

Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Larger omissions are reported, between brackets, in normal-sized type. The numbering of the segments of each dialogue is Malebranche's.

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SEVENTH DIALOGUE

The inefficacy of natural causes and the lack of power in created things. We are immediately and directly united to God alone.

[Theotimus has now joined the group, and engages in some joking conversational skirmishes with Aristes. Then Theodore gets down to business.]

Theodore: . . . Tell us please, Aristes, what has entered your mind on the topic I put to you in our last discussion. What are the things with which we have some connection? What are the causes of these connections, and what are their effects? . . . [Aristes replies jokingly, and Theodore, who is in a bad temper with Aristes throughout this dialogue, reproves him sharply. Then:]

1. Aristes: It seems to me, Theodore, that there is nothing to which I am more closely united than I am to my own body. For it can't be touched without my being affected. The moment it is injured I feel that I am hurt and discomfited. When a mosquito intrudes on my evening walk by sinking its venomous proboscis into my skin, I feel that I have been stabbed in my soul—tiny though that proboscis is. The mere noise the mosquito makes in my ears sounds an alarm in me—a sure sign that I am more closely united to my body than to anything else. Yes, Theodore, this is so true that we are •connected to all the objects that surround us only *through* •our •connection with• our bodies. If the sun didn't affect my eyes it would be invisible to me; and, if I became deaf I would no longer enjoy so much the company of my friends. It is even through my body that I adhere to my religion, because it is through my eyes and ears that faith entered my mind and my heart. In short, everything that matters to me relates to •me through •my body; so I am more

closely united to my body than to anything else.

Theodore [sarcastically]: Did you meditate for a long time, my dear Aristes, to make this great discovery?

Theotimus [pouring oil on troubled waters]: Those are all quite good things to say, Theodore.

Theodore: Yes, Theotimus, •good to be said• by people who consult their senses only. Who do you think Aristes *is*, when you applaud his saying things that any peasant might say? I no longer recognize Aristes in this reply.

Aristes: I see I have started off badly.

Theodore: *Very* badly! I didn't expect this beginning, because I didn't think you would have forgotten today what you knew yesterday. But old opinions keep returning to the attack, driving us back from the ground we have won; we can't hold our position unless we dig in and stay vigilant. Well, then: I contend that we, far from being united more closely to our bodies than to anything else, aren't united to them *at all*. I exaggerate my way of speaking a little, so that it will impress you and you won't again forget what I tell you. No, Aristes (speaking now precisely and strictly), your mind isn't and can't be united to your body. It can only be united to what can act in it. Now, do you think your body can act in your mind? Do you think that it is through *your body* that you are rational, happy or unhappy, and so on? Does your body unite you to God? Isn't it rather God who unites you to your body and, by way of your body, to everything in your environment?

Aristes: To be sure, Theodore, it is God who has united my mind to my body. But couldn't it be said. . .

Theodore: What? That it is your mind that is acting on your body right now, and your body on your mind? I understand you. You want to say:

God made this union of mind and body. But then with that union established, your body *can* act on your mind, and through it so can everything else. And with that same union established, your mind can act in your body, and through it on things in your environment.

Isn't that what 'could be said'?

Aristes: There is something about it that I don't understand too well. *How* does it all take place? I ask this as someone who has forgotten the better part of what you have told me, because I didn't think about it.

Theodore: I doubt that! What you really want is for me to prove more rigorously and in greater detail the principles of which I have spoken to you thus far. I must try to give you what you want; but please be attentive, and *respond* to what I say. Theotimus, you can monitor both of us.

2. Do you think, Aristes, that matter, which you judge perhaps not to be capable of moving itself or putting itself into any state, can ever affect the state of a mind, make it happy or unhappy, represent ideas to it, give it different sensations? Think about this, and answer me.

Aristes: That seems to me to be impossible.

Theodore: I repeat: *think* about it! If anything represents bodies it is the idea of extension; consult *it* to judge whether bodies can have any property other than the passive capacity to be given various shapes and various motions. Isn't it

utterly evident that properties of extension can only consist in spatial relations?

Aristes: That is clear, and I have already agreed to it.

Theodore: It follows that bodies can't possibly act on minds.

Aristes: Not of themselves, not 'by their own force', so it will be said. But why can't they do so by a power resulting from their union with minds?

Theodore: *What?* By 'a power resulting from their union'? I can't find any meaning in these general terms. Remember the principle of clear ideas, Aristes. If you abandon that then you'll be in darkness, and a single step will tumble you into a crevasse. I *do* understand

- how bodies, in consequence of certain natural laws, can 'act on' our minds in this sense: the states of bodies bring into play the efficacy of divine volitions, i.e. the general laws of the union of soul and body

—a matter I shall explain shortly. But I *don't* understand

- how bodies could be given a power—one that is really *theirs*—through the efficacy of which they could act in our minds.

What would that power be? Would it be a substance or a state? If a substance, then it isn't bodies that act but that substance *in* them. If the power is a state, then there will be a state of bodies which is neither motion nor shape; extension will be able to have states that aren't spatial relations. But why am I going into all this? It is up to *you*, Aristes, to give me some idea of that power that you think of as the effect of the union of soul and body.

Aristes: It will be said that *we don't know* what that power is. But what can you conclude from an admission of ignorance on our part?

Theodore: That it is better to keep quiet than to say things that one doesn't know ·to be true·.

Aristes: Agreed. But when we propose that bodies act on minds we are saying something that we *do* know ·to be true·. Nothing is more certain. Experience doesn't allow us to doubt it.

Theodore: Yet I doubt it very much, or rather I don't believe a word of it! Experience teaches me that I feel pain when a thorn pricks me. *That* is a certainty. But let's not go further than that. Experience *doesn't* teach us that the thorn acts on our minds, or that it has some power. I advise you not to believe a word of that!

3. Aristes: I don't believe that a thorn can act on my mind, Theodore. But it may be said that it can act on my body and, by way of my body, act on my mind in consequence of the union of my body with my mind. I agree that matter cannot act immediately on a mind—note the word 'immediately'.

Theodore: But isn't your body *matter*?

Aristes: Yes, undoubtedly.

Theodore: So ·by your own concession· your body can't act *immediately* on your mind. Thus, even if your finger was pricked by a thorn and your brain was disturbed by this action, neither ·finger nor brain· could act on your soul and make it feel pain. Your brain and your finger are nothing but matter, and so neither of them can act immediately on your mind.

Aristes: But ·if it's not my finger or my brain, what is it·? It isn't my soul that produces in itself the sensation of pain that afflicts it, for it feels the pain without wanting to do so. I feel that the pain comes to me from some external cause. So your reasoning proves too much. I am well aware that

you are going to tell me that it is God who causes my pain in me; and I agree. But he causes it only as a result of the general laws of union of soul and body.

Theodore: What are you getting at, Aristes? What you have just said is true, ·but you said it as though arguing against me·. Explain your thought more distinctly.

Aristes: I think, Theodore, that God has united my mind to my body and that, by virtue of that union, my mind and my body mutually act on each other in consequence of natural laws that God always follows quite exactly. That is all I have to say to you ·on this topic·.

Theodore: You don't make yourself clear, Aristes, which is a pretty good indication that you don't understand what you are saying. 'Union', 'general laws'—what sort of reality do you mean these terms to refer to?

Theotimus: Aristes seems to think the terms are clear and unambiguous because usage has made them so common. When something obscure and false has come our way many times without our pausing to examine it, we can hardly believe that it isn't true. The word 'union' is one of the most ambiguous words there is, but it is so common and comfortable that it goes everywhere without anyone stopping it ·to demand its credentials, that is·, without anyone considering whether it arouses a distinct idea in the mind. For something familiar doesn't attract one's attention—the attention that is needed if anything is to be understood; and whatever affects the imagination agreeably appears very clear to the mind, which is perfectly trustful as long as it is bought off ·with agreeable currency·.

Aristes: What, Theotimus! Are you entirely on Theodore's side ·about this·? Can we doubt that soul and body are united in the closest manner in the world? If I weren't sure

that both of you are too good to play such unkind tricks I would be tempted to think that you have teamed up to throw me into confusion and amuse yourselves at my expense.

Theotimus: You are a little too sure of yourself, Aristes. Theodore is upholding the side of truth, and if he overdoes things a little it is to set us right. He sees the weight of our old opinions carrying us along, and the force he uses on us is simply to hold us back. Please let's hear him out.

4. Theodore: You maintain Aristes, that your soul is united to your body more closely than to anything else. Well, I'll settle for that in the meantime, but only on condition that for a day or two you will also agree with me in not explaining certain effects in terms of a force of which neither you nor I have any knowledge. Isn't that quite reasonable?

Aristes: Only too reasonable. But what are you getting at?

Theodore: I am getting at this: *Between your mind and your body there is the closest union in the world.* How could we doubt *that!* But you weren't able to say what exactly this union *is.* So let us not take it to be a force that can explain the effects whose cause we are looking for.

Aristes: But if the effects depend necessarily on it?

Theodore: If they do depend on it, we shall indeed have to return to it. But let us not *assume* that they do. If I asked you, Aristes, how it comes about that by pulling on the arm of this chair I can move the whole chair, would you think you had explained this adequately if you replied that this happens because of the 'union' between the arm of the chair and the rest of the chair? Theotimus certainly wouldn't be satisfied with such a reply. It is all right for *children* to give answers like that, but not *philosophers*, at least when they purport to be doing philosophy. To satisfy Theotimus's mind on this question, we would have to work our way back to

the physical cause of the union of the parts of hard bodies, and to prove to him that the hardness of bodies has to come from the pressure on them of invisible matter around them. So the word 'union' doesn't explain anything, and stands in need of being explained itself. Take vague and general words for reasons if you want to, Aristes, but don't try to pay *us* in that currency! Although many people accept it and are satisfied by it, it's a little harder to palm it off on us, because of our fear of being deceived.

Aristes: What do you want me to do? I pay you in currency that I have accepted in good faith, and I have nothing better. As it is generally accepted in the world, you might see your way to being satisfied with it. But let us have some idea of how *you* go about paying people. Give me good reasons for thinking that body and mind inter-act, without bringing in the notion of the 'union'.

Theodore: Don't assume that they *do* inter-act, Aristes, rather than merely that their states correspond. Don't assume anything that experience doesn't teach you, and try to focus your attention on what I am going to say. Do you think that a body can act on matter and move it?

Aristes: Who can deny it?

5. Theodore: Theotimus and I, and soon perhaps Aristes too! For bodies to act on bodies would be a contradiction—yes, a *contradiction.* This paradox appears to be contrary to experience, opposed to the tradition of the philosophers, incredible to the learned and to the ignorant; but I shall prove it. Tell me, can a body on its own move itself? Please consult the *idea* you have of body; for always remember that we must judge things by the •ideas that represent them and *not* by the •sensations we have of them [third, fourth and fifth dialogues].

Aristes: No, I don't see that bodies can move by themselves. But no more do I see that they can't. I am in doubt about this.

Theodore: You do well to doubt and stop short when you can't clearly see your way ahead. But try to see clearly, and to dispel your doubt. Let us move ahead boldly!

Aristes: In this darkness I am afraid of taking a false step. Throw some light!

Theodore: The light you want will come from clear ideas, my dear Aristes, if you consult them *attentively*. Contemplate *intelligible extension*. This idea represents bodies because it is their archetype, i.e. they have all been made according to its pattern. The idea is entirely luminous; so consult it. Don't you see clearly ·from the idea· that bodies •can be moved but •cannot move themselves? You hesitate. Well then, suppose this chair can move itself: *when* will it decide to move? which way will it go? how fast? ·To cope with these questions· you would have to credit the chair with *thoughts*, and with *decisions* that could determine how it moves. In short, you would have to make a man out of your armchair. Otherwise, a power of moving itself would be of no use at all to it.

Aristes: A man of my armchair! What a strange thought!

Theotimus: It is a thought that many people actually have, as Theodore realizes. Everyone who judges things from his own resources—i.e. by the sensations he has of them rather than by the ideas that represent them—makes each object into something resembling himself. He makes God act like a man. He attributes to the lower animals what he senses in himself. To fire and the other elements he assigns 'inclinations' of which he has no other idea than his *feeling inclined* to do this or that. Thus, he humanizes all things.

But don't leave it at that. Follow Theodore, and answer his questions.

Aristes: I don't think that *this chair* can move by itself. But how do I know there isn't some *other* body to which God has given the power of moving? Remember, Theodore, you have to prove that for bodies to act on one another would be a contradiction; ·so this has to hold for absolutely all actual and possible bodies·.

6. Theodore: Well then, Aristes, I shall prove it to you. It is a contradiction for a body to be neither in motion nor at rest. For even God in his omnipotence cannot create a body that is nowhere, i.e. that doesn't stand in spatial relations to other bodies. A body is at rest when it keeps the same spatial relations to others, and it is in motion when these relations keep changing. Now, it is evident that every body either changes or doesn't change its spatial relations ·to other bodies·; there is no middle ground ·between changing and not-changing·. The propositions *It changes* and *It doesn't change* are contradictories [= 'are propositions that cannot both be true and cannot both be false']. So it is a contradiction that a body be neither in motion nor at rest.

Aristes: That didn't need proving.

Theodore: Now, the will of God is what gives existence to bodies and to all created things, for their existence is certainly not necessary. And created things *stay* in existence because the will that created them continues to operate; if this will were to stop, necessarily bodies would go out of existence. (When I speak of God's will as 'stopping', I am speaking of him according to our way of thinking). So it is this same will that sets bodies in motion or keeps them at rest, because it is this will that gives them being—that is, brings them into existence and keeps them in existence—and they can't exist without being in motion or at rest. Note

that God cannot do what is impossible or what contains an obvious contradiction. He cannot will something that cannot be conceived. So he can't •will that this chair exist without at the same time •willing that it exist in some particular place and •putting it there—since you couldn't conceive of this chair as existing but not existing in some particular place.

Aristes: Still, I seem to be able to think of a body without conceiving of it as in motion or at rest.

Theodore: I'm not denying *that*. You can indeed think of a body in a general way and make any abstractions you like, ·e.g. abstracting from its colour or its spatial position·. I agree. That is what often deceives you. But—I'll say it again—you cannot conceive •that a body exists and •that it is not at the same time somewhere and •that its relations with other bodies neither change nor stay the same and consequently •that it is neither in motion nor at rest. [The point is this: Aristes has said that he can have a thought that includes a chair and *omits the chair's being spatially located*; whereas Theodore is declaring to be impossible a thought that includes a chair and *includes the chair's not being spatially located*.] Hence, for God to make a body without making it move or be still would be a contradiction.

Aristes: Oh well, Theodore, I grant you that. When God creates a body, he must at first make it move or make it stay still. But when the instant of creation is past, this no longer holds: bodies move around by chance, or according to the law of the strongest. [French: *la loi du plus fort*. This phrase standardly relates to any illegitimate attempt by a person or group to further its ends by having recourse to force. Malebranche—perhaps as a mild joke—is shifting the phrase from politics to physics, presumably using it to label a thesis that he regards as the foundation of all physics, namely that 'bodies that are pushed or collided with always move in the direction from which the least pressure comes' (quoted from page 110 below).]

7. Theodore: 'When the instant of creation is past!' But, if that instant *doesn't* pass then you are at the end of your tether, and you will have to surrender. Now pay attention. God's will is all-powerful; he wills that there be such-and-such a world, and the world comes into being. If he no longer wills that there be a world, the world is thereby annihilated. For the world certainly depends on the volitions of the creator. If the world continues to exist, it is because God continues to will it to do so. From God's perspective the •conservation of creatures is simply their •continued creation. That is from the perspective of God who acts. From the viewpoint of created things there appears to be a difference ·between creation and conservation·, because in •creation they •come into existence out of nothing, whereas in •conservation they ·merely· •stay in existence. But in reality creation doesn't stop, because in God conservation and creation are one and the same volition, which consequently is necessarily followed by the same effects.

Aristes: I understand your reasons, Theodore, but I'm not convinced by them. 'If God no longer wills that there be a world, the world is thereby annihilated' strikes me as *false*. For the world to be annihilated it isn't sufficient (it seems to me) that •God no longer wills that it exist; what's needed is for •God positively to will it *not* to exist. There is no need for a volition when nothing is to be done. Thus, now that the world has been made, let God leave it alone, and it will stay in existence for ever.

8. Theodore: You aren't *thinking* about this, Aristes! You are making created things independent. You are judging God and his works by the works of men—works that •presuppose the natural order rather than (like God's works) •creating the natural order. Your house stays in existence although your architect is dead. This is because its foundations are

solid, and it has no connection with the life of the person who built it. It doesn't depend on him in any way. But the basis for our existence depends essentially on the creator. •The arranging of the stones depended in a sense on man's will, because in the natural order of things stones wouldn't come together like that without purposeful human agency; but •the resultant house has no such dependence. But the universe is derived from nothing, so it depends to such an extent on the universal cause that if God ceased to conserve it it would necessarily return to nothing. For God doesn't want to make—and indeed *cannot* make—a created thing that is independent of his volitions.

Aristes: I admit that between created things and the creator there is a relation, a connection, an essential dependence, Theodore. But wouldn't it be sufficient for this dependence that God can annihilate created things whenever he likes?

Theodore: Certainly not, my dear Aristes. What greater mark of a thing's independence can there be than its staying in existence by itself and without support? Strictly speaking, your house doesn't depend on you. Why? Because it survives without you. You can burn it down whenever you choose, but you don't *sustain* it. That is why there is no essential dependence between it and you. Thus, even if God could destroy created things whenever he chose, if they can stay in existence without the continual influence of the creator they don't essentially depend on him. For you to be fully convinced of what I am saying, suppose for a moment that God no longer exists. On your view, the universe stays in existence, because

the going out of existence of a cause
doesn't undercut the effect any more than does
the staying in existence of a cause that doesn't *do*
anything.

That is evident. Now, on the supposition that the universe still exists and God doesn't, you can't think of the world as essentially dependent on the creator. (The supposition involves an impossibility, it is true. But the mind can join or separate things as it pleases—even supposing states of affairs that are impossible—in order to discover their relations.) Hence, if bodies essentially depend on the creator for their continued existence they need to be sustained by his continuing influence, by the causal power of the will that created them in the first place. If God merely stops willing that they exist, it will necessarily follow—just from this—that they will go out of existence. If they continued to exist when God no longer willed that they do so, they would be independent. Indeed, they would be independent to such an extent that God couldn't destroy them. I shall now prove this to you.

9. An infinitely wise God can't will anything that isn't worthy of being willed; he can't love anything that isn't lovable. Now there is nothing lovable about nothingness! So it can't be what a volition of God's aims at. Since it doesn't have any reality at all, nothingness certainly doesn't have enough reality to stand in any relationship with the action of a God, an action of infinite worth. So God cannot positively will the annihilation of the universe. It is only creatures who can, through weakness or error, have volitions that aim at nothingness. They can do this because a certain object can—or they think it can—be an obstacle to their getting what they want. But when you have thought about it you'll see how utterly evident it is that an infinitely wise and all-powerful God cannot, without contradicting what he is, deploy his power in not making anything—indeed, not merely *not making anything* but *destroying* his own work, not correcting defects in it that he didn't put there but annihilating natures that he has made. Thus, Aristes, on

your view that to annihilate the world it isn't sufficient for God to stop willing its existence—your view that God must also positively will that the world no longer exist—the world is independent and *necessarily* existent. For God couldn't destroy it without renouncing his attributes, and for him to do that would be a *contradiction*.

So don't lessen the dependence of created things; if you do, you risk falling into the impiety of making them entirely *independent*. God can annihilate them whenever he pleases, as you say, but that is because he can stop willing what he freely willed. [Theodore next discusses the status of God's acts of the will: they apply through all time, but don't consist of first one episode, then the next, then the next, and so on; they are eternal and unchangeable but not absolutely necessary, though they do have a kind of conditional necessity. This extremely difficult half-page is omitted here, on the excuse that Theodore himself calls it a digression. He goes on:] I should return to our subject. Are you now convinced that creatures essentially depend on God, to such an extent that they can't stay in existence unless he continues to will that they do so?

Aristes: I have done all I could to resist your reasons. But I surrender! I have no answer to give you. The dependence of creatures is quite different from what I thought.

10. Theodore: Then let me recapitulate what I have been saying, and draw some consequences from it. But take care that I don't infer anything that isn't clearly contained in the premises. Creation does not stop: from God's side, the conservation of creatures is just their continued creation—a single volition that continues and operates unceasingly. Now, God cannot •conceive and so he cannot •will that a body be nowhere or that it not have certain spatial relations with other bodies. So God cannot will that this chair ex-

ist. . . .without his placing it in some particular place. •So the positions and movements of bodies are wholly the work of •God, leaving no work to be done by •other bodies or by •any other things whatsoever. Thus, it would be a contradiction (•note the crescendo!•) for

one body to move another, or

for you to be able to move your chair, or

for all the angels and demons joined together to be able to move a wisp of straw.

The demonstration of this is clear [and Theodore repeats it. Then:] God adjusts the efficacy of his action to the inefficacious action of his creatures. This is what I have to explain to you, in order to make reason agree with experience and to give you an understanding of the greatest, most fruitful, and most indispensable of principles, namely:

God communicates his power to creatures and unites them among themselves solely by putting them into various states that are occasional causes of the effects that he himself produces.

I repeat, *occasional* causes. They •aren't themselves efficacious causes, but• they determine the efficacy of God's volitions; •for example, when you set yourself to raise your arm, this mental act of yours can't possibly cause any event in the world of matter, but it is the *occasion* for God to hoist your arm. The relationships of occasional causes to efficacious causes are encoded in general laws that God has prescribed for himself. He has done this so as to make himself recognisable through his works, and also to confer on •his work a uniformity of action that makes the parts hang together and saves •it from being confused, irregular, and unintelligible. I'm telling you this, my dear Aristes, to give you ardour and arouse your attention. For what I have been saying about motion and rest in matter might •otherwise• strike you as rather unimportant; you might think that such

simple little principles couldn't lead you to the great and important truths of which you have already caught a glimpse and which underlie almost everything I have said to you up to now.

Aristes: Don't be afraid that I will lose sight of you, Theodore. It seems to me I am following you quite closely, and your words charm me so that I seem to be swept along. Courage, then! I'll be able to stop you if you skip lightly over some places that are too difficult and too dangerous for me.

11. Theodore: Let us suppose then, Aristes, that God wills that there be a ball on the floor. No sooner said than done! Nothing is more mobile than a sphere on a plane, yet all the powers imaginable can't move the ball if God doesn't intervene. For—to repeat the point—if God wills to create or conserve the ball just precisely *here* (and he absolutely must put it *somewhere*), no force will be able to make it move from here. Don't forget this. It is our principle.

Aristes: I believe it, this principle. The only possible •mover is the •creator—the one who gives bodies their existence and puts them in the places they occupy.

Theodore: [This speech contains a rather large addition to what Malebranche wrote. For ease of location it is tagged with asterisks instead of little dots.] Very well. The •moving force of a body, then, is simply the •efficacy of God's will, which conserves it—i.e. the body in question—successively in different places. Granting this, suppose that the ball is moved and that in doing so it encounters another ball at rest. Experience teaches us that the second ball will inevitably be moved, with an unbroken rule governing how its movement relates to that of the first ball. Now, it isn't the first ball that moves the second. That is clear from the principle *that all seeming interaction among bodies is really an occasional-cause pattern in which the

only causal efficacy is that of God's volitions. One could spell this argument out in the following simple way:

God moves the second ball; so the first ball doesn't move it, because the ball-moving role is already fully occupied by God.

But a slightly more complex argument is stronger and deeper*:

One body couldn't move another without passing on to it some of *its own* moving force. Now, the •moving force of the first ball is simply the •volition of the creator who conserves it successively in different places. It isn't a •quality belonging to the ball itself. Nothing belongs to the ball except its own states; and states can't be separated from the substances that have them, so they can't be passed along from one substance to another. Hence, bodies can't move one another, and a collision between them is only an *occasional* cause of the distribution of their motion.

[Theodore then offers a brief sketch, omitted here, of some of the rules governing how motion is distributed in collisions. In the first edition of the work he had more, but Malebranche came think it contained a mistake, and deleted it. Then:] But there is no point in going into detail about the laws of motion now. All you need to know is •what reason has shown us, namely that bodies can't move themselves or other bodies that they bump into; and •what we learn from experience, namely that there are certain strictly observed laws in accordance with which God moves bodies.

Aristes: That seems to me to be incontestable. But what do you think, Theotimus? You never contradict Theodore.

12. Theotimus: I have been convinced of these truths for a long time. However, as you want me to oppose Theodore's opinions, please resolve a little difficulty that I have. I

understand that a body can't move itself. But now suppose this:

A body X is in motion, and God hasn't yet established laws for communication of motion ·in collisions·, so that there are not yet any occasional causes. In the line of X's motion there is a second body Y, which is concave and like a mould to body X.

What will happen? I contend that X will move Y, as a genuine cause that is necessarily connected with its effect. What do *you* say will happen? Choose!

Aristes: What will happen? Nothing. For, where there is no cause there can't be any effect.

Theotimus: What, *nothing*? Surely something new must happen. For either body Y will be moved on impact or it won't.

Aristes: It won't be moved.

Theotimus: So far, so good. But what will become of body X on encountering Y, Aristes? Either it will rebound or it won't. If it rebounds, we shall have a new effect of which Y is the cause. If it doesn't rebound, that will be even worse ·for your view·, for then we'll have a force that is destroyed or at least rendered inoperative, ·and that is impossible·. So the collision of bodies is not an *occasional* cause but a *very real and true cause*, since the impact is necessarily connected with whatever effect you choose. Thus. . .

Aristes: Just a minute, Theotimus. What are you proving? Given that bodies are impenetrable—i.e. given that no body can *sink into* another, coming to share the other's space with it—it is necessary for God at the instant of collision to set himself to choose between the alternatives you have proposed. That is all; I simply overlooked it ·when answering your challenge·. You are far from proving that a moving

body is able, by means of something that belongs to it, to move another body that stands in its way. If God hasn't yet established laws for the communication of motions, the nature of bodies—their impenetrability—will oblige him to make laws that he judges to be appropriate; and he will opt for the laws that are simplest provided they suffice for the things he wants to make out of matter. But clearly impenetrability doesn't itself have any causal efficacy; it merely serves to provide God. . . with an *occasion* for varying his ·particular· actions without changing anything in his ·general principles of· conduct.

Still, I don't mind saying that a moving body is the true cause of motion in the bodies it collides with, for we needn't quibble over a word. But what is a body in motion? It is a body transported by divine action. If the action that transports it is applied to the body it collides with, it can transport that second body as well. Who doubts that? But this action—this moving force—doesn't belong to bodies at all. It is the efficacy of the will of ·God·, the one who is creating them—i.e. keeping them in existence—in a series of different places. Matter is essentially movable. By its nature, it has a passive capacity for motion (·it can *be moved*·). But it doesn't have an active capacity (·it can't *move* anything·); the only thing that moves any body is the continual action of the creator. Thus, one body can't move another through an efficacy that belongs to its nature. If bodies had the force of moving *in themselves*, the stronger would as •genuine causes overpower the others when they bumped into them. But bodies are moved only by something other than themselves, so their collision is merely an •occasional cause which, because of their impenetrability, obliges ·God·, the mover or creator, to spread his action ·out among several bodies·. And because God is bound to act in a simple and uniform way, he has had to make for himself the simplest possible

general laws, so that •when change is necessary he changes as little as was possible, and so that •through a single action he can produce an infinity of different effects. That is how I understand matters, Theotimus.

Theotimus: You understand them very well.

13. Theodore: *Perfectly* well. We agree on the principle. Let us follow it a little further. It follows, Aristes, that you by yourself can't raise your arm, move to a different chair, cross your legs, sit up straight, do harm or good to others, make the slightest change in the universe! Here you are in the world with no power, as immobile as a rock, as stupid as a log, so to speak. Your soul can be united to your body as closely as you please, and be attached through it to all the bodies surrounding you, but what good will this imaginary union do you? How can you stir yourself to move merely the end of your finger, to utter merely a one-syllable word? If God doesn't come to your aid, your efforts will be in vain; you will only form impotent desires. For, on a little reflection, do you really know *how* to go about pronouncing the name of your best friend, or bending the finger that you use most? Let us suppose this:

You know that our arms can be moved only by means of animal spirits flowing through the nerves to the muscles, contracting the muscles and pulling the attached bones towards them. (Not everyone knows this; indeed it is still a matter of dispute among the learned.) You also know the anatomy and the working of your machine as precisely as a clock maker knows his own work.

But •while equipped with all this knowledge (as we are supposing)•, remember the principle that bodies can be moved only by their creator. This principle is sufficient to tie down—why do I say 'tie down'? it is sufficient to *annihilate*

all your alleged faculties. For animal spirits are bodies, tiny though they are: they are just the most finely divided part of the blood and other bodily fluids. So only God can move them; only he can, and knows how to, make them flow from the brain into the nerves, from them to the muscles, and from one muscle to its opposing muscle—all of which is necessary for your limbs to move. Hence, notwithstanding a union of soul and body such as you like to imagine, you are still motionless and dead unless God chooses to align his volitions with yours, aligning •his always efficacious volitions to •your always impotent desires. There is the unravelling of the mystery, my dear Aristes. The only thing to which creatures are immediately united is God. They depend essentially and directly only on him. They do not depend on one another because they are all equally powerless. It is all right to say 'Created things are united among themselves' and even 'Created things depend on one another', as long as such statements are not understood according to the plain man's ideas, i.e. as long as we agree that this 'unity' or 'dependence' comes about only in consequence of the unchangeable and always efficacious volitions of the Creator. [Theodore repeats the main outlines of the account, Then:] In short, God wills unceasingly that the states of mind and of body be aligned. This constitutes the 'union' and 'natural dependence' of the two parts of which any man is composed. . . .I get nothing from my own nature, nothing from the imaginary 'nature' that the philosophers write about; everything comes from God and his decrees. God has joined all his works together, though he hasn't put into them any entities that tie them together. He has made some subordinate to others without giving efficacious qualities to any of them. Such qualities are vain inventions of human pride, fantasies produced by the ignorance of philosophers! Men have had their *senses* stirred when in the presence of bodies, and have been

internally affected by the way their own efforts *feel* to them; and through all this they haven't recognized the invisible operation of the creator—the •uniformity of his conduct, the •fertility of his laws, the •ever-present efficacy of his volitions, the •infinite wisdom of his ordinary providence. My dear Aristes, please don't go on saying that your soul is united to your body more closely than to anything else! All it is united to immediately is *God*, and his decrees are the unbreakable links among the parts of the universe—including the link between your soul and your body. . . .

14. Aristes: Ah, Theodore! Your principles are so clear, so sound, so Christian! And at the same time so attractive and moving! I am entirely filled with them. So! God is himself present in our midst, not as a mere spectator and observer of our actions, good or bad, but as •the ultimate force that gives us social relations with one another, •the link of our friendship, •the soul, so to speak, of our dealings and conversations with one another. I can speak to you only through the efficacy of his power; I can affect or move you only through the motion that he puts into me. I don't even know how my vocal organs need to be disposed if I am to speak to you smoothly as I am now doing. The working of these organs is beyond me. The variety of words, tones, cadences yields seemingly infinite detail. God knows this detail: he alone governs what happens in it at the moment I have a desire. Yes, it is he who exhales the air which he first made me breathe in. [He continues with further details along the same lines, emphasizing God's role in (a) linking Aristes' volitions to the movements of his body, and (b) linking those movements to the sensory intake of Theodore and Theotimus. Then:] All of this depends on the two principles of which I am convinced: that only •God•, the creator of bodies, can be their mover, and that God communicates his power to

us only through the establishment of certain general laws whose applications are determined by our various states. Oh, Theodore! Oh, Theotimus! God alone is the bond of our •three-man• society. Since he is its driving force, let him also be its goal. Let us not misuse his power. May misfortune fall on those who make God's power serve their criminal passions. Nothing is more sacred than power; nothing more divine; so it is a sort of sacrilege to put it to non-religious uses. I now understand this: it would be to put the just avenger of crimes into the service of wickedness. By ourselves we can't •do anything. So we shouldn't, *by ourselves*, •will anything either. Since we can't act except through the efficacy of divine power, we shouldn't will anything that doesn't agree with divine law. Nothing is more evident than these truths.

Theodore: They are excellent conclusions.

15. Theotimus: They are marvellous principles for •morality. But let us return to •metaphysics. Our souls are not united to our bodies in the way the man in the street imagines. All they are united to immediately and directly is God. It is only through the efficacy of his action that we three are here together in this place. Indeed it's more than just *in this place*; the three of us are united here •not just spatially but• in belief, we are filled with the same truth, seemingly animated by a single mind, set alight by the same ardour. Following •the laws of the communication of motion, God •brings our bodies together; by following •the laws for the union of soul and body, he •gives us the same sensations. But how does it come about that •we are so united in mind, Aristes? Theodore utters certain words in your ears. This is just air struck by the vocal chords. God turns the air into words (so to speak), turns it into various sounds. He makes you hear the various sounds by way of states that he puts you into. •All that falls within the scope of the divine

activities we have just been talking about. But where do you get the *sense* of these words? What reveals to you and me the same *truths* that Theodore contemplates? If the air that God moves when Theodore speaks doesn't contain the •sounds that you hear, it certainly won't contain the •truths that you understand!

Aristes: I know what your point is, Theotimus. What enlightens all our intellects is our each being united to universal reason. I know more than you think! Theodore has already carried me to where you want to lead me. He convinced me that there is nothing visible—nothing that can act in the mind and be revealed to it—except the substance, the intelligible and efficacious substance, of reason. That's right: no created thing can be the immediate object of our knowledge. The only way we can see anything in the material world inhabited by our bodies is for our minds to walk attentively in another world, contemplating the beauties of an archetypal and intelligible world contained in •divine• reason. Just as our bodies live on the earth and feed on the various fruits it produces, our minds are nourished by the truths contained in the intelligible and unchangeable substance of •God•, the divine word. Because of the laws of the union of soul and body, the words Theodore utters in my ears tell me to attend to truths that he is uncovering in sovereign reason. This turns my mind in the same direction as his. I see what he sees because I look where he looks. And by words uttered in response to his, I converse with him and with him enjoy a good that is common to us all (and we achieve this although neither his utterances nor my own have any sense *in* them). For we are all essentially united to reason—united in such a way that without reason's help we can't enter into social relations with anyone.

Theotimus: I find your reply extremely surprising, Aristes. Given that you know all that you have just told me now, how could you reply to Theodore that we are united to our bodies more closely than to anything else?

Aristes: •I can't justify my reply, but I can explain why I gave it:• one says only what comes to one's mind, and abstract truths don't come to mind as naturally as things that we have been told all our lives. When I have meditated as much as you, Theotimus, I shall no longer speak in this mechanical way; I'll base my words on the replies of inner truth. Even *today* I understand—and shall *never* forget—that we are united immediately and directly only to God. •He has two ways of connecting us with other items•. It's •by the light of his wisdom that he makes us see the magnificence of his works, the model on which he forms them, the unchangeable artifice that controls their springs and motions; and it's •by the efficacy of his volitions that he unites us to our bodies and, through them, to the bodies in our environment.

16. Theodore: You could add •a third way that God has of connecting us to other items, namely• that it's •by the love that God has for himself that he communicates to us our unconquerable ardour for the good. But we'll talk about that another time. It is sufficient now for you to be fully—*fully*—convinced that the mind can't be united immediately and directly with anything except God; that we can have relations with creatures only through the power that the creator communicates to us in accordance with his laws; and that we can be joined together in society with him only by means of reason, which is consubstantial with him. [That last clause means that reason is God.] Once you accept this you'll see that it is of the utmost importance for us to try to get some knowledge of the attributes of this supreme being on whom we are so utterly dependent. For,

after all, he necessarily acts in us in accordance with his nature; so his way of acting should bear the character of his attributes. Not only should our duties be related to his perfections, but in our practical conduct we should steer by his conduct—that is, by the so-called ‘laws of nature’—so that we may in the right way go about carrying out our plans and find a combination of causes that will further them. Faith teaches us many truths about this by the short method of authority, and experience teaches us by proofs from sensation that are very pleasing and helpful. But none of this now gives us understanding; that must result from hard, focussed work. Anyway, since knowing and loving God is what we are made for, it’s clear that no occupation is preferable to meditation on his perfections, meditation that should fill us with love and govern how any rational creature goes about his business.

Aristes: I understand, Theodore, that the worship God requires of minds is a spiritual worship. It is for him to be known and to be loved, and it is for us to form judgments about him that are worthy of his attributes and to let every movement of our hearts be governed by his volitions. For God is a spirit, and wants to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. [Here ‘spirit’ translates *esprit*, which is usually translated by ‘mind’.] But I must confess I am terribly afraid of dishonouring the divine perfections by the judgments I make about them. Isn’t it better to honour them by silence and admiration, and to restrict our truth-search to truths that are less elevated and better suited to the capacity of our minds?

Theodore: What do you mean, Aristes? You aren’t thinking! [Theodore continues with a lengthy scolding, making such points as that you can’t love something about which you don’t know anything, and the assurance: ‘You won’t dishonour the divine perfections by making judgments unworthy of

them, provided you never judge them from your own case.’ He then says that they should now stop the conversation ‘until tomorrow at the usual time’.]

Aristes: Goodbye, Theodore. If you please, Theotimus, let’s all three meet at the appointed hour.

Theotimus: I am staying with Theodore, but I’ll return with him since you want me to. [At this point Aristes leaves.] Well, Theodore, how altered Aristes is! He pays attention, he has stopped joking, he is less preoccupied with conversational style; in short, he listens to reason and is sincerely submissive to it.

Theodore: True. But his careless old opinions cut across his path and introduce some confusion in his ideas. Reason and prejudice take turns in speaking from his mouth. Sometimes truth makes him speak, sometimes memory cuts in. But his imagination no longer dares to rebel. That indicates a good foundation and gives me every hope.

Theotimus: What would you expect, Theodore? Old opinions can’t be simply discarded like unwanted old clothes. It seems to me that you and I have been as Aristes is now. We aren’t *born* philosophers; we *become* philosophers. With Aristes we’ll have to go over the great principles incessantly, getting him to think of them so often that his mind will take possession of them and when he needs them they will come to his mind as a matter of course.

Theodore: That’s what I have been trying to do up to now. But it is an effort for him, for he loves the detail and the variety of thoughts. Please always stress to him the need to understand the principles *fully*, so as to calm down the liveliness of his mind; and please don’t forget to meditate on the topic of today’s discussion.

EIGHTH DIALOGUE

God and his attributes.

Theodore: Well then, Aristes, how do you feel? We must know what frame of mind you are in so that we can allow for it in what we have to say to you .

Aristes: I have gone over in my mind what you said to me so far, and I admit that I haven't been able to resist the evidentness of the proofs supporting your principles. But when I wanted to meditate on the topic of God's attributes, which you proposed for us, I found so many difficulties in it that I was blocked. I was going to tell you that the matter is too high-flown or too abstract for me. I couldn't get to it, and I couldn't get any grip on it.

Theodore: What! you don't want to say anything to us?

Aristes: It is because I haven't anything good to say, anything that satisfies me. I shall listen to the two of you, if you please.

Theodore: That doesn't please us at all. But since you don't wish to tell us what you thought, at least follow me and tell me your opinion of what has come to *my* mind.

Aristes: Willingly. But Theotimus?

Theodore: He will be the judge of any little differences that arise from the diversity of our ideas.

Theotimus: 'The judge'! What do you mean by that? It is for reason to preside over us and give final decisions.

Theodore: I mean, Theotimus, •that you will be a subordinate judge who depends on reason, and •that you are to pass judgment only according to the laws that reason prescribes to all three of us. Let us lose no time, please. Listen to what

we say to each other, compare that with the replies of inner truth, and on that basis warn and correct the one who goes astray. Come on, Aristes—follow me, and stop me only when I skip too lightly over difficult places.

1. By 'divinity' we all understand •the infinite, •being [or existence] without restriction, •[the] infinitely perfect being. [These are being offered as three ways of saying the same thing.] Now nothing finite can represent the infinite. So if we can •think of God then we •know that he exists. Don't be surprised if Aristes allows me this, Theotimus, for he agreed to it before you joined our conversations [second dialogue].

Aristes: Yes, Theotimus, I am convinced that nothing finite can have enough reality to represent the infinite—that when we see something finite ·it can't represent infinity to us, because· we can't discover in it an infinity that it doesn't contain. Yet I am certain I see the infinite. Hence, the infinite exists, because I see it and I can see it only in itself ·and not as represented by something finite·. As my mind is finite, my knowledge of the infinite is finite: I don't grasp infinity, I don't have the measure of it and I'm quite certain I shall never shall. ·The crux of my trouble seems to be this·: I don't merely find no end in what is infinite; I see that it doesn't have an end. In short, the perception I have of the infinite is limited; but the represented reality in which my mind gets lost (so to speak) has no limits. That is something that I can no longer doubt.

Theotimus: I don't doubt it either.

Theodore: Granting this, it is clear that as the word 'God' is only short-hand for 'the infinitely perfect being', it would be

a *contradiction* for us to be mistaken when we attribute to God only what we see clearly pertains to the infinitely perfect being. There is a supplementary reason for being confident about this. We never go wrong when we judge •God’s works solely on the basis of what we see clearly and distinctly in their ideas, because God modelled his works on these ideas (their archetypes), so that they must accurately represent their nature. Well, then, there is all the more reason why we shall never go wrong in attributing to •God himself only what we see clearly and distinctly belongs to the infinitely perfect being—that is, what we discover not in •an idea of God that is distinct from God but rather in •God himself, in his substance. Let us then attribute to God or to the infinitely perfect being *all perfections*, however incomprehensible we find them to be, provided we are certain that what we are attributing *are* indeed

true perfections, true realities,
and *are not*
‘attributes’ that have a touch of nothingness about them, that are limited by imperfections or limitations similar to those of created things.

Take note of this.

2. God is the infinitely perfect being. So God is independent. Think of this, Aristes, and stop me only when I say something you don’t see clearly to be a perfection and to belong to the infinitely perfect being. God is independent. So he is unchangeable.

Aristes: ‘God is independent, so he is unchangeable’! Why unchangeable?

Theodore: Because there can’t be an effect or change with no cause. Now God is independent of the efficacy of causes •external to himself•; so if a change occurred in him it would be *he* who caused it. Now, though God is the cause of, or

force behind, his volitions and decrees, he didn’t at any time produce a change in himself. For his decrees, though perfectly free, are themselves eternal and unchangeable, as I have already told you [page 72]. God *has made* these decrees, or rather he *is unceasingly making them* on the basis of the eternal wisdom that is the unbreakable rule of his volitions. These decrees have infinite effects; they produce countless thousands of changes in the universe; but the decrees themselves are always the same. That is because the efficacy of these unchangeable decrees comes into action only by the circumstances of occasional causes. (They are sometimes called ‘natural causes’, but that label might encourage the dangerous assumption that there is a ‘Nature’ with its own causal efficacy, different from the will of God and from his omnipotence. So ‘occasional cause’ is better.)

Aristes: I don’t understand all this very well. God is free and indifferent with respect to the movement of a certain body, for instance. [In this dialogue, ‘indifferent’ is used to mean something like ‘not *pushed* in either direction’. If God is ‘indifferent’ with respect to whether my arm goes up, he is *absolutely open* to making it go up and *equally open* to letting it stay down.] If he is indifferent, he can produce that effect or not produce it. Assuming that the body in question *does move*, this effect is a consequence of God’s decrees, I agree. But it is certain that God is able instead *not* to produce it. So he is able *not* to will to produce it. So God is not unchangeable, because he can change his will and not will tomorrow what he wills today.

Theodore: You are forgetting what I told you in our last discussion, Aristes [seventh dialogue, section 9]. God is free and indeed indifferent with regard to thousands upon thousands of effects. He can change his will in the sense that he is indifferent as between willing and not willing a certain effect.

But think: now that you are seated, can you be standing? You •can absolutely, but you •can't conditionally: •it is possible that at this moment Aristes should be standing, but •*given that he is sitting* he can't now be standing, for you can't be standing and seated at the same time. You must understand that there is in God no succession of thoughts and volitions—that by an eternal and unchangeable act he knows everything and wills whatever he chooses to will. God wills with perfect freedom and total indifference to create the world. He wills to make decrees and establish simple and general laws in order to govern it in a way that reflects his attributes. But once these decrees have been given, they can't be changed—not that they are absolutely necessary but they are conditionally necessary. Do take note of this: the reason they can't be revoked is simply that they do now exist, and that when God made them he knew so well what he was doing. He sometimes willed that something be the case for a limited period of time; but that doesn't mean that he changed his mind. On the contrary, his initial single act of the will specified the time for which the supposed state of affairs was to last. So God does not and cannot change his thoughts, his designs, his volitions. He is unchangeable: this is one of the perfections of his nature. And nonetheless he is perfectly free in everything he does outside •himself•. He can't change, because whatever he wills he wills not in a series of volitions but in a simple and invariable act. But he is able *not to* will it, because he wills *freely* what he does in fact will.

Aristes: I shall think about what you are telling me, Theodore. Let us go on. I believe that God is unchangeable. It appears evident to me that it is a perfection not to be subject to change. That is enough for me. Even if I couldn't reconcile God's unchangeability with his freedom, I believe

him to possess these two attributes since he is infinitely perfect.

3. Theotimus: Let me present you with a small problem, Theodore. You have just said that the efficacy of God's unchangeable decrees comes into action only by the circumstances of occasional causes, often called natural causes. Those were your words. But tell me, what now becomes of miracles? A collision, for example, is the occasional cause of motion's being communicated from the moving body to the other one; but won't God be able to suspend the effect of the general law of the communication of motion in a particular case? and hasn't he often suspended it?

Theodore: I shall answer this by addressing *you*, Aristes; for I see that Theotimus is asking me for further explanations that he thinks *you* need, because he's afraid you didn't get my thought. So, Aristes, when I say that God 'always' follows the general laws that he has prescribed, I mean 'always in the course of his ordinary and general providence'. I don't rule out miracles or effects that don't follow his general laws. But besides—and now I'm talking to you, Theotimus—when God performs a miracle and doesn't conform to the general laws that we know, I claim that either •he acts in accordance with *other* general laws that we don't know or •what he does then •is an exception to his laws, but• is a response at that time to circumstances that he had in view from all eternity. He had them in view in performing that simple, eternal, invariable act that contains both •the general laws of his ordinary providence and also •exceptions to those same laws. These circumstances •that call for an exception to some law• shouldn't be called 'occasional causes' in the sense we give that phrase when we say that a collision is the 'occasional cause' of a body's starting to move. In the latter case, God makes general laws to produce a uniform correlation between

his volitions and the occurrence of these circumstances of moving bodies etc.. It is not like that with the *exceptions* to the general laws. In those, God acts sometimes in one way and sometimes another, although always as required by the attributes of his that he values most at that time, so to speak. If at that time the demands of his justice matter more to him than the demands of his wisdom and all his other attributes, he will side with justice in making the exception. . . . But I am afraid that Aristes doesn't like our digressing in this way, Theotimus, so let us get back to our topic. . . . Well, then, God, or the infinitely perfect being, is independent and unchangeable. He is also omnipotent, eternal, necessary, immense. . .

Aristes: Hold on a moment! He is omnipotent, eternal, necessary—yes, the infinitely perfect being has those attributes. But why *immense*? What do you mean?

4. Theodore: I mean that the divine substance is everywhere, not only in the universe but infinitely beyond it. For God is not contained in his work; rather, his work is in him; it exists in his substance, which keeps it in existence by his all-powerful efficacy. It is in him that we exist. It is in him that we have movement and life, as the apostle says: 'In him we live, and move and have our being.' (*Acts 17:28*)

Aristes: But God isn't corporeal, so he *can't* be spread out everywhere.

Theodore: It is because he isn't corporeal that he *can* be everywhere. If he were corporeal he couldn't penetrate bodies—that is, occupy the very same space that they do—as he does. It is absolutely impossible for bodies to penetrate one another, for example by two one-foot boards coming to occupy the very same space, because it is a contradiction that two feet of extension should make only one. But the divine substance is not corporeal, so it is not

extended in space as bodies are—great in an elephant, small in a gnat! Wherever it is, it is there in its entirety, so to speak; and it is everywhere—or rather everything is in it, for the deepest and most intimate *place* that any created thing has is in the substance of the creator.

•Created extension is to •God's immensity what •time is to •eternity. All bodies are extended in the immensity of God, as all times follow other times in his eternity. God is *always* everything that he is, with no succession in time. He fills everything with his substance without being spatially extended. In his existence there is neither past nor future: everything is present, unchangeable, eternal. In his substance there is no large or small. Everything is simple, equal, infinite. God •created the world, but his volition to create it is not •past. God •will change the world, but the volition to change it is not •future. . . . In short, it is not true that God *has* existed or that he *will* exist; he simply *exists*. It *can* be said that God existed in time past, but he *was then* everything that he *will be* in time future. This is because his existence and his duration (if I may speak of him as having a duration) is in its entirety •in eternity and is in its entirety •in every moment that passes in his eternity. Similarly, God is not in part in the sky and in part on earth. He is entirely present in his immensity and entirely present in every spatially extended body in his immensity. He is—*all* of him is—present in each part of matter, even though there is no limit to how small those parts can be, because matter is divisible to infinity. Or, to put all this more exactly: it's not so much that God is in the world as that the world is in God or in his immensity; similarly, it's not so much that eternity is in time as that time is in eternity.

Aristes: It seems to me, Theodore, that you are explaining something obscure in terms of something else that is none

too clear! I'm not struck with the same sense of *evidentness* as I was in the days past.

5. Theodore: I don't claim to give you a clear understanding of God's immensity, Aristes, or of *how* he manages to be everywhere. I find this incomprehensible, as you do. But I do claim to give you *some* knowledge of God's immensity by comparing it with his eternity. You have agreed that God is eternal. I thought I could convince you that he was immense when I compared the eternity that you accept with the immensity that you don't.

Theotimus: What do you want Theodore to do? He compares divine matters with divine matters. That is the way to explain them, as far as it is possible. But you compare them with finite things, which is just the way to make a mistake, such as this:

Man's mind fills no space. Therefore the divine substance is not immense.

Bad inference!

There is more of created extension in a large space than in a small one. Therefore, if God were everywhere, there would be more of him in a giant than in a pygmy.

Another bad inference based on comparing the infinite with the finite. If you want to judge God's attributes, look to the infinite, the notion of the infinitely perfect being, as Theodore does; don't dwell on ideas of particular finite things. Theodore doesn't judge God's immensity by the idea of created bodies or minds. He knows that the divine substance doesn't have the imperfections and limitations that created things are bound to have. That is why he judges that God is everywhere, and is nowhere in the way that bodies are.

Aristes: What? God is there in his entirety so to speak, and also there, and there and there and there and there, and

everywhere else, and in spaces thought of as beyond the world? This is incomprehensible.

Theodore: Yes, God is in everything, or rather everything is in God; and the world, however large it is taken to be, can't equal him or provide any measure of him—e.g. by being a millionth as big as he is. This is indeed incomprehensible, I agree; but that is because the infinite is beyond us. Come on, Aristes! Isn't God here in your garden, in the sky, and in his entirety everywhere that he is? Would you go so far as to *deny* that God is everywhere?

Aristes: He's present everywhere by his operation. But...

Theodore: What?—'by his operation'? What sort of reality is God's operation as distinct from (and separate from) his substance? By God's 'operation' you don't mean the effect that he produces; for the effect is not an action but the upshot of an action. By God's 'operation' you seem to mean the act through which he operates. Now, if the act through which God produces or conserves this chair is here, certainly God is here himself; and if he is here he must be here in his entirety; and the same holds for all the other places where he operates.

Aristes: I think that God is in the world in the way you think your soul is in your body, Theodore. For I know you don't think the soul is spread out in all parts of the body. It is in the head because it reasons there. It is in arms and feet because it moves them. Similarly God is in the world because he conserves and governs it.

6. Theodore: That comparison is full of old opinions and obscurities. The soul is not *in* the body, nor is the body *in* the soul, though their states are correlated through the general laws of their union. Rather, both are *in* God, who is the true cause of that correlation. Minds are in divine reason, Aristes,

and bodies are in God's immensity; but neither of them can be in the other, for they have no *essential* relation to one another. It is only •through God that they have a necessary relation—this relation is established •from outside them both, and doesn't come from their own essences. Mind can think without body, but it can't know anything except in divine reason. Body can be extended without mind, but it can't be extended except in God's immensity. This is because the qualities of body have nothing in common with the qualities of mind; for body cannot think, and mind cannot be extended. But both participate in God, who gives them their reality and has it himself. For he possesses all the perfections that created things have, but none of their limitations. He knows, as •created• minds do; he is extended, as bodies are; but he has thought and extension in a totally different way from created things. Thus, God is everywhere in the world and beyond it; but the soul is nowhere in the body. The soul doesn't know *in the brain*, as you suppose. It knows only in God, though it has its knowledge only as a result of what happens in a certain portion of matter called 'brain'. And it doesn't move the limbs of its body by applying a force that belongs to its nature. It moves them only because he who is everywhere in his immensity uses his power to bring about what his creatures want in their powerless desires. So, Aristes, don't say that •God is in the •world that he governs as the •soul is in the •body that it animates. That comparison has *nothing* true in it: the soul can't be in the body nor can the body be in the soul; and anyway minds, not being able to *operate* in the bodies they animate, couldn't be spread out in them *by virtue of their operation*—in the way that, according to you, God is everywhere by virtue of his operation.

Aristes: What you are saying seems to be to me very difficult. I'll think about it. But meanwhile please tell me: Before the world existed and God operated in it, where was he?

7. Theodore: I ask *you* that, Aristes—you who hold that God is in the world only by his operation. . . No answer? Well, I tell you that before creating the world God was where he is now and where he would be if the world were annihilated. He was *in himself*. When I tell you that God is in the world and infinitely beyond it, you aren't getting my thought if you believe the world and the imaginary spaces •beyond it• are the place occupied by God's infinite substance. God is in the world only because the world is in God. For God is only in himself, only in his immensity. If he creates new spaces, he doesn't thereby acquire a space to be present in; he doesn't make himself even more immense! He is eternally and necessarily where these spaces are created, but unlike these spaces he is not 'there' in the sense of being *located* there.

Extension, Aristes, is a reality, and all realities exist in the infinite. •Bodies are extended, and •God is extended too, since he has all absolute realities (i.e. all perfections). But God is not extended *as* bodies are, because he doesn't have the limitations and imperfections of his creatures. •Here are three differences•:

God's substance does not have parts.

One part does not contain, as in bodies, the negation of another part.

The *place* of God's substance is simply his substance itself.

•Similarly on the other side of the body/mind divide. Created• minds have knowledge, and •God does too; but he doesn't think •or know• as they do. •Here are three differences•.

What God's knowledge is immediately knowledge *of* is himself.

In him there is no succession or variety of thoughts.

One of his thoughts doesn't, as in us, contain the negation of all others. His thoughts don't mutually exclude one another.

God is always one and always infinite, perfectly simple yet composed (so to speak) of all realities or all perfections. [•For a reason given in a note on page 14 above, the next bit could be read in either of two ways. This ambiguity, which runs all through the work without doing any obvious metaphysical damage, has generally been handled in the manner given in the first reading; but the second reading ought to be given a hearing, as it is here and in a few other places. •The mention of Moses is a reference to *Exodus* 3:13-14: 'Moses said unto God, . . . "They shall say to me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say unto them?" And God said unto Moses: "I AM THAT I AM." And he said: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you'."]]

first reading: This is because the true God is *the being*, not merely *a being of such and such a kind*, as he himself said to his servant Moses. . . . He is the unrestricted being, not a finite being which is, so to speak, a mixture of being and nothingness. You must attribute to the God whom we worship only what you conceive in the infinitely perfect being.

second reading: This is because the true God is *Being*, not merely *a being*, as he himself said to his servant Moses. . . . He is Being without restriction, not a finite being which is, so to speak, a mixture of being and nothingness. You must attribute to the God whom we worship only what you conceive in infinitely perfect Being.

Don't deny anything of him except what is finite, i.e. what involves nothingness. And though you don't understand

clearly everything I am telling you—and I don't either!—you will at least understand that God is as I am representing him to you. For you should know that to judge worthily of God, we *must* ascribe to him only attributes that are incomprehensible. This is evident, because •God is in every sense the infinite being, with nothing finite pertaining to him, and •whatever is infinite in every sense must be in every way incomprehensible to the human mind.

Aristes: [He accepts, apologizes, and laments that pagans and many Christians haven't had a proper view of God.]

8. Theotimus: You seem to be quite satisfied with what Theodore has just said to you, Aristes—that God's attributes are incomprehensible in every way. But I fear there is an equivocation in it. For it seems to me that we clearly conceive an immense limitless extension. The mind doesn't take in or get the measure of this extension, I agree; but it has clear knowledge of its nature and properties. Now, what is God's immensity if not an infinite intelligible extension

by which God is everywhere, and
in which we see spaces that have no limits?

So it isn't true that God's immensity is in every sense incomprehensible to the human mind, since we know *intelligible extension* most clearly—so clearly that in it and through it geometers discover all their demonstrations.

Aristes: It seems to me you don't quite grasp Theodore's thought, Theotimus. But I haven't meditated enough on the matter, and I can't give you an explanation of something that I only glimpse. Please answer for me, Theodore.

Theodore: What, Theotimus! Are you muddling God's immensity with intelligible extension? Don't you see that these two things are infinitely different from one another? God's immensity is his substance itself—•spread out everywhere,

•in its entirety everywhere, •filling all places yet without local extension. [For God to have ‘local extension’ is for him to be •spread out through the whole of space, occupying it in the way that sticks and stones occupy parts of it (with the difference that God would penetrate the sticks and stones etc., occupying places that they *also* occupied). Theodore’s alternative to this is God’s being •wholly in the whole of space and wholly in each part of it; which he might have compared with an instant of time’s being present in the whole of space and in each part of it.] *That* is what I claim to be utterly incomprehensible. But intelligible extension is merely God’s substance considered as representing bodies, and as something in which bodies—with all their limitations and imperfections—can participate. . . . No finite mind can comprehend God’s immensity, or any of the other attributes. . . .of God. These are always infinite in every sense, always divine and consequently always incomprehensible. But nothing is clearer than intelligible extension. Nothing is more intelligible than the ideas of bodies, since it is by those ideas that we know quite distinctly (not the nature of •God, but) the nature of •matter. To be sure, Theotimus, if you judge God’s immensity by the idea of extension, you will think God to be extended in the way that bodies are. Make that extension infinite—as immense as you please—you won’t exclude from it the imperfections that the idea represents. God’s substance (•on this view of it) won’t be *in its entirety* everywhere that it is. [Theodore continues with a stern warning against thinking that one can have clear ideas of God’s attributes. Summing up:] All the absolute attributes of the Deity are incomprehensible to the human mind, though it can comprehend clearly •what there is in God relative to creatures, by which I mean •intelligible ideas of all possible creations.

Theotimus: I see I was mistaken, Theodore, in confounding infinite intelligible extension with God’s immensity. . . . Still, I

knew quite well that an infinite corporeal extension. . . .would still have nothing divine about it. For God is not the being that is infinite *in extension*; he is the being that is infinite *period*. The being that isn’t restricted in any way. Now, what is infinite has the property, which (as I have often heard you say) is incomprehensible to the human mind, of being at the same time *one thing and all things*, composed (as it were) of an infinity of perfections yet so simple that each of its perfections contains all the others without any real distinction. Certainly this property is further from fitting the material universe and its parts than it is from fitting the substance of the soul; for although the soul isn’t composed of *parts*, it can be in several different *states* at the same time—a faint sketch of the simplicity and universality of God.

Theodore: You are right, Theotimus. There is no substance more imperfect, more unlike God, than matter, even infinite matter. Matter corresponds •perfectly to intelligible extension, which is its archetype; but it corresponds •most imperfectly to the divine immensity, and it corresponds •not at all to the other attributes of the infinitely perfect being.

9. Aristes: What you are saying now makes me understand that •Spinoza•, our irreligious contemporary who made the universe his God, really didn’t have a God. He was a real atheist. But I can’t help thinking that plenty of good men have quite unworthy opinions about God, which they could have avoided by a little philosophizing. Their God isn’t identical with the universe; he is its creator—and that’s pretty well everything they know about him. That would be quite good if only they *stopped* there, rather than •blundering on and• corrupting the notion of the infinite. But •they *do* go on, and• construct an •idea of the •incomprehensible being—I’m sorry for them when I think of it! Theotimus was quite right

in saying to me that men naturally *humanize* everything. It would be pardonable if they were only incarnating God (so to speak) by investing him with their own qualities; but some of them go much further than that, and strip God of all incomprehensible attributes and all characteristics that are essential to an infinitely perfect being. Or all but one, the exception being *power*; but they get this wrong too, for they share power out between God and what they call 'Nature' in such a way that, although they leave most of it to God, they don't let him *use* it.

Theotimus: That is for fear of bothering God with trivial matters, with actions unworthy of his attention and of his greatness. For we naturally believe that God should be content with our thinking of him as being such as *we* would like to be. Man is at all times shot through with his inner sense of what is happening in his mind and in his heart. He can't avoid having a confused sense both of what he is and of what he wishes to be. So he finds it quite natural to *spread* himself onto the objects of his knowledge and to apply human standards in estimating not just everything in his environment but also, even, to the infinite substance of God. It is true that the notion of *infinitely perfect being* is deeply engraved on our minds. We are never without a thought of *being*. But, far from grasping this vast and immense notion of *unrestricted being* so as to estimate by *its* standards the God who unceasingly presents himself to us, we consider this immense notion as a mere fiction of our minds. That is because *being in general* doesn't strike our senses, and we judge the solidity and reality of objects by how forcibly they push us around.

Aristes: I do understand all this, Theotimus. It is just what Theodore was telling me a week ago. My mind can't get a grip on the abstract ideas you present me with; they don't affect

me through my senses; but I don't take that to show that they are mere phantoms. I believe they are sublime truths that a person can't reach unless he silences his imagination and his senses, raising himself above himself. I have resolved that from now on I will no longer judge God from my own case, or by ideas representing created things, but exclusively by the notion of *the infinitely perfect being*. Please continue to question and instruct me, Theodor

10. Theodore: Very well, let us proceed. You believe that God is good, wise, just, merciful, forbearing, strict.

Aristes: Not so fast. I mistrust these ordinary-language terms. I believe God is wise, good, just, mild, and that he has all the other qualities that scripture attributes to him. But I don't know whether everyone who utters these words has the same thoughts. The infinitely perfect being is •good, •just, •merciful! I find this obscure. Define these terms for me. [The three will be discussed in sections •11–12 and •13–14 and •15 respectively.]

Theodore: Oho, Aristes! You are afraid of being ambushed! You do well. When we philosophize about sublime and delicate matters, we should beware of unclarities and ambiguities, and ordinary-language terms are not the most free from such troubles! We ought to define these terms, then, but that is not so easy. Before we get into it, we may be helped by this question: Do you think that God knows and that he wills?

Aristes: As to that, yes. I haven't the least doubt that God knows and wills.

Theodore: How do you come to be so sure of that? Is it because *you* know and will?

Aristes: No, Theodore. It is because I know that knowing and willing are perfections. I'm not modelling God on myself,

for although I sense and suffer and doubt, I am certain that God doesn't sense or doubt. And when I say that God knows and wills, I don't claim that he does these in the way men do. I say only in general that God wills and knows, and I leave it to you and Theotimus to explain *how* he does so.

Theodore: What? *How* he does so? All God's ways of doing things—the *how* of them—are incomprehensible. We don't even know how *we* know or how *we* will; for, having no clear idea of our souls, we can't clearly comprehend anything in our states. So there is all the more reason why we won't explain to you exactly *how* God knows or *how* he wills. Nevertheless, consult the notion of the infinitely perfect being. See if I am following it. For I tell you boldly that God is a light unto himself. He finds in his substance the essences of all things and all their possible states, and finds in his decrees the existence of all things and all their actual states.

Aristes: It seems to me that you aren't risking much in what you 'boldly' say.

·WISE·

11. Theodore: I don't claim that I am. But, since you accept this principle, let us draw some conclusions from it. So all truths are in God, because no truth escapes the knowledge of an infinitely perfect being. And everything that God knows he knows *in himself*. So his substance contains all truths, that is, all intelligible relations (truths are simply real relations, and falsehoods imaginary ones). So not only is God wise but he is wisdom, not only is he knowing but he is knowledge, not only is he enlightened but he is the light that enlightens him to himself and indeed to every intellect. For it is in *his* light that you see what I see, and that he himself sees what you and I both see. I see that all the diameters of a circle are equal. I'm certain that God himself sees this and that all minds do or can see it. Yes, I am certain that

God sees precisely the same thing that I see, the same truth, the same relation that I perceive now between 2-plus-2 and 4. Yet God sees nothing except in his substance. Hence, the very truth that I see is a truth that I see in him. You know all this, Aristes, and you have already agreed to it. But these principles slip out of our minds so easily, yet are of such great importance, that it is time well spent to recall them to mind and make ourselves familiar with them.

Aristes: This is then one of the great differences between God's way of knowing and ours. God knows all things in himself, whereas we know nothing in ourselves: we know nothing except in a substance that isn't ours. God is wise through his own wisdom, but we become wise only through the union that we have with him, that is, with wisdom eternal, unchangeable, necessary, common to all intellects. For clearly minds as limited as ours can't find in their own substance the ideas or archetypes of all possible beings and their infinite relations. Anyway, I am certain that men, angels, and indeed God see the same truths that I see—so certain that I can't doubt that same light enlightens every mind.

12. Theotimus: To be sure, Aristes, if God sees precisely what we see when we think that twice two makes four, it is *in him* that we see this truth; for God sees it only *in his wisdom*. As for his seeing that we are now thinking of it—even *that* is something that he sees only in his decrees and in his eternity, i.e. he sees it in his eternal decree *that* we should think this at this time, and not in an observation of our present state, for he doesn't derive his knowledge from what is now going on in his creatures. But mightn't it be said that what minds see are not the same truths but similar truths? God sees that twice 2 makes 4. You see it, I see it. That's three similar truths rather than one unique truth.

Aristes: It's three similar perceptions of one and the same truth, but why three similar truths? And who has told you that they are similar? Have you compared your ideas with mine and with God's to see the resemblance clearly? Who told you that tomorrow, that time without end, you will see as you do today that twice 2 makes 4? Who told you that even God can't make minds capable of seeing clearly that twice two *doesn't* make 4? Surely it is because you see the same truth that I see, but by a perception that isn't mine though perhaps it is similar to mine. You see a truth that is common to all minds, seeing it by a perception that is yours alone, because our perceptions, our sensations, all our states are special to ourselves. You see a truth that is unchangeable, necessary, eternal. For you are so certain of the unchangeability of your ideas that you aren't afraid that tomorrow you will find them all to have changed. Just as you know that they exist·ed· prior to you, so you are well assured that they will ·exist after you, and indeed will never go out of existence. Now, if your ideas are eternal and unchangeable, it is evident that they can exist only in the eternal and unchangeable substance of God. [He goes on a little about this. Theotimus replies politely. Then:]

Theodore: We all agree, then, ·on these three things·. (1) God is infinitely wise, and is so essentially and through himself, by the necessity of his being. (2) Men can be wise only by the light of divine wisdom. (3) This light is communicated to them as a result of their *attending*; this is the occasional cause that brings into play the general laws of the union of men's minds with universal reason (as we shall soon see). Now let us prove that God is just.

·JUST·

13. In the simplicity of his being, God contains the ideas of all things and their infinite relations—that is, every truth.

Now we can distinguish in God two kinds of truths or relations:

- relations of magnitude; these are speculative truths whose evidentness calls only for *judgments*, and
- relations of perfection; these are practical truths, which arouse ·not only judgments but· also *movements*.

(·Although I lay those out as separate categories, they can be mixed, because· relations of perfection can be expressed in terms of relations of magnitude, and indeed it is only when expressed in that way that they can be clearly known. But we needn't linger on that point here.) 'Twice two makes four' is a relation of equality in •magnitude; it is a speculative truth that doesn't arouse any movement in the soul—whether love or hate, esteem or contempt, etc. 'A man is more valuable than a lower animal' is a relation of inequality in •perfection, which demands not only (·judgment·) that the mind assent to it but also (·movement·) that knowledge of this relation or truth make a difference to love and esteem. Pay attention then. God contains in himself all the relations of perfection. Now, he knows and loves everything that he contains in the simplicity of his being. So he esteems and loves all things to the extent to that they are worthy of love and esteem. He unconquerably loves the unchangeable *order*, which does and must consist only in the relations of perfection that hold among his attributes and among the ideas that he contains in his substance. He is therefore *just* essentially and of himself. He cannot sin because nothing can quell his love for himself, and so he cannot *not* do justice to his divine perfections, to everything he is, to everything he contains. He can't even will positively and directly to produce some disorder in his work, because he esteems all created things in proportion to the perfection *in their archetypes*. For example, •he cannot without a reason will that the mind be subject to

the body; and •if this does happens that is because man is not now such as God made him. •He cannot prefer injustice; and •if it exists that is because the uniformity of his conduct shouldn't depend on irregularity in ours. The time of his vengeance will come. •He cannot will anything that would corrupt his work; and •if there exist monsters [see note low on page 51] that disfigure it that is because his attributes are more honoured by the simplicity and generality of his ways than •they would have been• by his excluding the defects that he does in fact permit in the universe. . . . Thus, God is just in himself, just in his ways, just essentially, because all his volitions necessarily conform to the unchangeable order of justice that he owes to himself and to his divine perfections.

But man is *not* just in himself. For the unchangeable order of justice, which contains all relations of perfection among all possible beings and all their qualities, exists only in God and not at all in our own states; and accordingly, if man were to love himself by a movement •of the heart• of which *he himself* was the cause, this self-love, far from being able to make him just, would corrupt him infinitely more than the self-love of the wickedest of men. [Theodore means: if the situation were that •human beings looked *always and only* into themselves for guidance of their thoughts and feelings, each of them would be worse than the wickedest people are in the situation that in fact obtains—i.e. the situation in which •the pipeline to God isn't completely blocked.] For there has never been a soul so black, and possessed of a self-love so disordered, that the beauty of the unchangeable order couldn't move it on certain occasions. So we are perfectly just only when we see in God what he sees there himself, and accordingly judge as he does, and esteem and love what he loves and esteems. Thus, far from being just *in ourselves*, we shan't be perfectly just until we are freed from these bodies of ours that disturb all our

ideas. When that happens we shall see, without any shadowy parts, the eternal law on the basis of which we shall govern every judgment that we make and every movement of our hearts. Charitable people •who still have their bodies• can be said to be truly just, though they often form very unjust judgments. They are *just in the movements of their hearts*. But they aren't strictly and unqualifiedly *just*, because they don't know exactly all the relations of perfection that ought to determine their esteem and their love.

14. Aristes: I understand (because you told me, Theodore) that justice and truth both reside eternally in an unchangeable nature. The •distinction between• just and unjust, as well as •that between• true and false, are *not* inventions of the human mind, as certain people with corrupt minds have claimed. [The target here is presumably Hobbes.] They have maintained this:

Men have made for themselves laws for their survival, basing them on self-interest. They agreed on these laws among themselves, and *that*—•their *agreement*—is why they were obliged to obey them. Someone who breaks the agreement, being weaker than the other parties to it, finds himself among enemies who satisfy their self-interest by punishing him. So he ought out of self-interest to observe the laws of the country he lives in, not because they are *just* in themselves but because obedience to them frees a person from fear of those who are stronger. (•As for the laws' being just in themselves, we can see that they aren't•, because laws in other countries are totally different.) Everything is permissible by nature to all men. Each individual has a right to everything, and if I yield my right it is because the force of competitors obliges me to. Thus, self-interest is the rule of my actions. My law is an

external power; and if I were the strongest I would naturally regain all my rights.

Can anything more beastly and mindless be asserted? The lion's strength is what gives it control over other beasts, and I admit men often *do* use force to grab control over others. But to believe that this is *permissible* and that the stronger have the *right* to anything and aren't committing any injustice—if they take it—that is surely to take one's place among the lower animals. Yes, Theodore, I agree that the unchangeable order of justice is a law that even God doesn't ever dispense with, a law by which every mind should regulate its conduct. God is *just* essentially and by the necessity of his being. But let us see whether he is good, merciful, forbearing; for it seems to me that all this can hardly be reconciled with the strictness of his justice.

·MERCIFUL·

15. Theodore: You are right, Aristes. God isn't good or merciful or forbearing according to the plain man's ideas. These attributes as ordinarily conceived are unworthy of the infinitely perfect being. Yet *God possesses these qualities* is true, in the sense that reason teaches us this and scripture (which can't contradict itself) makes us believe it. To explain all this more clearly, let us see first whether God is *essentially just* in the sense that he necessarily rewards good works and strictly punishes everyone who offends him or (so to speak) injures his attributes.

Aristes: I can conceive, Theodore, that, if creatures are capable of offending God, he won't fail to avenge himself—he who loves himself by the necessity of his being. But what seems to me *not* to be conceivable is that God is ever offended. And if it *were* possible, as he loves himself necessarily, he would never have given existence—or at any rate that freedom or power—to creatures capable of resisting him.

Isn't that evident?

Theodore: You present me with a difficulty that will soon be explained, Aristes. Follow me please, without getting ahead of me. Isn't it clear from what I was just telling you that unchangeable order is the law of God, the inviolable rule of his volitions, and that he can't help loving things in proportion to how lovable they are?

Aristes: That is what you have just demonstrated.

Theodore: Then God can't will that his creatures not love in accordance with the same unchangeable order. He can't exempt them from following this law. He can't will for us to have more love for what merits less. But you hesitate! Doesn't this seem certain to you?

Aristes: I find some difficulty in it. A kind of inner feeling convinces me that God can't will that we love or esteem anything more than it deserves; but I do not see this quite clearly. For what do our love and our esteem matter to God? They don't matter at all. *We* may want others to esteem and love *us* because we all need one another. But God doesn't need us. He is so utterly *above* his creatures that one would think he takes no interest in our judgments regarding him and his works. That has at least some likelihood.

Theodore: It has all too much likelihood for minds that are corrupt! It is true, Aristes, that God doesn't fear or hope for anything from our judgments. He doesn't depend on anything; he is abundantly self-sufficient. Yet he necessarily takes an interest in our judgments and in the movements of our hearts. Here is proof of that. The only thing that gives minds a will, or makes them capable of willing or loving, is a natural and irresistible movement that God continually impresses on them—a movement toward the good. Now, God acts in us only because he wants to act; and he can want

to act only through his will, only through the love he has for himself and for his divine perfections. And, as I have just shown you, the order of these divine perfections is what properly constitutes his law, since he is *just* essentially and by the necessity of his being. So he can't will that •our love, which is simply the effect of •his own, be contrary to his, tending in a different direction from his. He can't will that we have a greater love for what is less worthy of love. He wills necessarily that the unchangeable order that is his natural law should also be ours. He can't exempt himself from it or exempt us. And, since he has made us such that we can either follow or not follow that natural and indispensable law, we must be such that we can be either punished or rewarded. Yes, Aristes, if we are free, it follows that we can be happy or unhappy; and if we are capable of happiness and of unhappiness, that shows for sure that we are free. Suppose some man's heart is disordered by his bad use of his freedom—how does that relate to the order of justice that God owes to his divine perfections? The answer is that it conforms to that order if •but only if• this sinner is unhappy in proportion to his disorders. Now God's love of order cannot be quelled; so he punishes without exception whoever does injury to it. This is not because the sinner 'offends' God in the sense that one man 'offends' another, nor is it because God punishes him because he enjoys getting vengeance. Rather, God cannot *not* act in accordance with his nature. . . . Thus, God is not indifferent with regard to the punishment of our disorders. He is neither forbearing nor merciful nor good according to the plain man's ideas, since he is *just* essentially and by a natural and necessary love that he has for his divine perfections. He can *defer* a reward or penalty as is required or permitted by the order of his providence, . . .but he must at *some* time deal with men

according to their deeds. God is good to the good and, so to speak, bad to the bad, as scripture says: 'With the pure you will show yourself pure; and with the froward [= 'perverse'] you will show yourself froward' (*Psalms* 18:26) He is forbearing and merciful, but that is in his son and *through* his son: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlasting' (*John* 3:16). He is good to sinners in this sense:

Through Jesus Christ he gives them the grace they need for changing the wicked dispositions of their hearts so that they may cease being sinners and do good deeds; and once they have become good and just, he can •be good to them, •pardon their sins in view of the debt-payment by Jesus Christ, and •crown their merits—merits that are really gifts from him, because they were acquired through the good use of his grace.

But God is always strict, always follows exactly the eternal laws, always acts according to his nature. . . . All this is in conformity with scripture, Aristes, as well as with the notion that all men have of the infinitely perfect being, though it doesn't at all fit the crude ideas of stupid and hardened sinners who want •a God who is in a human way meek and indulgent or •a God who doesn't intervene in our affairs and doesn't care what sort of life we lead.

Aristes: I don't think these truths can be doubted.

Theodore: Think about them, so that you will remain convinced, Aristes, not just by •a kind of inner feeling with which God inwardly persuades everyone whose heart is not hardened and entirely corrupt, but also by •an evidentness that will put you in a position to *demonstrate* it to those rare geniuses who think they have found in self-interest the true source of natural morality.