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NATURAL THEOLOGY OF HERMAN SAMUEL REIMARUS

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Abstract: Hermann Samuel Reimarus, an eighteenth-century German philologist and theologian, authored in the last two decades of his life fairly popular works on physico-theology. He proposed two proofs for the existence of God, a version of cosmological proof in which he rather ineptly struggled with the problem of infinity, and physico-theological proof in which he focused on the world of animals – animal anatomy, physiology, and the animal way of life – to show that without the assumption of God as the Creator the phenomena in the animal world cannot be meaningfully explained. Such investigations were important for Reimarus for eschatological reasons, although he did not discuss in any depth human eschatological prospects.

Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) was an eighteenth-century German philologist and theologian. In 1714, he studied theology, philosophy, and philology in the University of Jena, and in 1716, he studied in Wittenberg where he received a doctorate in 1719. In 1723, he became a Privatdozent in Wittenberg and a rector in the Große Stadtschule in Wismar. In 1727, he became a professor of oriental languages in the

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Akademisches Gymnasium in Hamburg¹. An active philology scholar, Reimarus turned in the last two decades of his life to theology, particularly, to physico-theology as a means of proving the existence of God with the particular emphasis placed on the use of the human reason according to the dictates of the times of the Enlightenment. He offered, basically, two proofs, one is a version of cosmological proof, another is a physico-theological proof.

The proof from the finitude of the universe

Whence the world? Whence the human race? The existence of the two can be explained by a resort to infinity: the world is eternal; it has always existed and so did the human race. In Greek philosophy, the eternity of the world was claimed at least by Empedocles, the Peripatetics, the Stoics, and, in a way, the atomists. Some speak about the infinity of the human race, which would be an infinity of human cause-effect chains. However, the concept of an infinite chain “does not include the sufficient reason of things that come into being,” since the explanation of causes is constantly delayed and none is eventually given (VW 10)², said Reimarus. And what of it, an advocate of the eternity of humankind may ask? Wouldn't the problem of the sufficient reason in the face of this eternity simply disappear?

In all this, Reimarus very seriously struggled with the problem of infinity. In his view, no number and nothing countable can be infinite

¹ J.G. Meusel, *Lexikon der vom Jahr 1750 bis 1800 verstorbenen teutschen Schriftsteller*, vol. 11, Leipzig 1811, p. 128–132; J.D. Winckler, *Nachrichten von Niedersächsischen berühmten Leuten und Familien*, vol. 2, Hamburg 1769, p. 382–396; Joh[ann] Alb[ert] Hinr[ich] Reimarus [Reimarus' son], *Vorerinnerung des Herausgebers vom Dasein Gottes und der menschlichen Seele*, in: H.S. Reimarus, *Abhandlungen von den vornehmsten Wahrheiten der natürlichen Religion*, Tübingen 1781, p. 1–56.

² References are made to the following books of Reimarus:

- A *Angefangene Betrachtungen über die besondern Arten der thierischen Kunsttriebe*. Hamburg 1773.
- KS *Kleine gelehrte Schriften, Vorstufen zur Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, Göttingen 1794.
- TT *Allgemeine Betrachtungen über die Triebe der Thiere, hauptsächlich über ihre Kunsttriebe zum Erkenntniß des Zusammenhanges der Welt, des Schöpfers und unser selbst*, Hamburg 1762² [1760].
- V *Die Vernunftlehre, als eine Anweisung zum richtigen Gebrauche der Vernunft in dem Erkenntniß der Wahrheit, aus zwoen ganz natürlichen Regeln der Einstimmung und des Widerspruchs hergeleitet*, Hamburg 17663 [1756].
- VW *Die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der natürlichen Religion in zehn Abhandlungen auf eine begreifliche Art erklärt und gerettet*, Hamburg 1766³ [1754].

since no number can be imagined that cannot be made larger (VW 19), even if it is done an infinite number of times and because of the constant possibility of such enlargement, the process can never be completed (20). The conclusion is unjustified. Why cannot such an enlargement be completed? Surely, not in the human mind, but why not in the divine mind, the mind which is infinite? No number – and Reimarus seems to mean natural numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. – is infinite, but how about the size/cardinality of the set of all these numbers? No elaborate set theory is needed to ask this question, which Reimarus did not ask.

What exists, says Reimarus, must have some determination (Bestimmung), must be an entity of certain number and size, so, for each number and line, a larger number and line can be imagined (VW 21), and thus, there is no infinite line and so no infinite sequence of ancestors going into the past. In this, by definition, Reimarus limited himself to the finitude since really existing lines must be of determined, which is for him, *finite* length. It appears that even a potential infinity is rejected, since an infinite line proposed by geometry would be of an indefinite length. Maybe for this reason Reimarus, without much elaboration, stated that the infinity used in mathematics is useless and can even lead to errors (18) or, at best, it can be but a metonymic infinity, a manner of speaking that, say, a number is infinite (KS 215).

In his words, “that which can always be extended is not infinite, and precisely because it can be multiplied to infinity, it can never become infinite, but is and will always be finite”. So, no sequence in the world is infinite, including time when it increases, so the world must be in temporal limits since years cannot be extended into infinity, but are always given by a specific number. Otherwise, this would be thinking that before all real years there was unreal time, so the world is not eternal (VW 159–160). In this, it is assumed that no completion of infinite extension is possible, but, metaphysically, it would be just as justified to say that what cannot be extended is infinite. And in the Reimarus universe, this would not be an empty statement. After all, God’s intellect is infinite (165). However, an unsubstantiated claim is made that there is only one infinity (210). Couldn’t there be two infinite lines? Not in reality, although, presumably, on theoretical level, geometry may permit this. This may be the reason why Reimarus claimed that using mathematical infinity may lead to errors. Two infinite lines can, theoretically, exist, but not in reality. This is a tacit acceptance of Aristotle’s permission of the potential infinity

but not actual infinity, at least, not outside the divine Being. And thus, because infinity exists only in God, the world is limited both temporally and also spatially; it is not eternal but neither can the number of finite existing things be infinite (592). Wouldn't such a claim impose a limitation on God's omnipotence?

Another proof of the non-eternity of the world states that no nation considers itself eternal and the true history of any nation does not go further than the Mosaic history (VW 33). Moreover, the more we go into the past the fewer people are on earth, whereby we finally can reach the origin of humankind (57). This common origin is also indicated by the connections between languages (58) and the linguistic knowledge of Reimarus' times strongly suggested the existence of the common ground of languages in the past. The third indicator of the common origin of mankind is the gradual growth of arts and sciences (63). 4000 years ago, humans were "raw and inexperienced" (64). Consider a relatively recent import of various fruit trees to Europe from other continents. Does it mean that in an infinite past no such import of tasty fruits took place and that people made some improvements only recently (67)? Some say there were catastrophes – floods, fires, and the like – and possibly only a small number of people survived or the human race had to be recreated (69). However, neither history, experience, nor reason can confirm such repetitive events (70). There would have to be infinitely many such catastrophes. Also, the number of births in the infinite past would be larger than the number of such catastrophes, but "one infinity cannot be smaller than another [infinity]" (71).

The proof from the harmonization of forces

Even if the universe existed from eternity, there would be a need for an overseeing intelligent power. Reimarus defined nature as the essential power of any real substance (VW 196). And so, in Reimarus' universe, the sun, moon, stars, minerals, plants, animals, each speck in the world has its particular nature, its particular power to act, so there is not just one force that acts in the world (197). This could easily result in a chaotic universe. Therefore, all these frequently contrary forces have to be wisely reconciled and harmonized making the world into a unity and are maintained in this state (198). This is true, in fact, about any compound entities, so that, for example, in the growing body of a fetus, various blind forces of various parts have to be coordinated by the divine force

(601). This reconciliation of all forces is necessary since 1) the forces of matter just like matter itself are lifeless and blind; 2) these forces depend on the neighboring forces; 3) all forces in the world are connected with one another (200); thus; 4) there is an order between parts of the world set before their creation; 5) all rules of forces (201) are conditional, not necessary; 6) miscreations, such as conjoined twins (cf. 452), natural disasters, and the like, show us that in natural order everything is possible, that there is a rule for bringing accidents; thus, the rules of nature are not absolutely necessary (203). In this, it appears that Reimarus did allow an element of randomness in the universe, orderly randomness, as it were. The existence of what may commonly be considered miscreations, Reimerus apparently considered as deliberately inserted into the universe by the Creator to show that no natural forces are absolute, and thus, they can be undermined by breaking the rules that determine their actions by the Creator to show that He is in control of these rules even if humans would misinterpret such intervention as a stroke of randomness. That is, what is unpredictable to humans, is under full control of the Creator who uses super rules that control randomness.

In this, Reimarus contradicted himself by not allowing miracles in the universe. Miracles “run contrary to the workings of God, to the efforts and rules of the active forces of nature” (VW 587). The more miracles God would perform after creation of the world, the more He would destroy nature, thereby showing that He had created it for nothing, did not preserve it, and either He would not have seen a possible natural means to be used for His purposes or He would have often changed His purpose and worked against His own influence to preserve nature (588). Reimarus apparently considered miracles as divine attempts to patch up the world with ad hoc decisions to suspend its natural laws to avoid unwelcome and unforeseen situations. He did not consider a possibility that God could have foreseen from eternity all miracles He would want to perform in the world to come just as He foresaw the workings of natural laws³. After all, Reimarus acknowledged the theological fact that it would belie God’s infinite wisdom if something happened unbeknown to Him (575). The reality of the world depends on God’s will; nothing accidental can happen that was not before in God’s intellect who thought about all possibilities of all reality, which very well would include all miraculous

³ Cf. W. Büttner, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus als Metaphysiker*, Paderborn 1909, p. 143.

events (576). Incidentally, Reimarus sometimes forgot his theoretical stance and prayed, for instance, for peace in Germany, for which he also expressed his gratitude, and he prayed for progress in Germany in various arts.⁽⁴⁾ Wouldn't it have been the cry of his heart for miracles?

The proof from design

The strongest argument Reimarus proposed was a traditionally used argument from design.

Atomists proposed that the accidental movement of atoms after many trials and errors resulted into well-organized clusters of matter which were parts of organisms or entire organisms. In the animal body there are millions of parts of various kinds which form a harmonious whole which infinitely surpasses human inventiveness, cleverness, intellect, and wisdom if it attempted to put together such a body. It is thus absurd to think that such an organism could arise by accident; it would be like thinking that Virgil's *Aeneid* could arise from an accidental toss of letters (115). It is assessed that 24 letters of the Latin alphabet can be ordered in 1000 quintillion ways⁵, but the number of different orderings of 363,780 letters of the *Aeneid* is practically infinite in comparison with the number of orderings of 24 letters⁶. But what is the number of letters in the *Aeneid* in comparison with the number of particles in an animal body? in comparison with all particles in the world (116, 126)? How can an accident create all this order (117)? Trial and error can hardly account for such an order. Both small and large animals have perfect bodies in which there is no redundant part (126), but they all together are suitable for a particular kind of life. Taking this kind of life as goal, there must be a rule which is the ground of harmony of the variety of parts of animal bodies (127).

Generally speaking, no life was originally generated by natural means (131), that is, nature is not the first self-standing being (132), but it comes

⁴ H. Köstlin, *Das religiöse Erleben bei H.S. Reimarus und J.S. Semler*, Borna – Leipzig 1919, p. 36, 72; cf. the possibility of prayer for God's assistance and help (VW 715).

⁵ 1000 quintillion = 10^{33} ; to be precise, the number of permutations of 24 letters can be expressed with the factorial function, $24! \approx 6 \cdot 10^{23}$, much less than 10^{33} , but still an impressively large number.

⁶ $363,780! \approx 3 \cdot 10^{1,864,937}$, 3 followed by nearly 2 million zeros; in comparison, the number of atoms in the observable universe which consists of billions of galaxies each of which containing up to billions of stars is assessed to be ca. 10^{80} . Incidentally, in this thought experiment some design is already present since it is assumed that among 363,780 letters there is already an exact number of each letter needed to generate the *Aeneid*.

from a truly first self-standing being. Matter is lifeless (133). Material bodies do not multiply themselves, do not grow, have no senses, do not move at will (138), they always move by the same rules (139). Life requires at least sensation/feeling (*Empfindung*) (140). The world is a big lifeless machine brought into being by a living being (141). The material world is controlled by mechanical forces and “there is no mechanical force in the whole world that can put the infinite number of scattered physical primary substances in order and harmony in an organic body, or ensoul it, and that can impart powers of imagination and voluntary inclinations to the soul”; hence, animals, at least the first animals, have been created supernaturally (TT 362–363). Thus, the source of harmoniousness of the world is of supernatural origin; it comes from God.

The design of animals

In Reimarus’ view, “there is nothing which brings us to a nearer path of self-knowledge, which so clearly reveals the plan of the entire creation and the context of the visible world and contains obvious traces of the wisdom, goodness, and care of the Creator than the investigation of animals and their inborn instincts (*Kunsttriebe*)” (TT 361). From among all aspects of the natural world, the animal world – not even the human world, the presumed crown of creation – is the best choice for an investigation to detect the presence and action of God in the world.

There is an extraordinary variety in the world of animals to mention only the variety in size from a whale to a living speck of dust, variety in form, makeup, the kind of motion, and of procreation. The makeup is fitting each kind; if some body parts, say, eyes, between animals of different kind were switched, the animals would die (VW 322). This is hardly the result of a cosmic accident.

As to the kinds of animal motion, Reimarus distinguished four broad categories: walking, flying, swimming, and crawling (A 85), and then proposed a more detailed classification: special motion takes place I. on the solid ground: 1. with the body not coming from the ground at the same time: 1) on one plane: (1) footless animals. Crawling: a) using small curve (snails), b) with left and right bending (snakes), c) by contraction (earthworm), and seven more subcategories follow (86); (2) two-feet animals: a) forwards, sometimes backwards: (a) on the entire sole, (b) on foot balls and toes; b) unnatural: (a) on the heels, (b) on hands and feet, (c) on hands alone, (d) interchangeably (87), and

so on, with some 40 more categories to follow. He did not stop there, he also tried to describe in detail some of these motions. For example, the movement of a snail can be observed when a snail is put on glass. "Then we will notice that, in particular on the edge of the sole, the movement is wavy and proceeds in small arcs from the rear part to the foremost part" (91). And in more detail: "An elongated body, which is to move forward in waves, must naturally begin its movement from the rump; so that [as shown on a diagram] F advances to C, and describes an arc F G E, so then E advances further up to D, and describes a second arc E G D, bringing the part F E back to the straight line (94). And so, one can further think/see that D approaches C, again C approaches B and finally B approaches A in arcs, until A can now stretch forward, and thus, a single step of the whole animal is ended; since meanwhile a new step is already starting from the rump" (95).

The makeup of organs of animal bodies provides only the possibility of motion of a particular kind (VW 374). The art and skill of how to use these organs are not corporeal, they are the result of the acting of an Intellect that is the Master of mechanics (375). Animals act by their instincts (323), which determine their skills and all these skills are necessary for the animal wellbeing and are perfect in their kind. There are so many kinds of animals and of their skills and each animal is a born artist and master in the use of its skills. Animals know how to move, how to use all their body parts, they perfectly know their kinds of food and how to get it, and some know ways of healing their wounds or illness (324). They know how to prepare their habitation according to "the skillful fissure stamped on their soul" (325). When metamorphosis is part of their life cycle, they know the time and seek proper place for the next phase. They know their enemies and how to use their weapons, and they maintain population balance so that only overflowing population is lost (326; A 150). And so, predators do not wipe out any kind of animals and keep their number in some limits and in proper proportion with other animals. Why even do such animals exist? Predators are necessary and are part of variety of life in nature. However, the Creator set for them narrow limits. And so, the strongest predators like lions multiply very slowly, and they prey on their own kind and other kinds (VW 397, 647). Some limits put on them are in form of their need to hibernate in winter or in a long time needed to digest their booty (397); some can endure hunger very well for a long time, and some can turn to plant food. Also, the potential victims are

often endowed with defense mechanisms (378). Incidentally, humans should not complain about the existence of predators or any harmful animals since humans are the most dangerous beings (645).

Animals can communicate with one another, for social animals, they know their place and fulfill well their duties (VW 326). They know how to procreate and how to care for their offspring. Their ways are fixed so that when their work is disturbed, it can be fatal (327). When from a misguided desire to help animals, their environment is changed (328), that can be harmful to animals (330).

Instincts allow an animal to execute an action (VW 336) not yet experienced and they are working perfectly after the first try, without any instruction (TT 159). A newborn spider makes a web that it did not make before nor does it know anything about flies to be caught by it (VW 337): “the spider weaves its net, antlion (Ameis[en]löwe) digs hole before it tried how gnats and flies taste, well, even before it knows that such insects exist in the world” (TT 250). Some instincts become active in a particular age, always working perfectly (TT 166). If organs develop at a particular age, no learning is needed to use them properly (168). Many animals do some tasks only once in their lifetime and yet do it without any learning. Experience does not count; spiders do their future webs not better nor faster than at the beginning (VW 338). This is an expression of God’s wisdom and care: the life of many animals is so short that there would not be enough time for them to learn all necessary skills from experience (343).

Perfect as their skills are, animals can be mistaken in the execution of their instincts, but this seldom happens (TT 180). Animals do not try to develop new skills beyond the ones determined by instincts (VW 342). No new instincts can be acquired, but the existing instincts can be redirected by training, although new skills developed that way are not needed for animals (TT 184). Also, the instincts of animals of a particular kind are the same in various countries and generations (158).

Not only are animals, so to speak, saturated with purposefulness in every fiber of their physical and mental being, but so are their surroundings. Each plant is associated with a particular kind of animal through its smell and taste to serve these animals as food and, thus, viewed as machines, plants serve living beings (VW 172). “And anyone who wants to know the world and what kind of thing it is must include these uses for the living beings in explaining it and in its essential con-

cept, because it contains the basis of all the properties of the world, and even holds of all nature and mechanical laws of motion; otherwise he knows no more about the world than the Hottentot knows about the clock” (173). All these properties and usages have been providentially determined by God.

God and man

If nothing was eternal, things would come out of nothing. If nothing were necessary, all that is could be or not be, could have these properties or others. If nothing were self-standing, every entity’s existence would depend on something else, but the first ground would not exist. Thus, there must exist a self-standing, necessary being (VW 3). It must also be only one such being since it is simply necessary and other beings originate from it. This is not nature (4), but God who is also unchangeable (208), infinite (209) and almighty (213). There is the One (Eins) which has the sufficient ground of everything else, i.e., which determines what everything else is and what cannot be (142). God is the One, otherwise, there would be some difference between multiple divinities in thought, in ability, in willing; thus, how could it be said about the God who lacks certain thought that another divinity has that He is infinite? “Infinity is not only one but also unique” (210). So, the uniqueness of God rests on the uniqueness of infinity. Why are there not two infinities? No argument is provided.

If anything has been made, it was made for a reason, with a purpose in mind. The act of creating presupposes the intelligence of the creating agent and the purpose germinated in the mind of this agent. It would be a contradiction to make something but not its purpose. This purpose must be determined to understand the physical perfection of various entities and provide the sufficient ground why particular natural powers and their rules exist (VW 145).

Without an efficient cause we cannot think about the emergence of anything (VW 8), so the Creator becomes the first efficient cause (223), but, in a way efficient causes are of secondary importance. “The efficient causes of things are set on account of the final causes and are the means through which the final causes become a reality, so the final causes hold in themselves the ground of the efficient [causes] and must be thought of first before it can be rationally grasped that the efficient causes were set in motion and why they were so created or according to

what rules” (TT 380)⁷. Efficient causes are connected with final causes and the entire harmony of things comes from one source of perfection and wisdom (VW 205). This source, God, determines final causes and uses efficient causes to actualize the final causes, to actualize His creative purposes.

God’s design transpires from every detail in the universe. The larger question is, why create this world? In Reimarus’ view, God did not create the world on account of Himself. “Accordingly, it is only actually from the living beings of all kinds that God took the motive for creation, because they were capable of inner perfection, pleasure, and happiness, and because God took pleasure in giving reality/existence out of his infinite fullness to the beings that could live outside of him, and imparting as much perfection and happiness as any kind, in connection of things, could bear” (VW 216). Since God enjoys eternal, infinite, and unchangeable pleasure and happiness (212), then it appears that God wanted to spread happiness and He could have done it only by creating something outside of Himself, the material and spiritual world filled with life and reasonableness found in intelligent beings, in humans on earth and in inhabitants of other celestial bodies, including the sun (177)⁸. Also, because “God took pleasure” in creating the world, He did it for Himself as well and in this act of creation lies God’s infinite power, goodness, and wisdom (218).

God does not want to remain hidden. He wants to be known and nature itself is the way of knowing Him and His attributes. In particular, the variety of the world of animals is inexhaustible, so full of new proofs of an infinite wisdom and goodness that rule in nature. Nature “teaches me to better know God, the world, and myself and to apply this knowledge to my happiness” (VW 313). Efficient causes are not understandable by themselves, but they lead to a question, why they act, whereby the natural science points to a higher science with which it has to be connected. Does anyone know the nature of animals if he, for

⁷ So, in particular, an explanation of the workings of a machine only in terms of mechanical causes would be insufficient if its purpose were not explained. “Without the consideration of its utility according to certain ends, a being is not a machine, but a material aggregate at best,” C. Le duc, *Reimarus on natural religion, final causation and mechanism*, „*Studia Leibnitiana*”, 50(2018), p. 113.

⁸ There is no reason to consider the sun and the stars to be “burning pool of sulfur and dead seas”. They are rather electrifying/electrical machines emitting light and warmth without burning and becoming too hot and thus inhabitable (VW 177).

instance, only knows that a spider weaves a spiderweb (296), knows the makeup of animal bodies but not why parts of the body are configured in a particular way and what is their function? Also, we don't know our own nature well enough if we don't know why the Creator made us in a particular way, whereby we may have wrong ideas about our own happiness and have hopeless prospect for the afterlife if we don't have before our eyes God's designs (297).

As to humans, although they can draw pleasure from their senses, whereby, by God's design, sensory pleasure becomes a part of human happiness (VW 533)⁹, sensory pleasures are not the only ones important for humans (537). "The inner contentment arises in humans not from money and fame by themselves, but from the awareness of wisdom and virtue with which the two have been earned and used" (540). Humans are not satisfied with something that does not fill the intellect with important truths and does not fill the will with virtue (541). "We, humans, are alone on the face of the earth who have an ability and desire to investigate the makeup and causes of things, and to penetrate from ourselves and from the animate and inanimate nature to the first invisible cause, to the most perfect infinite being, on which everything depends, and to draw pleasure from this knowledge". Sensory pleasure has its limits. Knowledge can always carry the soul farther; the pleasure grows with the growth of knowledge (550). Sensory pleasure is transitory, knowledge is lasting (551). True, not everyone is a scholar (552), but everyone can reason as the scholars do (553), since all people have the same intellectual endowment. People have an inborn ability to form general concepts from individual things (TT 347), just as they have an ability to develop grammar and speech: "Children also create a natural grammar for themselves, thanks to reflection and insight into the similarity of word inflections, word formations, and idioms, and learn to understand and speak a language correctly according to a vague insight into the rules". This regular reflection is a natural skill (348), in which we can see a forerunner of Chomsky's linguistic competence and the universal grammar. "We also have ... a natural grammar, natural logic, natural hermeneutics, natural basic science, natural art of measurement, etc., that is, we have a disposition to this or that art or science that is

⁹ And thus, it is an exaggerated holiness among Christians to consider as sin any pleasure in the world (TT 77).

closely/firmly based on human nature, whether general or specific. A more precise determination of our soul powers for particular artistic effectiveness, or artistry, is not present in our nature” (356). Thus, people can observe and learn things frequently unaware that they can apply their abilities to a much wider extent than they do. They can read to sharpen their mind. Nothing is more useful, more comprehensible, and more pleasant than the investigation of the wisdom and goodness of God in His works (VW 554). For humans, the rational knowledge of God, of the world, and of one’s own nature gives the rational pleasure of the will of any perfection (555). “Man is born for rational contentment and love. The more he recognizes, seeks, loves, enjoys his and other things’ perfection, as it brings the interconnection in the world, the happier he is” (560). Again, man is born for love and who acts cordially toward others, he acts according to his nature (764).

“I am still talking about the human being, considered without religion, to show that we are far from doing justice to our nature, with all reason and virtue, if we do not rise to the knowledge of the supreme Being and his intentions. Because just as little the intellect without this knowledge can find the sufficient reason and connection of all things and the perfection that rules in the world: just as little will our will become without respect, love and veneration of our Creator and especially without trust in his wise and good providence, and without the hope of a perfect, imperishable life to which he destined us” (VW 573–574). So, clearly, God destined humans not only to reach at least some level of happiness in this life, but also in the afterlife, which, of course, is possible, if the core of the human being, the soul, survives the death of its hosting body. Does it?

The immortality of the soul and the afterlife

There is no doubt that the soul exists. The ego (das Ich) is distinguished from other entities by a feeling in a particular body; this includes sensory feelings (VW 432); thus, “the entire body, up to the outermost skin” constitute the ego; this includes the parts of the body which are not directly felt, like bones, but are connected to the parts which can be felt (433). The body evolves, its particles are constantly being replaced, and some body parts may be missing. It is obvious that it is not really the body, but rather the being that is conscious of itself in the body that makes up the human being and the individual self (434). “It is obvious

that it is not really the body, but rather the essence that is conscious of itself in the body that makes up the human being and our individual ego” (440), in a word, the soul, a substance that is the same during all changes of the body and is self-aware (447, 450). By definition, the soul is immortal since substance is something that remains the same in variety of changes; otherwise, it is an accident (446, cf. 695). Traditionally, the fact that the soul is simple, not compound, was used as an argument for its immortality since, as simple, it cannot be decomposed, although a possibility was allowed that it could be annihilated by God.

The soul is simple since it is aware in one place, which is the head (VW 489), of the body of what is afoot in various body parts. Moreover, if it were compound, each part would be self-aware, which would amount to multiple souls; also, multiple parts of the soul could not be self-aware in one part (VW 459). “The body is given to the soul as a mirror, so to speak, in which it can recognize itself, the world and the Creator; the soul is not dependent on the mirror” (462). The soul is an incorporeal entity since the properties and actions of the soul cannot be explained with corporeal properties (468), concepts, judgments, and conclusions cannot be explained by points, lines, angles, degrees, and figures; pleasure and pain, love and hatred cannot be explained by mechanics (469).

Apparently, the existence of the soul as a purely spiritual being is not ideal for it, since it needs organs to receive sensory impulses; thus, after death, the soul is maintained by God for eternity as a *perpetuum cogitans et vivens* (VW 696) and, being a simple substance, it is connected after death with aethereal particles, particles of light, through which it will see much more clearly than it does now (698).

The immortality of the soul is derived also from God’s wisdom and goodness. Nothing is in vain in nature. All the advantages God gave humans would be in vain if there were no future, no better life (VW 709). The earth is our first home, a school in which we learn the basic foundation of sciences to be led later to higher things and “as the small foretaste of the truths we can already have a sweet idea of how we will one day in the kingdom of light look with enlightened eyes at the whole of nature and all the divine mysteries that are still hidden from us” (710).

On a similar note: human desires always go beyond the reached goal and extend into infinity (VW 566). Such desires would be in vain if they

could not be fulfilled, and so, God allows for these desires as indications that there is an afterlife.

What can people expect in the afterlife? We learn from Reimarus very little about the eschatological prospects. “There must come a time when the good conduct of men, like good seed, will grant the richer fruit and harvest, and evil, like weeds, will choke and destroy. A different life must follow, when the faithfulness of the pious, proven through many temptations, will bring them to their right perfection and to the full enjoyment of their fruits, and when they will also be differentiated from the evil through the consequences and retribution of their wickedness” (VW 721). There are rewards in the afterlife and there are also punishments. Rewards will be in the increase of intellectual satisfaction, but what about punishments? They might be of some intellectual kind – dimming a person’s intellectual perspicuity, making recollection of logic rules harder, and the like – or, because the soul will be clothed with an aethereal body, maybe some kind of bodily punishment, say, sensory deprivation. In any event, the deeds in this life do count and will be following people into the next life. So, people should act according to their nature and virtues are human nature more fitting than vices (VW 564–565) and God did implant in humans the noble faculty of reason for them to be led to truth, virtue, and religion (TT 258).

Fuzzy as the knowledge of the afterlife can be, Reimarus tried to make it sure that the virtuous life will be appreciably rewarded there and vices will meet with less welcome consequences. All of it hinges upon the belief in God and His attributes, so people should get to know God. God revealed Himself in nature. He would not have done it if people should not have part in His eternal goods (VW 719). It appears that physico-theology is the best approach to discover God through the investigation of nature and people should use their intellectual abilities to the best level possible. Not everyone has to be a professional scientist; there is enough that can be discovered in nature for every person with a modicum of attention. Reimarus himself was not a naturalist; he provided in his books a great deal of information about the natural world, particularly the animal world, but all of it came from published observations and experiments by various recognized scholar. Occasionally, Reimarus referred to his own observations (e.g., VW 421, 467), but they were of the kind that were accessible to everyone without any special instru-

ments (the microscope, in particular), as, for instance, watching a spider weaving its web. In his approach, Reimarus joined physico-theology that flourished in the eighteenth century for which he had very good model to follow, his colleague and father-in-law, Johann Albert Fabricius, who himself authored three physico-theological synopses: hydro-theology, pyro-theology, and aero-theology¹⁰.

Christianity

Most physico-theological treatises of the time are very generous with Biblical quotations and frequent doxological phrases and paragraphs. There is very little of it in Reimarus' books¹¹. Several verses are quoted in the context of a linguistic interpretation of κτίσις (V 276–278), a series of verses are given to show in what respect animals can teach people Bible verses (TT 376–378, also 46). More interestingly, Christ is mentioned just once in a noncommittal manner (V 277), and Christianity is mentioned only as something to be built on top of natural religion: to accept revelation a person should first believe that God exists (VW Vorbericht [2–3]). This reticence to refer to the Scripture and to Christianity is not an accident. Reimarus left behind some 2000 pages of an *Apology*¹², many fragments of which have been posthumously published, in which he very viciously attacked Christianity and the Scripture frequently proposing mean-spirited interpretations by which he rejected most of what Christianity and Judaism stand for. The Bible is rejected as filled with inventions, distortions deception, and fabrications. There are no miracles, all miracles are results of superstitions beliefs, erroneous interpretations, or outright tricks. To see the profundity of Reimarus' analyses, consider the epiphany on the Mount Sinai: there

¹⁰ Accordingly, Reimarus' brand of physico-theology could be called zoo-theology, but it does not have a nice ring in English and animal-theology is not much better; maybe: faunal theology.

¹¹ In fact, "Reimarus completely dispenses with religious pathos and doxological phrases in which the Creator is praised in a highly emotional tone and [by which] the reader is urged to believe [in this Creator]", H. Petersen, *B.H. Brookes, J.A. Fabricius, H.S. Reimarus: Physikotheologie im Norddeutschland des 18. Jahrhunderts zwischen theologischer Erbauung und Wissensvermittlung*, PhD diss., Kiel 2004, p. 210–211; as stated in a more noncommittal manner, "The relation between reason and revelation remains in the "Vornehmnesten Wahrheiten" remarkably unclear, D. Klein, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768). Das theologische Werk*, Tübingen 2009, p. 249.

¹² D.F. Strauß, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus und seine Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, Leipzig 1862, p. 20.

was not any; the manifestation of God on the Sinai was due to Moses who burned bushes on this mountain and caused thunder with some kind of gunpowder and Joshua spoke through some kind of speaking pipe so that he was heard in the camp¹³. Christ's resurrection was just a deception; Reimarus accepted the rumor recorded in the Gospel that Christ's body was stolen except that there were no guards at the grave in spite of the Biblical report¹⁴.

Reimarus believed in God, but, in his mind, this was a rational belief. Such faith does not rely on miracles nor on prophecies. He spoke about faith as an acceptance of a testimony/report (V 252), but for him, there should be a rational foundation to accept something as true. Ungrounded acceptance of something, that is, faith, would be for him an epistemology for the poor, and, for him, the faith in Biblical reports belongs to this category. Raimarus' is a trust in human reason; never mind that reason can go awry, that mistakes have been and are being made, but reason prevails. This was called Vernunftfanatismus¹⁵, fanaticism concerning reason. However, this can be rephrased as trusting reason, faith in the reason, whereby faith is not quite eliminated from his epistemology. This faith in reason is really a true foundation, and by overlooking this, Reimarus hubristically elevated his approach over what he rather haughtily rejected. He spoke about "narrow limits of the intellect," and yet he made pronouncements about "an infinite field" of investigation (VW 246), although infinity cannot be comprehended with the finite human mind (KS 207). Would not that be a leap of faith? Faith requires "an outer wall and foundation" (VW Vorbericht [3]), but, apparently, so does intellect. He overrationalized rationality and saw as his theological obligation to set up a rational outer wall and foundation in his approach to fight against atheism to defend religion of one God the Creator who created the world out of love for His creation for which He providentially cares, the God who revealed Himself through nature for people to discover him to follow moral rules to be rewarded in the afterlife. Christians very easily could agree with this and with the process of winning over unbelievers. Already in the fourth century

¹³ H.S. Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, „Zeitschrift für historische Theologie“, 22(1852), p. 460.

¹⁴ [H.S. Reimarus], *Fragmente eines Wolfenbüttelschen Ungenannten*, Berlin 1784, p. 233–236.

¹⁵ Strauß, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus*, p. 283.

a bishop of Milan, Ambrose, a teacher of Augustine, wrote that “we should begin education [of unbelievers] with that one God is a creator of the whole world” and only afterwards pass to specifically Christian issues¹⁶. In that respect, the physico-theological image of God proposed by Reimarus is acceptable to Christian readers of his books as testified by the popularity of these books – several editions and translations – but only from the *Apology* would readers learn that Reimarus believed in a unitarian God who requires no Savior to atone for human sins. This is also reflected in his view of two books: traditionally, a book of nature and a book of grace are recognized as two sources of knowledge about God. Frequently, the book of grace – the sacredness of the Bible – was used primarily or exclusively as such a source, sometimes great weight was given to the book of nature as physico-theology did. Reimarus retained only the book of nature¹⁷ completely rejecting revelation recognized by Christians. In that respect, his approach can be considered an extreme expression of physico-theology by relying entirely on the observation of nature and reasoning to prove the existence of God and to specify His attributes, whereas most physico-theologians of Reimarus’ times considered physico-theology as a guide to and as an enhancement of scriptural revelation, to which almost invariably was given the primary authority.

TEOLOGIA NATURALNA HERMANNA SAMUELA REIMARUSA

Słowa kluczowe: Hermann Samuel Reimarus, fizyko-teologia, życie pozagrobowe.

Streszczenie: XVIII-wieczny filolog i teolog niemiecki, w ostatnich dwóch dekadach swojego życia napisał dość popularne prace z zakresu fizyko-teologii. Zaproponował dwa dowody na istnienie Boga, wersję dowodu kosmologicznego, w którym dość niesprawnie zmagął się z problemem nieskończoności, oraz dowód fizyko-teologiczny, w którym skupił się na anatomii i fizjologii zwierząt oraz na sposobach ich życia – by pokazać, że bez uznania Boga jako Stwórcy nie da się sensownie wyjaśnić zjawisk w świecie zwierzęcym. Takie badania były ważne dla Reimarususa ze względu na perspektywę eschatologiczną, chociaż nie omawiał jej dogłębnie.

¹⁶ Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* 6.104.

¹⁷ VW 252, 315, 753; [Reimarus], *Fragmente*, p. 129; “There are things in nature which become readable writing even for the simplest, from which they can and should learn something about God’s intellect and intention” (VW 249).

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