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# Natural Theology, Philosophical Theology and Illustrative Argumentation

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**Abstract:** I will attempt to define what we understand as “narrative argumentation” or “narrative arguments” through an appeal to a discussion of intercultural rational theology. In this context I offer a distinction between two concepts, which are considered usually as synonymous. *Philosophical theology* is regarded from the historical point of view as the whole repertoire of attempts at rational justification of the faith in God along with analysis of His attributes and actions within different religious traditions (both ancient and modern, Western and Eastern), whereas *Natural Theology* is regarded as a philosophical preparation for the theology of Revelation in traditional Christianity. Varieties of the teleological argument, which have been developed in the history of thought as the argument from analogy, i.e., from vivid examples aiming at persuasion of an opponent and audience in the dialectical controversy, are classified into two species of short-cut illustrative examples and the species of full-fledged theological parables, i.e., narratives in the strict sense. I conclude this discussion with an invitation to investigate other main theological arguments from a similar point of view.

**Keywords:** Cicero, Sextus Empiricus, Uddyotakara, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, Richard Bentley, natural theology, philosophical theology, arguments, illustrative examples, parables

In 2015, Colin Ruloff published a very impressive *Festschrift* dedicated to the remarkable theologian Stephen Davis, wherein he managed to engage first-rate thinkers in analytic theology. Included were presentations by Richard Swinburne, Charles Taliaferro, William Craig, Alvin Plantinga, Eleonore Stump, along with other renowned experts, such as Linda Zagzebski, Marguerite Shuster and Stephen Evans<sup>1</sup>. Their papers dealt with such traditional “big questions” such as the essence and existence of God, philosophical explication of the Christian dogmas, God and abstract objects, mind-body dualism, faith and testimony, and the problem of evil. Gerald O’Collins touched on a rare topic for the analytic tradition (where dealings with methodological issues are not too typical) as boundaries of theological disciplines in his case, between philosophical and fundamental theology. The name of Kelly James Clark is slightly less familiar, but he offered a small, yet very thought-provoking contribution, *Narrative and Natural Theology*<sup>2</sup>. We should be thankful to the editor for having included this subject in this volume.

Clark deals with a relatively new field (though he does refer to C.S. Lewis), which could be designated as *Philosophy of Narrative*. He aims to specify how, among other things, the “figurative-cum-narrative mode of cognition of reality widens the whole horizon of our cognition”, as compared with what may be discovered by means of rationality alone. And his paper concludes with a promise that “imaginative stories could enliven crucial premises in a moral argument, for example, or in the cosmological argument. These stories

<sup>1</sup> Ruloff, *Christian Philosophy of Religion*.

<sup>2</sup> Clark, “Narrative and Natural Theology”.

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do not provide sound arguments, but they could assist us in grasping the soundness of the arguments. Certain stories can remove the passional or temperamental obstacles that prevent this perception of the truth. If my argument is correct, “natural theology” ought not to ignore the resources of narrative”<sup>3</sup>.

Clark is indisputably right in both his claims, i.e., that pictorial material, while not making rational arguments sound, does assist their soundness and that theology producing these arguments, ought to use the resources of this material. And he is doubtlessly right in that the issue he examines deserves special investigation. Nevertheless, he is open to several questions.

Firstly, he seems to use the notion of *natural theology* as something quite *natural* in itself (cf. performative statements) and, therefore, not requiring any further definitions. Secondly, he does not disclose the notion of *narratives* as applied to theology working with reasons, nor does he cite any examples of those narratives which could assist, at least, the arguments for the existence of the God he mentions, to the result that the paper devoted to narratives is bereft of just that - narrativeness. Thirdly, he seems to act as if no one spoke about the correlation of reasons and what he could have understood as narratives in theology before Lewis, i.e., the twentieth century, as if he does not allow a slightest suspicion that it dates back to much earlier times.

My purpose is to fill in the mentioned gaps. And I would start with the first one, i.e., on which territory of rational theology the very discussion on the correlation between arguments and narratives could be most suitable and the reason why.

## Is Natural Theology “Natural” in Its Own Right?

As alluded above, differing disciplines and framework concepts is not too popular in the analytic tradition. In the same manner, one could also note, striving for concrete problem solving is not typical for the continental philosophy<sup>4</sup>. That is why *rational theology*, as a rule, is not separated from the *philosophy of religion*. One example is the very title of the *Festschrift* to Stephen Davis, *Christian Philosophy of Religion*, which deals with purely theological content. So it was by no means striking that in a very extensive and authoritative handbook, the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* (edited by Thomas Flint and Michael Rea, 2009), its discipline is interpreted implicitly as dealing with theological issues, but of a different order than those covered by the philosophy of religion with which it should be in sync<sup>5</sup>. Another significant point of view, coming from John Macquarrie, states that *rational theology* entails ‘sharing-in’ faith and seeking to understand it, while *philosophy of religion* claims only ‘knowing about’ faith<sup>6</sup>. It is only there that any difference can be traced between the two, and not in their subject matters. Yet in reality it is the same as claiming that philosophers of science are only those personally engaged in natural sciences. O’Collins shares this view and refers to the same Stephen Davis<sup>7</sup>, but analogies of this type lead to

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>4</sup> Here, as everywhere, analytic theology is an immediate continuation of analytic philosophy in general, which, in turn, has tried to fit into the patterns of science, while science aims at results more concrete than self-reflection. As an example of the opposite we may turn to Husserlean phenomenology which seems to develop its methodology as a “goal-in-itself” (since it aims not at providing answers to any classic philosophical question). In Heideggerean philosophy what matters first and foremost is questioning itself (Fragen) and the very structure of it, while answers are of secondary importance (it was by no means accidental that Heidegger estimated science as capable only of inferior knowledge which has nothing to do with ‘the truthful knowledge’, provided only by (his) philosophy (see, e.g. his programmatic lectures on “what is metaphysics” and Nietzschean teaching of the eternal return).

<sup>5</sup> In so doing they coordinated their project closely with the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* (2005) edited by William Wainwright (also a sizeable book), where the problems of evil and theodicy are given very modest attention, while Flint and Rea try to make up for such a deficiency by writing three separate chapters. See: *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, 4. References to Wainwright’s handbook also help explain one very important specific trait of this volume that the editors did not consider worth explaining - the omission of such a basic theme of any rational theology as the arguments for God’s existence. The reason is that the arguments are dealt with in two big chapters in Wainwrights’ volume. See: *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, 80-116, 116-38.

<sup>6</sup> Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 39. See also: O’Collins, “The Philosophical Theology of Stephen Davis”, 346.

<sup>7</sup> O’Collins, “The Philosophical Theology of Stephen Davis”, 346.

a rather contrary conclusion. I feel that a philosopher of science, acting as a philosopher of science, ought to deal with the nature of scientific knowledge and language, the concepts of normal science, paradigm shifts, the structures of scientific revolutions etc., but not with the matters of solid-state physics, physics of semiconductors, quantum physics etc., just as a philosopher of education is to be concerned with the aims, forms, or the methods of the education process, rather than the subjects taught in colleges or schools. Likewise, a philosopher of art deals with the nature of art, artistic mediums, expression, and forms etc. and not with concrete topic of historical art criticism, such as studies in the conventions of Jesuit theatre in France. In the same way a philosopher of religion should be engaged, in his proper specialization, with the phenomenon of religion (e.g., at its three levels - religiosity, religion as a genus and empirical religions<sup>8</sup>) and not with concrete religious doctrines, or their substantiation, or refutation.<sup>9</sup>

*Natural theology* is also understood as something self-evident, and not only by those who use this concept as ‘ready-to-eat’ but also by those who are responsible for its very ‘cooking’. I refer only to *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* by W. L. Craig and J. P. Moreland (2009). It is a fundamental work, dedicated exclusively to the arguments for the existence of God, the problems of evil and with the theodicy within one’s body. In addition to the classical arguments, it includes some relative rarities<sup>10</sup>. But one can only wonder why the editorial introduction lacks any explanation of such a peculiarity of the volume in that the whole content of *natural theology* is narrowed down to these arguments without any reference to divine attributes. ‘Coexistence’ of both large blocks (the arguments and attributes) was regarded as unavoidable in the second scholasticism when *natural theology* became fully systematized<sup>11</sup> (and where methodological issues were being elaborated much more carefully than today – see above). By omitting the second block and including theodicy in the first, the editors must have had a new feature of *natural theology* in mind; yet they failed to reveal anything of the sort<sup>12</sup>. So it is not striking that the correlation between natural and philosophical theology was not even mentioned in their work.

Indeed, there are some important exceptions. Here I would distinguish Scott MacDonald who avowed that while natural theology (being understood in the narrow sense, as allowing only some kinds of deductive inferences, or, in the broader sense, as allowing also inductive ones) offers justificatory services, there is also theology with functions that are mostly clarificatory regarding traditional items of faith. For example, the notion of atonement does not require that we justifiably believe or know that God exists, but accepts that atonement has, in fact, occurred. And this differentiation allows MacDonald to take justificatory and clarificatory theologies to be species of a single genus of *philosophical theology*. He defines the latter as the “enterprise that attempts to understand divine matters using the techniques and methods of human reason, particularly as those have been developed within philosophy.” However, *natural theology* was defined from the outset as an enterprise aiming “at establishing truths or acquiring knowledge about God (or divine matters, generally) using only our natural cognitive resources”<sup>13</sup>. MacDonald’s reasoning invites questions. Is it possible for a theologian to work on theological matters while being a non-believer? Where, now, could he have found such a separate “clarificatory theology” which could be regarded as a kind of the genus of philosophical theology besides his unsuccessful *a priori* example of a theologian dealing with the doctrine of atonement without necessarily believing in the existence of God? Nevertheless, his distinction

<sup>8</sup> Discussed in detail in: Shokhin, “Methodological Pluralism and the Subject Matter of Philosophy of Religion”.

<sup>9</sup> It goes without saying that a philosopher of science can be at the same time a physicist, philosopher of education – a teacher, philosopher of art – an artist, and philosopher of religion – a theologian, but just *at the same time, coincidentally* etc. and not in their specific “philosophical professions”.

<sup>10</sup> Besides such well-established arguments as those from religious experience and miracles, arguments from reason and consciousness are developed in detail. See: *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, 282-343, 344-90.

<sup>11</sup> One may refer here to *Disputationes metaphysicae* (chapter XXX) by Francisco Suarez (1597) as the most authoritative text in the field. The same is true for his followers. So while Disputatio LIX of *Disputationes in universam philosophiam* by Guiseppe Polizzi (1675-1676) dealt with the existence of God, the next one with the Divine attributes, and this curriculum was reproduced also in *Quaestionum philosophicarum* (Lib.V, quest. 2.39-44) by Silvestro Mauro (1670), not to mention others.

<sup>12</sup> Just as the editors of *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* made readers guess their motives in omitting the first block. – See footnote 5.

<sup>13</sup> MacDonald, “Natural Theology”.

between *justificatory* and *clarificatory* functions of theology is doubtlessly productive. In fact, the very first treatise under the title of *Philosophical Theology* (see below) opens with the endeavor to ‘clarify’ to what kind of arguments the famous teleological argument belongs, while ‘natural theologians’ before the treatise mostly confined themselves to the refutation of their opponents. In the past I offered some criteria for differentiating the two theologies using many ‘*a posteriori* arguments’<sup>14</sup>, so I prefer to limit myself to only one, which is important within the context of the present investigation.

In spite of the fact that the first treatise on *natural theology* was most likely composed by Nicolas Bonetus, a follower of Duns Scotus, ca. 1330<sup>15</sup>, and that on *philosophical theology*, by Frederick Tennant six hundred years later<sup>16</sup>, the phenomenon of *philosophical theology* is considerably earlier than that of natural theology. The very notion of *theologia naturalis* was taking shape as the necessary conceptual correlate to the notion of *theologia revelata* (as in the cases of other correlative concepts, as, e.g., potentiality and actuality, realism and nominalism, the first intention and the second intention), and, due to the sharp distinction between verities accessible and inaccessible to natural reason that is typical of Christian theology. This notion can be considered in some sense the unique heritage of Christianity. We may trace the corresponding difference between two sources of knowledge of God and the created world while reading Tertullian (150–220 A.D.)<sup>17</sup>, St. Hilary of Poitiers (320–367)<sup>18</sup> and then Hugh of Saint Victor (1096–1141), who differed between *theologia mundana* and *theologia divina*<sup>19</sup>. Aquinas neatly opposed the verities about God as cognizable by the natural reason (*ratio naturalis*) to those which “surpass every capability of human reason” (*quae omnem facultatem humanae rationis excedunt*)<sup>20</sup>, and thereafter, in the later scholasticism Francisco Suarez and his followers fit the arguments for the existence of God and Divine attributes into the compartment of *theologia naturalis* (= *metaphysica, disputationes philosophicae*) and the superintelligent doctrines (beginning with that of the Holy Trinity and concluding with those of the sacraments) into the compartment of *cursus theologici* (= *theologia nostra, disputationes theologicae*)<sup>21</sup>. At the same time, *natural theology* was seen as a preparation for the ascension to the theology of the second kind regarded as the theology in the proper sense (cf. the very designation *theologia nostra*, i.e., “our theology”).

Aquinas was fully justified in acknowledging that the verities about God are cognizable by the natural reason. His existence and general attributes had been taught by medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophers who developed this area of investigations in the framework of Kalam and Aristotelism in parallel with Christianity. But *rational theology* was developed before the dawn of Christian theology through the efforts of the Stoics, Epicureans, Aristotle, Plato, Parmenides and even Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 570 – c. 475 B.C.) whom later doxography credits with dialectical arguments against polytheism and in support of philosophical monotheism<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, the origins of the very term *philosophical theology* can be reconstructed from one passage of Varro (first century B.C.), as cited by St. Augustine, where we read that among three kinds of theology acknowledged in Rome one was referred to as “having the greatest use among philosophers” (*physicon, quo [maxime udguntur] philosophi*)<sup>23</sup>. But the Mediterranean region was not the only place where rational teachings of and arguments for the existence of God and His rulership over the world were developed. Indian philosophers of the schools Yoga, Vedānta and most of all Nyāya championed different versions of *īśvaravāda* (“the doctrine of the existence [and attributes] of God”) against very strong opponents, the Buddhists and others, for a long time. And they, as well as Greek and

14 Shokhin, “Philosophy of Religion and the Varieties of Rational Theology”.

15 Schrödter, “Religion bzw. Theologie, natürliche bzw. Vernünftige”.

16 Tennant, *Philosophical Theology* (the first volume dealt with the soul, and the second one with the soul, world and God).

17 Tertullianus, *Adversus Marcionem* I.18.

18 Hilarius, *De Trinitate* I.2.15.

19 See Hugo de Sancto Victore. *Didascalicon* I.1, where reading books on “the liberal arts” and on “divine scriptures” were demarcated from the very beginning.

20 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* I.3.

21 Many of them also distinguished the main features of the two theologies. See, e.g.: Vázquez, *Commentaria ac disputationes in primam partem Summa Theologiae Sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, 55 (Quest.I, § 19). I express my gratitude to Galina Vdovina for this reference.

22 Pseudo-Aristoteles, *On Melises, Xenophanes, Gorgias* III–IV.

23 Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* VI.5.

Roman philosophers, never thought of their rational efforts as something which could serve as a recipe for proper knowledge of God from Revelation, although they held their sacred texts in a very high esteem. To sum up, we conclude that the scope of the notions of “natural theology” and “philosophical theology” do not coincide and that the two could be compared with both narrower and a wider circles. The former could be enveloped, in some sense, into the latter, along with the assumption that the narrative dimension of *rational theology* could be better explained within the context of *philosophical theology*, which could be identified also as an *intercultural rational theology*. And this, in turn, prompts us to speak of the Greeks and Romans.

## The Greek and Roman Theologies

As it has often happened in the history of thought, something treated as a novelty often proves to be rather old, and the topic of correlation between theology and “narratives” is not an exception. And this issue was also touched at Antiquity in the controversial context.

The first use of the word *theologians* (*theologoi*) dates back, as is well known, to Plato’s *Republic* in the well-known dialogue between a young man Adeimantes and Socrates. Socrates champions the view that it is legislators and not ‘theologians’, i.e., poets, such as Homer and Aeschylus, who ought to establish “models and norms of the right speech about the gods” (*peri theous nomōn te kai typōn*), and this ‘correct speech about the gods’ serves as the first (albeit only a descriptive one) definition of theology in the history of culture. Step by step, Socrates makes Adeimantes understand why poetic narratives about the divine world should be corrected, and he justifies his thesis by means of rational, philosophical arguments. A god cannot be the cause of both the good and evil (in contrast to what poetic narratives state) but only of what is good. Nor can it be subject to changes and transmutations inasmuch as such a capability is a property of lower beings, to which it cannot belong, and not of higher ones, to which it belongs. Socrates supports this statement with a graphic example: even the better buildings erected by people differ from the worse ones by their comparative immutability. In addition, even individual gods cannot be in need like ordinary humans (again, in opposition to what poetic narratives teach), nor can they use magic for the deception of people, because fraud (ascribed to Zeus by Homer and to Apollo by Aeschylus) is regarded as the greatest vice even among humans<sup>24</sup>. But the point is not in expulsion of narratives about gods from the ideal city (as Plato’s position is often misinterpreted) but, on the contrary, it is in bringing them up to the standards, because in their ‘right fashion’ these narratives may serve to educate the citizens.

With Aristotle, we enter a new stage of comprehending theology and, therefore, understanding its correlation with narratives. On the one hand, he admits that a ‘myth-lover’ (*philomythos*) is in some sense also a ‘wisdom-lover’ (*philosophus*).<sup>25</sup> However, ‘physicists’, as authentic originators of philosophy are matched against these ‘mythologists’ (Homer, Hesiodus, Orpheus)<sup>26</sup>. Yet theology surpasses the ‘philosophy of nature’ inasmuch as it constitutes the subject of ‘the first philosophy’ (*prota philosophia*), the highest theoretical science (while theoretical ones supersede all the others), as distinguished from two others insofar as it studies both ‘being *qua* being’, what it is and which attributes belong to it *qua* being.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, it surpasses things which are separate (in contrast to subjects of mathematics) and are immutable (in contrast to those of physics), being, therefore, also *theología*<sup>28</sup>. That is why ‘the first philosophy’ deserves the title of “divine science”<sup>29</sup>. It is evident that Aristotelean theology *qua* metaphysics and the superior

<sup>24</sup> Plato, *De Re Publica*. II. 379a - 383c.

<sup>25</sup> Aristoteles, *Metaphysica*, 982 b 18.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1071b 27, 1075b 26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1026a 30-32.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1026a 20-25.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 983a 5-10. It took two millennia of Western philosophy to have clearly distinguished ontology from theology mixed in Aristotle’s *prota philosophia*, with the resulting division of the latter into *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*. This great undertaking accomplished by German university philosophy in the 17th century, a story, exciting as it is for a historian of philosophy, lies beyond the scope of this article. See old but classic work that sheds light on this process through detailed description of the first-hand sources: Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts*.

theoretical science, where God was considered ‘economically’, as the first mover of all moved things and the self-thinking thought, was hardly compatible with vivid illustrations.

The Stoics’ attitude seems more syncretic, since they were a distinguished school of popular philosophy. Already their second scholarch, Cleanthes (c. 330-230 B.C.), while trying to widen their threefold horizontal scheme of philosophical fields, i.e., logics, physics and ethics, introduced theology from the Aristotelean vertical scheme of theoretical sciences (see above) by adding it to physics.<sup>30</sup> However, Diogenes Laertius also ascribed to him a book under the title “Of the Gods”<sup>31</sup>, which should have included the interpretation of myths, and he credited his successor, Chrysippus (282 – 206 B.C.) with authorship of erotic stories about Zeus and Hera “with details which no one would soil his lips by repeating”<sup>32</sup>.

Such compatibility of incompatible “theologies” in the minds of the same thinkers (and Chrysippus was by no means the only man with “bifurcation of mind” in this regard) demanded some clearer theoretical lines to be drawn and for some demarcation to take place. This pursuit was not aimed solely at satisfying theoretical interests. The motive to preserve social consensus was also very recognizable here, especially in the Roman system of state regulation where religion played an important role. I refer here to the famous model of *theologia tripertita*, which was elaborated upon and proven by its most diligent and authoritative investigator, Hodo Lieberg, in cooperation with some representatives of the Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics<sup>33</sup>. They were best known by the later references to the testimonies of Quintus Mucius Scaevola Pontificus (140 – 82 B.C.) and “the most educated among Romans” – (according to Seneca) Marcus Terentius Varro (116 – 27 B.C.). While Mucius differentiated three kinds of gods, as introduced, correspondingly, by poets, philosophers and officials (where the last kind suited him best from the point of view of piety)<sup>34</sup>, the latter one went as far to differentiate three kinds of theology defined as a theory which gives rational explanation about the gods (*tria genera theologia dicit esse, id est rationis quae de diis explicatur*). These three formats of theology were divided into (1) the mythical genus (with the Latin interpretation *mythos=fabula*); (2) the physical genus (*physicon*); and (3) the civil genus (*civile*). These were identified as used by poets, philosophers and “nations,” respectively. The first theology - narrative, is resolutely condemned by Varro as containing abuses of the divine dignity (the gods are portrayed as quite human-like beings); the second one corresponds to a philosophical interpretation of gods (as springing from fire, numbers, atoms, etc.) but is more suitable in the narrow circles of a school than in public places (such as forums); and the third one deals with how, when and where different gods are to be worshipped. This was preferred over others also as “the most educated one among Romans”, who, like Mucius Scaevola before him, was also concerned predominantly with the state<sup>35</sup>.

Lieberg demonstrates that the differentiation of the three kinds and, accordingly (what is of much importance in our case), opposition of theology of philosophers to narrative theology was acknowledged even later. He refers to the famous orator, Dio Chrysostom (c. 40 – 120 A.D.), and an even more notable writer, historian and philosopher, Plutarch from Chaeronea (46 – 127 A.D.) and their contemporary, Aetius, a doxographer and eclectic philosopher. It seems that just “the fabulous genus of theology” made the great Neoplatonic Plotinus (c. 204/5 – 270 A.D.) get rid of using the very term *theología* in spite of its being more than appropriate for defining his own metaphysical meditations. He referred only to “narrative theologians” who wrote about the birth of Eros and equated Aphrodite to Hera<sup>36</sup>. Ancient theorists, however, offer us also some classifications of theological methods, and some of them deserve our special attention.

The later (almost medieval) outstanding Neoplatonic, Proclus (412 – 485 A.D.), among his other works, composed the treatise entitled *The Platonic Theology*. It dealt predominantly with Plato’s *Parmenides*, a

<sup>30</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae et sententiae philosophorum*, VII.41.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., VII.175.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., VII.187-188.

<sup>33</sup> See Lieberg, “Die “theologia tripertita” in Forschung und Bezeugung”. Besides previously studied Latin sources known in this regard (Tertullian and Augustin in the first place) Lieberg investigated the Greek texts, from Dio Chrysostom up to Eusebius of Caesarea (260/265 – 339/340 A.D.)

<sup>34</sup> Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei*, IV.27, VII.12 et al.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., VI.4-5, cf. III.4.

<sup>36</sup> Plotinus, *Ennead* III.5.2.2, 8.21.

purely metaphysical dialogue. But in the introductory section, he divides all Plato's teachings into four groups. According to Proclus, the great philosopher taught by means of (1) inspiration, (2) rational dialectics, i.e., logical controversy (as was the case, e.g., in *The Sophist* and *Parmenides*), (3) symbols, and (4) images<sup>37</sup>. Proclus' scheme was rather more inclusive than divisive. I'm sure, he might have aimed at gathering the whole Hellenic "theological arsenal" for counterbalancing Christian theology. Therefore, the "place of honor" was given to "inspiration" as something equivalent to "revelation". But it is quite clear that he put logical argumentation and narratives (cf. "symbols" and "images", alluding to myths) as it were, into the isolated compartments.

Yet prior to Proclus, in the 3rd century CE, the eminent champion of the Sceptics, Sextus Empiricus, referred to four modes of substantiation for the existence of gods with those who believe in it: (1) argumentation from the consensus of all people (belief in their existence cannot be groundless if all "nations", both Greeks and barbarians, share it); (2) from the world's order (from both design analogies and the necessity of the existence of the first mover behind other movers and moved things); (3) from different nonsenses which the negation of existence of gods would entail; and (4) from elimination of contrary arguments<sup>38</sup>. This scheme is not flawless: arguments of the groups (3) and (4) roughly coincide with each other. In both cases the existence of gods is inferred from such premises as the indisputable existence of e.g., piety, justice, divination, inspiration, which safely exist among all people. Nevertheless, inclusion of these groups (3) and (4) demonstrates a good analysis insofar as it demonstrates in the whole scheme that positive and negative arguments can lead to the same points of destination.

All the classifications we have just referred to have more than just only historical importance. The *theologia tripertita* scheme is not so much theological as a *religiological* one. Indeed, it captures the general structure of any more or less developed religious tradition, which needs some sacred history ('the first genus'), world-outlook ('the second genus') and ritual ('the third genus'). The elements of Proclus' scheme can also be integrated into the composite building of any theology, which requires a divine mandate, rational argumentation and reflections of the celestial world in images of the sublunary sphere. The scheme referred to by Sextus Empiricus testifies to *methodological* theorizing in the strict sense by generalization and distribution of rational arguments at disposal of any tradition of philosophical theology. It has not lost its significance up to the present time because the arguments from the religious experience as displayed in the human history and from the world's order remain the most persuasive means of reasoning for those who seek to support their faith by reason and to convert others. Moreover, examples the ancient philosophers referred to help us in our small enterprise for understanding how close the ties are between logical reasons and graphic images within the fabric of theology.

## The First Type of Short-Cut Illustrations

Indeed, what Proclus separated in theory has not been separated in practice, because dialectical argumentation has been joined by "symbols" and still more by "images" from ancient times. Yet these were of 'everyday', rather than a mythological kind. The reason is that in *philosophical theology* this dialectical argumentation was being worked out not as a soliloquy, but in a dialogical controversy, where a proponent's goal was to persuade, not only by means of inferences but also through convincing and generally accessible "visual aids", his opponent and, more importantly, a more or less neutral audience (be it eyewitnesses or, as more often, readers of a controversy). And the more persuasive illustrations for an argument were deployed by a disputant, the stronger the arguments, the more were his chances to succeed. Now, we shall attempt to "illustrate" these in the context of the teleological argument, nowadays referred to as the argument from design. This was referred to by Kant in his magnum opus, and rightfully labeled, in spite of all his critical attitude towards the theistic arguments in general, not only the most ancient one but

<sup>37</sup> Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* I. 4. 15-25.

<sup>38</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* IX. 60.

also the most persuasive and helpful for the sciences<sup>39</sup>. Yet this same argument — and this is essential for us now — is also “mostly narrative.” This feature is reflected in its third most common name, i.e., the argument from analogies. Let us try to make sure that these analogies have had more than one dimension.

I would define the first class of these as vivid examples *corroborating* a thesis of a *proponent*. These could also be identified as “short-cut narratives.” This was similar to Plato’s argument for the “regulated” depiction of gods referred to above: even the better buildings erected by people differ from the worse ones by their comparative immutability. Furthermore, more gods should be depicted as beings not subject to human-like mutability. And Sextus Empiricus, while illustrating the arguments from the world-order (see above), uses an analogy: when we see a beautiful coppery artifact, we want to discover the master, and in the same way we have reasons to seek after the final cause of this manifold and many-formed structure of the world<sup>40</sup>. The principle is similar, but much more vivid and, therefore, “narrative” in an analogy cited by Cicero (106 – 43 B.C.) in his great treatise *On the Nature of the Gods* and ascribed by him to the above mentioned second Stoic scholar, Cleanthes:

Just as a man going into a house, or gymnasium, or market-place, would find it impossible, when he saw the plan, and scale, and arrangement of everything, to suppose that these things came into being uncaused, but would understand that there was someone who superintended and was obeyed, so in the case of such vast movements and alternations, in the orderly succession of phenomena so numerous and so mighty, in which the measureless and infinite extent of past time has never deceived expectation, it is much more inevitable that he should conclude that such great operations of nature are directed by some intelligence.<sup>41</sup>

Analogies of the same kind became standard for supporting the existence of the Divine Reason for more than two millennia of the Western theology after Cleanthes. Only their “narrative matter” changed to suit the historical context and the technical progress. It was St. Athanasius the Great (295 – 373 A.D.) who wrote that one can ascend in contemplation from the beauty and slenderness of the earth and heaven to their Creator and His Word because as an ordinary artist, invisible at the present time, can be recognized through his artifacts, so also the world’s Artist who is also invisible for the corporeal eyes<sup>42</sup>. The same is seen with the soul which is being recognized by the corporeal movements, while being invisible to our sight<sup>43</sup>. During Modern times, art analogies were more popular. One can refer, for example, to John Ray, a very authoritative scientist of his day (his contributions to botany and zoology were not superseded by anyone for at least half a century) whose best known book, *Wisdom of God, Manifested in the Works of Creation* (1691) concludes with the statement that the universe, as a beautiful poem, testifies to a still more amazing design of its Author, who cannot be anything but the eternal and omnipotent Creator.<sup>44</sup> However, in the Enlightenment era, mechanistic designs started to occupy the minds of theologians (instead of palaces, pictures and poems), and the best resource for the argument was found in the comparison of artificial and natural “mechanisms.” In this regard, “clockwork” became a ‘favorite’ analogy because of its improvement and precision, in contrast to the medieval technologies. Moreover, Voltaire was quite sure that even for ordinary minds an understanding of expediency in the world should be clearly evident in using the analogy between the work of the hands of a clock and functions of the human body. In his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764-1769) he states outright that the groundlessness of atheism (in his article “Atheism”) may be at best exposed if one refers to the both classic and true inference that the universe, being like a perfectly adjusted mechanism, entails the existence of “a very good mechanic.” And thereafter, the image of a clock became a small model of the designed universe. We may remember the famous *Natural Theology* by William Paley (1802), who began his treatise with the image of a passenger coming across a watch on the road.

<sup>39</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* I.2. 3.6.

<sup>40</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* IX. 75-77.

<sup>41</sup> Cicero, *De natura deorum* II.5. Transl. by F. Brooks.

<sup>42</sup> Athanasius Alexandrias, *Oratio contra gentes*, 35.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>44</sup> Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation*, 87.

Traditional India had considerable problems with technologies, and Indian theists were, therefore, limited to simpler examples in their use of analogies differentiating artificial and natural things. However, these analogies were being used from the very beginning and uninterruptedly, and vivid illustrations were incorporated into the very members of the ancient Indian syllogisms, which were constructed initially not as an inference in the strict sense, but rather as an exposition of the dialogue between a proponent and opponent<sup>45</sup>. In this manner, e.g., Uddyotakara in the *Nyāya-vārttika* (the 7th century A.D.) replies to a generalized Antitheist<sup>46</sup> who suggests that the active Primordial Matter (Prakṛti), atoms and the law of karma are sufficient causes for explaining the world processes without admittance of Īśvara, that they are being nonconscious, just as an axe and the similar tools can operate only under the guidance of a reasonable subject<sup>47</sup>. Later, pots and clothes as produced by potters and weavers were used by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa in the *Nyāyamañjarī* (the 9th century A.D.) for supporting a conclusion that every composite thing has to have its origin only in its production, and given that mountains and trees are also composite things, their existence also presupposes the activity of the unseen “craftsman”<sup>48</sup>.

## The Second Type of Short-Cut Illustrations

We may furnish more examples of the first type of “visual aids” within the framework of the teleological argument, but it is time to come to the second one, i.e., aiming at *refutation of an opponent*. It was a great merit of the theologians referred to by Sextus Empiricus to have separated *reductio ad absurdum* reasoning, as applied to atheists, from the ‘positive arguments’ for the existence of the divine world, but they did not (according to his text) use the opportunity to amplify that this mode of argument is much more dangerous for an opponent than the one discussed above. For example, to prove that Shakespeare should have been the author of his dramas and not any other person (here we ourselves resort to the analogy argument!) one may, certainly, argue from his biography, e.g., beginning from his education at Stratford school of grammar, but it would be more effective to prove that some alternative candidates for the authorship had either nothing to do with playwriting (e.g., Francis Bacon), or passed away before Shakespeare’s main masterpieces were published (e.g., Edward de Verre). The same is true for philosophical theology and, indeed, any serious confrontation of positions: action on an adversary’s territory brings you closer to victory than any defense in your own land. We shall confine ourselves to a single short-cut narrative argument of this kind that has pervaded controversies for over two millennia.

It is in the same great dialogical treatise by Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* (ca. 45 B.C.), where this narrative argument was launched for the first time, and it can be, within the context, ascribed to the Stoics. The reasoning for turning against Epicurean naturalism deserves full citation:

Must I not here express my wonder that any one should exist who persuades himself that there are certain solid and indivisible particles carried along by their own impulse and weight, and that a universe so beautiful and so admirably arrayed is formed from the accidental concourse of those particles? I do not understand why the man who supposes that to have been possible should not also think that if a countless number of the forms of the one and twenty letters, whether in gold or any other material, were to be thrown somewhere, it would be possible, when they had been shaken out upon the ground, for the annals of Ennius to result from them so as to be able to be read consecutively,—a miracle of chance which I incline to think would be impossible even in the case of a single verse.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Here lies the main reason why these syllogisms were polynomial, i.e. seven-membered and even ten-membered (with the Jains) along with the classical five-membered, developed in Nyāya, and only the Buddhists after Dignāga (c. 480-540 A.D.) abridged the latter up to the three-membered (“Aristotelean”) model, while the Nyāya school remained faithful to the five-membered syllogism, and not only in opposition to the Buddhists but also because it better fitted the theory of argumentation traditionally developed by the school.

<sup>46</sup> Uddyotakara, *Nyāyavārttika*, IV.1.21.

<sup>47</sup> See the section on *īśvaravāda* in, e.g.: Uddyotakara, *Nyāyavartikam*, 456-467.

<sup>48</sup> See the section on *īśvaravāda* in, e.g.: Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, *Nyāyamañjarī*, 190-204.

<sup>49</sup> Cicero, *De natura deorum*, II.37. Transl. by F. Brooks.

Although the name of the cited philosopher is unknown to us, there is no doubt that he was a genius. In reality, a better illustration of impossibility of “natural transition” from the dead and unconscious matter to an expedient and thought-out form without supervision of the transcendent Reason could not have been provided by natural reason. In addition, this illustration was a great match for another analogy, developed in the Middle Ages, i.e., the analogy drawn between the universe and a text-book for knowing God. And no wonder that this ‘Ciceronian argument’ was in great demand during Modern times, serving as a challenge to the growing naturalism.

To give an early example, one can cite Charles Taliaferro’s reference to one of the leading English Platonists, Henry More, who, in his *Divine Dialogues* (1688), pondered whether a scroll of *Archimedes on the Sphaere and Cylindre* with all the figures suitable for the design could have been produced by chance and, given that such a suggestion is nonsense, it prompted him to compare a small scroll to “the whole volume of nature”<sup>50</sup>. Richard Bentley, a follower of the famous Robert Boyle and the author of the sermon *The Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism* (1693), worked along the same lines and produced a polemical illustration. While referring to Ciceronian example of the *Annales* of Ennius, he added a new one, of *Aeneid* of Virgil as consisting of 24 letters of Roman alphabet hurled at random. He also invented a parody of naturalistic views inviting one to believe in a monkey that “may scribble the *Leviathan* of Hobbes”, and of the same kind is the probability for material particles to unite by chance into the functioning body of a living being<sup>51</sup>.

Bentley, while referring to “the arguments from *Annales* and *Aeneid*” as illustrating the absurdity of the materialistic worldview sounded convinced that both ‘Ancients’ and ‘Moderns’ used them<sup>52</sup>. I don’t know whom among the ‘Moderns’ he had in mind. After him, however, these arguments were much in use, and it is suffice to mention only two examples. Though David Hume was a moderate opponent of the teleological argument, Cleanthes, the spokesman of theism, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (written and edited during the 1750s & 1760s) developed his argument with the claim that “the anatomy of an animal affords many stronger instances of design than the perusal of Livy and Tacitus”<sup>53</sup>. Now, Margaret Jacob persuades us that Jean-Jacques Rousseau studied Bentley’s sermons enthusiastically<sup>54</sup>, but he could not have overlooked the illustration of the design argument under discussion in his *Emile* (1762). Indeed, he reproduces the analogy with Virgil’s *Aeneid* in the famous *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar* (Book IV), but adds some considerations of much importance. He says that even innumerable castings of letters cannot change the situation because, in such cases, quantity cannot give us a new quality, and a chemist, while combining various material substances in his crucible cannot make them “feel” and “think” in this setting<sup>55</sup>. Here we have a double use of *reductio ad absurdum* as it is applied not only to a materialist’s thesis but also to his potential objections. Therefore, Rousseau’s controversial illustration sounds so up-to-date as if it were aimed at the ‘new atheists’ of our times who have not superseded the ‘metaphysics’ of their peers among Rousseau’s contemporaries.

The same type of controversial argument has survived up to the present day. Here I refer, first of all, to Fred Hoyle’s proposition that the probability of spontaneous generation of life on earth without Intellect does not exceed the chances of a tornado going off like a bolt above a dump of airplane parts to combine them exactly into a Boeing-747 aircraft<sup>56</sup>, and Richard Dawkins’ oversensitive reaction to this short-cut narrative is well-known. While Hoyle’s model was close to the idea of the Ciceronian argument, an image designed by the American and, later, Israeli astrophysicist and theist Gerald Schroeder did correspond to Bentley’s version in its “stuff”. But what Bentley invented as an imaginary experiment, Schroeder referred to as an empirical one. Having checked the results of an experiment conducted by the British National Council for Arts, he calculated that the likelihood of getting a one-letter word by monkeys in a cage is one

<sup>50</sup> Taliaferro, *Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion Since the Seventeenth Century*, 22-23.

<sup>51</sup> Bentley, *Eight Sermons Preached at the Honourable Robert Boyle’s Lecture*, 190-193. I express my gratitude to Igor Koshelev for providing me with a photocopy of this edition.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>53</sup> Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 75-76.

<sup>54</sup> Jacob, “Christianity and the Newtonian Worldview”, 245.

<sup>55</sup> Rousseau, *Oeuvres completes*, vol. 2, 573.

<sup>56</sup> “Hoyle on Evolution”.

chance out of 27,000, and still infinitely less may be their success in printing Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, *Shall I compare you to a summer day...* which monkeys could have typed at a keyboard during the time sufficient for the death of the earth by extreme heat.. But even the smallest probability of such an enterprise should be regarded as not too small when compared with "nanoscopic" chances of spontaneous production of the much more complicated "book of the world"<sup>57</sup>.

## The Type of Full-Blown Illustrations

The third species of "vivid aids" in the framework of the teleological argument may be generalized as a class of *controversial stories*. These could also be divided into the subclasses of less and more unfolded ones.

An example of reductive unfoldedness may be seen in the abovementioned Uddyotakara in the same subcommentary to the *Nyāya-sūtras*. To the question of the generalized Opponent, whether Īśvara uses some material for producing things or not, he answers with an example of a man who firstly makes an axe out of wood and iron and then with axe makes lumber, and in the same way Īśvara also acts gradually: in the beginning (of a new world) he stirs up living beings' memories of what is pleasant and unpleasant (also evoking memories of those objects which aroused these feelings in them); from memories he somehow produces pure and impure intentions; wherefrom *dharma* and *adharma* are produced, and with their help he makes the bodies of creatures. The Opponent objects that while he is making one thing, he cannot be the creator of the material with which he is working. But Uddyotakara retorts that no one said he had to make everything at once. This is not a mere illustration of an argument but a short "theistic story", having a firm plant on the similarities between the visible and invisible worlds. One cannot avoid the impression that just in this narrative Indian theism is as close as possible to the classical. Īśvara appears here not as a collaborator of the law of karma (whose role in the re-creations of the world is decisive) but in some sense its producer, inasmuch as he incites those dispositions and flaws of consciousness, which inevitably actualize karmic potencies. So here we come close to *creatio ex nihilo*<sup>58</sup>.

A typical fully unfolded teleological approach in the shape of a *parable*, which does correspond to a *narrative* in the strict sense, can be found in the first treatise in the history of thought under the title of *Philosophy of Religion* (1772). It was composed by the Austrian Jesuit, Sigmund von Storchenau (1731-1798), a defender of classical theism against its two main opponents - the atheists who outright rejected the existence of God and the deists who rejected the revealed religion as a superfluous burden on the shoulders of the religion of reason alone<sup>59</sup>. The first chapter of the first section, *The Existence of God*, begins with tales about a Dutch merchant, van der Graven, who, as it were, brought a clock into a Chinese port for the first time. Along with the public's general admiration for the assumed master of this quite perfect mechanism (let us remember the significance of the clock model in teleological reasoning of the Enlightenment), there were also some who insisted that the magical device for determining the time had appeared by itself (literally, "purely by chance" – *aus blossem Ohngefähr*). Then a certain disciple of Confucius finds such a suggestion to be completely incompatible with rationality and dismisses it. However, some who have a mind similar to these people are presently quite influential in Europe and insist on an "anonymous" origin of the universe which is no less complex (to say the least) and regularly arranged than a clock mechanism. They are not troubled by the impossibility of an "accidental" arrangement of the most harmonious human body as a whole, or of the organ of sight in particular, or of the regular change of seasons, or of the movements of the heavenly bodies. The author ends the

<sup>57</sup> Schroeder, "Has Science Discovered God?"

<sup>58</sup> We come close but we do not fully come to it, since the very departing point of the process depicted above, i.e. living beings' memories of what is pleasant and unpleasant stirred by Īśvara, along with memories of corresponding objects, refers to a preceding world period where these impressions could have been accumulated, that period being preceded by an earlier one, etc. up to beginninglessness of these periods, and this, certainly, prevents us from talking about creation in the real sense.

<sup>59</sup> On von Storchenau, see: Shokhin, "The Pioneering Appearances of Philosophy of Religion in Europe".

chapter with arguments against any sort of materialism, beginning with Greek atomism<sup>60</sup>. So we have a full-fledged didactic story concluded with an exhortation addressed to the general public and aiming at persuading the reader.

I am sure that Anthony Flew was not aware of Sigmund von Storchenau's existence, but his appeal to the audience after his conversion from atheism to 'Aristotelean theism' which produced a fierce reaction from his former "confederates" (again, led by Richard Dawkins) has much in common with Storchenau's exhortation. He himself called his story a parable. He opens the second part of his "bomb" entitled *There is a God. How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (2006) with an imaginary picture wherein a cell phone is washed ashore on a remote island inhabited by a tribe that has never had contact with modern civilization. Common natives of the island, while playing with the numbers on the dial pad and hearing different voices, come to conclusion that it is the device that makes these noises. And this "hypothesis" was confirmed by the scientists on the island. But the tribal sage summoned the scientists for a discussion. He thought long and hard on the matter and reached another conclusion, i.e., that the voices coming through the instrument must be coming from people like themselves, living and conscious although speaking in another language, and so he invited the native scientists to meditate on it. But they simply laughed at him and argued that when one damages the instrument, the voices stop coming; therefore the latter are nothing else than sounds produced by a unique combination of lithium and printed circuit boards. Flew concluded that this parable illustrates the well-known fact how much some "receipted theories" are capable of preventing people from accepting the truth<sup>61</sup>. Certainly, Flew's parable challenges not only materialists but all those who are fond of "encapsulating" their minds. However, in the first place it addresses physicalists hating any attempt to widen their naturalistic horizon. Obviously Flew was much more pessimistic than his remote predecessor in whose plot the sage became a winner. This is understandable, bearing in mind that Storchenau wrote at a time when the belief in the power of reason was still strong.

## Concluding Remarks

While *natural theology* and *philosophical theology* are not synonymous, we can establish two correlations between them. From an historical point of view, as it is within the focus of this paper, the first species of *rational theology* can be considered a narrow circle that could, in some sense, fit into a second one. But there is a 'qualitative' difference between the two theologies besides being 'quantitative'. Scott MacDonald was right on the whole, as was alluded above, in his differentiating between justificatory functions of the first and justificatory-cum-clarificatory of the second one. Certainly, it relates predominantly to the contemporary *philosophical theology* that could also take the *metatheological* burden on its shoulders (although we witnessed some elements of it also in Antiquity, e.g., Sextus Empiricus' discussion of the methods of theological discourse mentioned above). And I believe that the very issue of a correlation between logic and imagery in the development of theological arguments may be resolved on the ground of *philosophical theology*. The main reason is that its philosophical particularity is more appropriate for methodological reflection than other species of rational theology (including fundamental theology, along with natural theology) responsible predominantly for defending coherence and advantages of theistic world-explanation and repudiation of opposing views<sup>62</sup>.

All three levels of "figurativeness" now prove not only suitable but even necessary for the elaboration of the teleological argument, also known as the "argument from analogy." Basic illustrative analogies between artificial and natural things *au point de vue* of their production open the vista for the reception of the argument from design to a broad audience. Brilliant in its strength of persuasion, the Ciceronean argument as a whole class of *reductio ad absurdum* species has been very annoying for various kinds of naturalism (be it "old atheism", "new atheism", the newest one etc.). In contrast, full narratives in the

<sup>60</sup> Storchenau, *Die Philosophie der Religion*, 5-7.

<sup>61</sup> Flew, Varghese, *There is a God*, 85-86.

<sup>62</sup> It does not mean, certainly, that methodological reflection should be a 'goal-in-itself', as seen in some prominent trends of continental philosophy (see footnote 4), because, in contrary, methodology is a tool for obtaining concrete results.

shape of parables aim not so much at challenging an opponent with an argumentative weapon, but rather at providing him with a mirror where he can see his world-view from without. Flew's story, however pessimistic in its outcome, appears as a small *chef d'oeuvre* in its own way.

It goes without saying that one could be ready to discover still more numerous examples of "visual aids" within the framework of the argument from design, because reasoning from analogies is in its very core<sup>63</sup>. But has this argument been the only one wherein these "visual aids" could be deployed? The answer should be resolutely: No. Think only of the well-known witty parody of Gaunilo of Marmoutiers (fl. 11<sup>th</sup> century) of the still more famous ontological argument of Anselm of Canterbury, to wit that from the first premise, i.e., that one can conceive an idea of a lost island than which no greater, more pleasant and luxurious can be conceived, and from the second one, i.e., that it is greater to exist in reality than in thought only. One should infer that the island under discussion should exist also in reality. It is again a classical *argumentum ad absurdum* in a short-cut narrative fashion, and given that it is not as indisputable as in the case of indicating insurmountable ontological break between atoms of a typography set of types and a literary composition (inasmuch as whatever great island we could imagine, still a greater one can be imagined as well, in opposition to the most perfected Being). It does not miss the aimed target, i.e., the flight (*der Flug*, as Kant put it) from what could be thought of and what does truly exist. In any event, Gaunilo's narrative argument lies in the cradle of the richest controversy around Anselm's argument. I believe that his critique of the ontological argument might have influenced also Aquinas' and Duns Scotus' criticisms of it. The argument persists even to these days by the reason of its provocativeness for presenting and solving ontological problems (the correlation between mental and empirical realities being among the most important issues). So we find ourselves only at the beginning of investigating illustrative argumentation in philosophical theology. Many more discoveries still await us.

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<sup>63</sup> Once again, one can remember Bentley's note that not only ancient but also modern authors used *reductio ad absurdum* fashion of this argument with references to *Annales* and *Aenid*, but the said is relevant to all three kinds of controversial narratives.

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