Christian apologist may boldly assert that without an absolute personal being as the foundation of all things, there is no possibility of ethics. Without the ontological Trinity as the fount of all being, there is no possibility of unifying the particulars of human experience. Without the combined doctrines of the Trinity and man being God's image bearer there is no possibility of predication and thus language. Without the doctrine of God's sovereignty and providence there is not ground for inductive logic and science. Without a good and all-powerful God that creates both man and the natural realm there is not reason to believe that our senses are reliable. From these considerations it is clear why TAG is often described as an argument that proves the impossibility of the contrary.lxxxix[89] There is, at bottom, one non-Christian worldview and this worldview is easily reduced to absurdity. FØrster's insight is relevant at this point. When one version of the non-Christian worldview is refuted, the general non-Christian worldview is refuted for all of them are variations on a common theme.

The radical relativist may at this junction assert that there is no way we can set a limit on what is conceivable. He, in affect, says that it is conceivable (possible) that there are other worldviews that are inconceivable to us. Here Davidson's arguments against the notion of a conceptual schemes is relevant.

The Davidsonian contention about conceptual schemes is that it makes no sense to speak of a possible conceptual scheme that is inconceivable to us.xc[90] If a conceptual scheme is so different from ours that we are not able to somehow map it out against ours, we will not even recognize it as an alternative conceptual scheme. Indeed, the very notion of an inconceivable conceptual scheme is without significance. The relativist's contention that there may be conceptual schemes or worldviews so radical from ours that we cannot conceive of them and that one (or more) of these conceptual schemes or worldviews may be able to provide a set of sufficient conditions for experience is thus abortive. No sense can be made of such a claim. And with this, the fangs of objection (2) are effectively removed.

We are not quite out of the woods yet, however. As we saw earlier, the critic of TAG offers a special version of this objection. Objection (3) contends that there is another (conceivable) worldview that does provide sufficient preconditions for experience and thereby cuts off the proof that the Christian worldview is necessary precondition of experience. This worldview is in many ways identical to Christianity except that it contradicts it a one or more points. The example mentioned above was Fristianity. Fristianity is said to be identical to Christianity except for the fact that instead of a Trinity it has a quadrinity. With regard to this objection, the recent literature on TAs is of little help.

The only way we know that God is a Trinity is that he revealed it to us – mere speculation or empirical investigation would never lead us to this conclusion. But the Fristian worldview, which is, ex hypothesis, identical to Christianity in every other way, asserts that its god is a quadrinity. But if Fristianity is otherwise identical to Christianity, the only way for us to know this would be for Fristian god to reveal this to us. But there is a problem with this. Supposing Fristianity had inspired scriptures (which it would have to have since it is all other ways identical to Christianity), these scriptures would have to reveal that the Fristian God is one in four. But notice that by positing a quadrinity, the Fristian scriptures would be quite different from the Christian Scriptures. Whereas the Christian Scriptures teach that, with regard to man's salvation, God the Father ordains, God the Son accomplishes and God the Spirit applies, the Fristian scriptures would have to teach a very different order. But exactly how would the four members of its imagined godhead be involved in man's salvation? More fundamentally, whereas in the Christian Trinity we read that the personal attribute of the Father is paternity, the personal attribute of the Son is filiation and the personal attribute of the Spirit is spiration,[xci[91]] what would be the personal, distinguishing attributes of the members of the Fristian quadrinity? What would their relationship be to each other? Further questions flow out of this. How would the quadrinity affect the doctrine of man and sin? How would redemptive history look different? What about eschatology? This all needs to be spelled out in detail. This illustration reveals a general problem. One cannot tinker with Christian doctrine at one point and maintain that other

doctrines will not be affected. It does no good for the proponent of Fristianity to claim that the only difference between his worldview and the Christian worldview is over the doctrine of the Trinity. Christian doctrine is systemic and a change in one area will necessarily require changes in others. It is necessary, therefore, that the advocate of Fristianity to spell out how this one change in doctrine affects all other doctrines. But once this is done, there is no guarantee that the result will be coherent.

Thus without providing the details of Fristian theology, this objection loses its punch. It can only be thought to be a challenge to Christianity if it, like Christianity, provides preconditions of experience. But without knowing the details, we cannot submit it to an internal critique. Until this happens, we can justifiably fall back on the conclusion that there is no conceivable worldview, apart from Christianity, that can provide the preconditions of experience.

At this point the proponent of object (3) may attempt one last desperate stand. He can argue that we can take Christianity at it stands and, rather than replace one of its doctrines with another, simply remove some distinguishing feature. For example, rather than positing something as problematic as a quadrinity, the objector may simply invent a religion identical to Christianity except, say, that the book of Jude was never written and thus has no place in its canon.

But this is not a worldview that is *relevantly* different from the Christian worldview. For all it really does is ask us to think counterfactually about the Christian canon. That is, the answer we give to the counterfactual question, "Did God have to inspire Jude to write his epistle?" answer is, of course, no.[xcii][92] Furthermore, for much of redemptive history God's people did not have the privilege of reading Jude (old covenant times) and even in the era of the church, Jude's canonicity was not universally acknowledged until the fourth century. Are we to infer from this that the old covenant people or certain second century Christians did not have a genuine Christian worldview? Such a conclusion would be absurd.

With this, objection (3), as presently advanced, is not a threat to the conclusion of TAG – that Christian Theism is the precondition of human experience.

B. Objection 4 Revisited

Turning now to objection (4) – the contention that the move from conceptual necessity to necessary existence is unwarranted – it is clear that much of the contemporary literature on TAs is relevant to TAG. Stroud's arguments against moving from the necessity of believing or accepting a conceptual scheme to demonstrating what the world is actually like can be easily restated in terms of TAG. The challenge is, thus, to bridge the gap between having to believe the Christian worldview because it provides the necessary preconditions of experience and showing that the Christian worldview is true.

Grayling's distinction between option-A and option-B TAS is helpful at this point. Recall that Bahnsen's response to this objection was that the debate between the Christian and the non-Christian assumes that one of the views has to be true. While this may indeed be the assumption between opponents in a debate, Bahnsen provides no reason for why this assumption is correct. Without an argument for this contentious assumption, Bahnsen seems to forced to be construe TAG as an option-B TA. The Christian worldview is shown to be the necessary precondition for experience in general and the necessary precondition for rationality in particular. To deny Christianity, a move that presupposes rationality, is to presuppose Christianity.

If TAG does show that we must believe in Christianity in order to make our experience possible, this is certainly a powerful apologetic tool. The problem, however, is that while TAG, on an option-B interpretation, demonstrates that the Christian worldview is necessary precondition for experience, it does not prove that the Christian worldview is true. For it may be that our experience of rationality, morality, science, etc. are illusory. Bahnsen's reply to Montgomery that we must make the "gratuitous assumption" that at least one worldview must be right is without foundation.xciii[93] Surely, we can, for argument's sake, conceive of the world being ultimately irrational and amoral. And if can do this, it follows that TAG, on this interpretation, fails to prove that Christianity is true.

One way out of this predicament is to make the strong modal claim that the world is actually rational, that universals exist, that our sensory faculties do get us in touch with the external world, etc. Given this premise, it can readily be shown that TAG does get us to the truth of Christianity. For if the necessary precondition of experience is the Christian worldview and if our experience must be of a real, mind-independent world, this conclusion follows immediately. The problem, of course, is how to prove such strong modal claims. Certainly this cannot be achieved by using contemporary TAS such as Strawson's, for Stroud has shown that such arguments need either an addition factual premise or a verification principle in order to work.

There is another way around this problem. If, as some have maintained, Van Til was something of an idealist, we can see how he was able to bridge the gap between thought and reality. This reading of Van Til, however, is not only implausible, but there is nothing in his writings that indicate that he relied upon some version of idealism to make the move from what we must believe to what the world is like. Furthermore, even if Van Til was an idealist, this would be of little help to the Christian who is, like Bahnsen, an epistemological realist.[xciv[94]] But the major problem with this move is that Christian theology and idealistic metaphysics and/or epistemology are fundamentally at odds with one another.

It is difficult to see a way through this predicament. All exits seem to be blocked off and it appears that the Christian apologist is forced to conceive of TAG as an option-B TA. And as such the claim that TAG proves the existence of God can no longer be made. This seriously diminishes force of TAG. It seems that the best the presuppositionalist can do at this point is to argue that the most likely explanation for the fact that Christian worldview is the necessary precondition for experience is that Christianity is true. But notice that even if it is granted that this is the most likely explanation, the argument for God's existence is reduced to one of probability claim. And if it is probable or even highly probable that God exists, it follows that there is some possibility that he does not exist – even if that probability of this is relatively low.

Before we abandon hope, there may be a way out of this problem. The source of the present difficulty seems to be the way in which the TAG has been set up. Given the context of this discussion, the tenancy is to conflate the notion of the Christian worldview with the notion of a conceptual scheme. Although there is a certain surface similarity between the two, these two notions do not, in fact, correspond to one another. It is a serious error to conceive of the Christian worldview as nothing more than a mere conceptual scheme that organizes our experience. Certainly Christianity does, in some sense, organize our experience, but it does more than this. The Christian worldview is much richer than the conceptual scheme that is the precondition of, say, reidentifying particulars. Christianity provides us with a detailed metaphysical, epistemological and ethical system. The foundation of this system is an absolute personal God who has created all things including man. This God, moreover, has given man his word so that he may know the truth. The Christian worldview, thus, not only provides a way to organize experience, but it tells us that a sovereign God has revealed truths about the world to us.

Stated another way, the necessity of a conceptual scheme cannot guarantee anything about the way the world must be. For while such a scheme may organize our experience, it itself is dumb and mute and cannot, definitionally, tell us anything about the world itself. But the Christian worldview is not a mere conceptual scheme. It claims to do more than simply provide us with the necessary preconditions of experience. The Christian worldview posits a sovereign, creator God who is both personal and absolute in his nature. This God is, moreover, a speaking God who reveals truths to us about himself and the world. In his revelation to us he declares that he has made a world and that this world exists independently from himself and us.xcv[95] On the basis of his revelation, therefore, which is itself the necessary precondition of experience, we can know truths about the world and God.

V. Conclusion

In setting forth TAG, Van Til gave the Christian apologist a powerful argument for Christian Theism. Indeed, Van Til claimed that this argument is "absolutely sound."[xcvi[96]] As we have seen, however, there have been a number of objections raised against this argument. Van Til left it to his followers to answers these objections. But while in Bahnsen we find an able defense of TAG, much of what he says is merely programmatic in nature and calls for elaboration.

In the footsteps of Van Til and Bahnsen, I have endeavored to further elaborate and defend TAG against common objections. In order to do this more effectively I have surveyed the relevant philosophical literature in order to set these criticism in sharper focus and formulate the objections in the strongest possible way. In doing this, I hope to have offered a more thorough and robust defense of TAG. And though this defense of TAG is not meant to be the last word – certainly vigorous debate will continue and further refinements will need to be made – the conclusion we may draw is that none of the common criticisms of TAG are cogent. And as a corollary to this, we can justifiably maintain that TAG accomplishes just what Van Til set it out to do: establish the truth of the Christian worldview as the necessary precondition for human experience.

i[1] Examples of the former include Jim Halsey, *For a Time Such as This* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976) and William White, *Van Til: Defender of the Faith* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1979). See John M. Frame's incisive comments about the "movement mentality" of some of Van Til's followers in *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 1995), 8ff. The two most respected apologists that fit in the latter category are Van Til's students Edward J. Carnell and Francis Schaeffer. Interestingly, Carnell quotes his apologetic mentor only once in his books on apologetics, and that in a footnote, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), 41, n. 22. Schaeffer never published any acknowledgment of his dependence on Van Til.

ii[2] I would be remise to pass over this opportunity to say a few words of appreciation for John Frame. Though Frame is more critical of Van Til than Bahnsen (his criticism of Van Til's transcendental argument, for example) he has certainly offered many valuable insights and performed a genuine service for the Christian community in his sympathetic and philosophically sensitive treatment Van Til's work. Even when disagreeing with some of Frame's conclusions about Van Til, the Christian scholar is always forced to take his considerations seriously. This can be said of very few theologians. Unfortunately Frame's work on Van Til has not been fully appreciated by both those within and without the Reformed community.

iii[3] Bahnsen's personal acquaintance with Van Til is of some interest at this point. Bahnsen studied under Van Til and Westminster Theological Seminary during the early 1970's. Bahnsen was recognized by Van Til as an outstanding student and was even called upon to lecture for him (Van Til) on apologetics when he became ill. After earning the M. Div. and Th.M. degrees from Westminster and completing a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Southern California, Van Til favored inviting Bahnsen to join the Westminster faculty. Despite this endorsement, Bahnsen was never asked to teach at the institution. Frame says the reasons the Westminster faculty did not offer Bahnsen a position were his theonomic views and "some other considerations." Frame, *Van Til*, 393.

iv[4] "Why I Believe in God," (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1948). Van Til does offer many examples of philosophical criticism of other non-Christian worldviews, but these tend to be highly abstract, enthymematic, and written in a difficult style. They are, thus, of limited practical use.

v[5] Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1998), 675, n. 268.

vi[6]Audio tapes of these debates are available from Covenant Media Foundation (www.cmfnow.com).

vii[7] Frame, *Van Til*, 392.

viii[8]"The Authority of Scripture (A Responsible Confession)" in E. R. Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 197-203.

ix[9] "Response by C. Van Til," in Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens*, 203.

x[10] *Toward a Reformed Apologetic* (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1972), 27 quoted in Bahnsen, *Van Til*, xviii, n. 4.

xi[11] The syllabus has been incorporated as part of Bahnsen's posthumously published book, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, Robert Booth, ed. (Texarkana, Tex.: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996).

xii[12]"Socrates or Christ: The Reformation of Christian Apologetics," in Gary North, ed., *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, Cal.: Ross House Books, 1976), 191-239.

xiii[13] "The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens," *Ashland Theological Bulletin* 13 (Spring 1980): 4-40. Also published as an appendix in *Always Ready*.

xiv[14] These criticism are stated in: Alister McGrath, *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 218; Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968); John M. Frame, *Van Til*; Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace* (Tyler, Tex.: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

xv[15] *Van Til*, 675, n. 268.

xvi[16]See, for example, John M. Frame, "Cornelius Van Til," in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), 156-167.

xvii[17]Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 26.

xviii[18]Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1955) 363-4.

xix[19]University of Southern California, 1978.

xx[20]*Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995): 1-31.

xxi[21] Gordon H. Clark, "Apologetics," *Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (Carl F. H. Henry, ed.), 140. Quoted in Nash, 301.

xxii[22]*Trinity Review*, September, 1979.

xxiii[23] *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000).

xxiv[24]"A Reformed Epistemologist's Closing Remarks" in *Five Views on Apologetics*, Steven B. Cowan, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2000), 371.

xxv[25]R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984).

xxvi[26]*A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 204-5.

xxvii[27]A recent criticism of TAG is the so called counter argument, TANG (transcendental argument for the non-existence of God). Michael Martin, the inventor of TANG, contends that God's non-existence is transcendentally necessary in order to account for human experience. Since this argument did not appear until 1996, a year after Bahnsen's death, Bahnsen did not have a chance to respond. For a refutation of TANG see my "The Great Debate Gets Personal," *Penpoint*, vol. 7, no. 7, August 1996.

xxviii[28]*Apologetics to the Glory of God* and *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought*.

xxix[29]The above quotes are found in Van Til's, *The Defense of the Faith*, 117-18.

xxx[30]Frame, *Apologetics*, 76.

xxxi[31]*Van Til*, 371.

xxxii[32]*Van Til*, 319.

xxxiii[33]*Van Til*, 264.

xxxiv[34]In E. R. Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens*, 380-92.

xxxv[35]"Once Upon an A Priori...", 387-88.

xxxvi[36]*Van Til*, 488 n. 41.

xxxvii[37]*Van Til*, 488 n 41.

xxxviii[38]As far as I am aware, the only place this objection seems to be touched on in the literature on TAG is David P. Hoover's article, "For the Sake of Argument" (Hatfield, Pa.: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, n.d).

xxxix[39]This objection may be recast in terms of psychological necessity. On one reading of Hume, for example, he argues that our notion of causality is illegitimate because it is neither analytic ("relation of ideas") nor is it grounded in our experience ("matter of fact"). Nevertheless, Hume contends that we are not able to give up our belief in causality. No matter what the philosophical arguments might tell us, our belief in causation is left undisturbed. It is a determination of the mind that we have no control over. Thus belief in causality is, according to this reading of Hume, a psychological necessity. This line of reasoning is not used in the literature of TAG for obvious reasons. Since there are people who claim to be atheists, it would be difficult to prove that belief in God is psychologically necessary.

xl[40]*Van Til*, 486, n. 37.

xli[41]In Metaphysics (v. 1061a 5-1062b) Aristotle demonstrates the transcendental necessity of the law of contradiction.

xlii[42]*Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1959).

xliii[43]It should be noted at the outset that some philosophers argue that there is nothing at all distinctive about TAs. Moltke Gram is, perhaps, the leading advocate of this view. The following articles by Gram are representative: "Transcendental Arguments," *Noõs*, vol. 5, no. 1 (February 1971), 15-26, "Must We

Revisit Transcendental Arguments?" *Philosophical Studies* 31 (1977), 235-248. Gram's arguments, however, have not been persuasive to most commentators on TAs.

xliv[44]See T. E. Wilkerson, "Transcendental Arguments," *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970), 200-212 and Ralph C. S. Walker, *Kant: The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) for insightful discussions on the logic of TAs.

xlv[45]*The Refutation of Skepticism* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 94.

xlvi[46]Michael Dummett denies that there is (was) such a school. Assuming he is correct, the name is still useful and in this context innocuous. See his "Oxford Philosophy" in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 431-436.

xlvii[47]"Transcendental Argument" in Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 925.

xlviii[48]"Transcendental Arguments" in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1992), 507.

xlix[49]"Transcendental Arguments" in Edward Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 9 (New York: Routledge, 1998) 452.

l[50]Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments," *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968), 241-256.

li[51]Even a cursory reading of the *Critique* makes this clear. In the very beginning remarks of the Introduction to the second edition Kant states: "But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience. For it may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our won faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies from itself" (B 1).

lii[52]Although some of the debate is indeed trivial. For although Kant made the term a technical one and, thus, must be conceded a certain propriety over it, philosophers should be more concerned with the success and failures of the arguments at hand rather than lexicographical particularities – Johnson, after all, was modest enough to call himself a harmless drudge.

liii[53]Although Kant never actually used the term "transcendental argument"; his closest term is "*Transzendentalen Deduktion*".

liv[54]"Transcendental Arguments: Genuine and Spurious," *Noûs* vol. 6 (1972), p. 274.

lv[55]"Atemporal Necessities of Thought; or, How Not to Bury Philosophy in History," in *Reading Kant: New Perspectives on Transcendental Arguments* (Oxford: Blackwell,[date]), p. 42.

lvi[56]All references from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are from Norman Kemp Smith, trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965).

lvii[57]Prolegomena, p. 294 (Academy edition). Cited in Jaakko Hintikka, "Transcendental Arguments: Genuine and Spurious," *Noûs* vol. 6 (1972), p. 275.

lviii[58]Hintikka, 275.

lix[59]For slightly different reasons, David Bell also considers it a mistake to view The Refutation as a transcendental argument. See his "Transcendental Arguments and Non-Naturalistic Anti-Realism," in Robert Stern, ed., *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 189-210.

lx[60]*The Refutation of Scepticism*, 80.

lxi[61]Grayling misleadingly paraphrases this phrase as "mere 'mode of *origination,*'" Grayling, *The Refutation of Scepticism*, 80.

lxii[62]Graham Bird is one of the few who makes his commitment to this practice explicit. "Kant's Transcendental Arguments," in Eva Schaper and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl (eds.), *Reading Kant*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

lxiii[63]Perhaps the most famous example of this is found in Strawson's misreading of the Deduction in his *The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966).

lxiv[64]By 'clarity' I mean that it is clear what Kant intended the goal of transcendental proofs to be. I do not mean that it is at all clear how Kant actually goes about doing it.

lxv[65]"Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism," in Eva Schaper and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl (eds.), *Reading Kant*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 56.

lxvi[66]Gottlob Frege, "Thoughts," in *Logical Investigations*, P. T. Geach, ed. and trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958); Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1995).

lxvii[67]*The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966).

lxviii[68]*Individuals*, 35.

lxix[69]*Individuals*, p. 35.

lxx[70]Strawson has since changed his mind. See his *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

lxxi[71]*Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968), 241-56.

lxxii[72] In a fascinating study of early Post-Kantianism, Paul Franks show that Gottlob Schulze offered a similar objection to Kant and his follower K. L. Reinhold in his *Aenesidemus* (1792). "Transcendental Arguments, Reason, and Scepticism: Contemporary Debates and the Origins of Post-Kantianism," in Stern, ed., *Transcendental Arguments*, 111-45.

lxxiii[73] *Categorial Frameworks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 72. Quoted in Eckart F_rster, "How Are Transcendental Arguments Possible?" in Schaper and Vossenkuhl, 15. Roderick Chisholm's strictures on TAs are similar to K_rner's. See his "What is a Transcendental Argument?" in *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 98. Originally published in *Neue Hefte f_r Philosophie* 14: 19-22.

lxxiv[74]"The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions," *The Monist*, 51 (1967), 320-21.

lxxv[75]Richard Rorty, "Transcendental Arguments, Self-Reference, and Pragmatism," in P. Bieri, R.-P. Horstmann and L. Kròger, eds., *Transcendental Arguments and Science* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979), 82.

lxxvi[76]A. Phillips Griffiths, "Transcendental Arguments," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl. Vol. 43 (1969), 171.

lxxvii[77]Eva Schaper, "Arguing Transcendentally,"*Kantstudien* 63 (1972), 107.

lxxviii[78]Richard Rorty actually tackles the second horn. He agrees with Stroud that a verification principle is necessary, but not the empiricist kind that Stroud maintains. Rorty argues that this empiricist form of verificationism is not only dubious, but demonstrably false. TAs that rely on such a principle are therefore directly refuted. However, Rorty maintains that a Peircian form of verification (to know the meaning of a term is to know inferential relations), is not obviously false and can do the requisite work of answering the skeptic. But this answer to the skeptic takes us no further that Stroud. It merely shows that the skeptic must assume the truth of our conceptual scheme in order to call it into question. But this, of course, does not establish anything about the way the world is. Richard Rorty, "Verificationism and Transcendental Arguments," *Noõs* vol. 5, n. 1, (February 1971), 3-14. See Anthony Brueckner, "Transcendental Arguments I," *Noûs* 17 (November, 1983), 551-575 for a trenchant criticism of Rorty.

lxxix[79]"Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability," in Paulo Parrini, ed., *Kant and Contemporary Epistemology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994).

lxxx[80]Stroud, "Kantian Argument," 234 quoted in Stern, ed., *Transcendental Arguments*, 7.

lxxxi[81]Bernard Williams suggests that both Kant and contemporary philosophers who employ TAs implicitly assume some form of idealism. See his *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

lxxxii[82]This move is the most common in the TA literature. See, for example, Peter Hacker, "Are Transcendental Arguments a Version of Verificationism?" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1 (January 1972), 78-85, Eckart FØrster, "How are Transcendental Arguments Possible? in *Reading Kant*, 3-20, Ralph C. S. Walker, "Induction and Transcendental Argument," in Stern, ed., *Transcendental Arguments*, 13-29, Robert Stern, "On Kant's response to Hume: The Second Analogy as Transcendental Argument," also in Stern, 47-66.

lxxxiii[83]Schaper, "Arguing Transcendentally," 107-8. Interestingly, Schaper thinks that this type of proof is the only one possible.

lxxxiv[84]"On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 183-198.

lxxxv[85]FØrster, "How Are Transcendental Arguments Possible?," 15.

lxxxvi[86]The example in this paragraph is due to FØrster.

lxxxvii[87]Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, xi.

lxxxviii[88]Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 489.

lxxxix[89]Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 205.

xc[90]I am borrowing from the insights of Davidson and generalizing them for my own purposes. No doubt Davidson would reject the use of "conceivability" to replace his own term, "translatability."

xci[91]See Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, William Hendriksen, trans. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977), 304-13. Bavinck states, "The trinity is not capable of being augmented or decreased, it is 'complete.'" He then cites Augustine, "But within the essence of the trinity in no way can any other person whatever exist out of the same essence."

xcii[92]Saying this does not imply that Jude is thus unnecessary. God determines the canon because he determined Jude to be a part of it, in another sense, it is most necessary.

xciii[93]Bahnsen, *Van Til*, 487, n. 41.

xciv[94]It is interesting to pause at this juncture and ponder what Jonathan Edwards, who almost certainly held to some version of idealism, could have done with TAG.

xcv[95]Independently in the sense that God is distinct from his creation.

xcvi[96]Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 256.