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Book and Author Luncheon on The Angels and Us

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1. I think I am able to anticipate the questions to which you would like answers.

I can do so because I have been asked them so many times by those who learned that I was writing a book about angels.

I wish I could say that they are all good questions, but that is not the case. Some of them should not have been asked; and some, as they are usually phrased, are downright silly.

There are, however, some good questions that I have not been asked. At the end, I will state these good questions for you and I will try to answer them.

2. One prefatory remark that throws light on all these questions.

Mine is the first purely philosophical book on angels that has ever been written; and, at the same time, it is concerned with the religious belief in angels and in the theological dimension of the subject.

3. In the light of what I have just said—that I wrote the book as a philosopher, not as a theologian, and as a pagan, not as a person of religious faith—the first question that I have been asked over and over again, is plainly inappropriate.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN ANGELS?

No, as a philosopher and as a pagan, I do not believe in angels. The reality of angels cannot be established by philosophical reasoning as, I think, the existence of God can be.

Let's change the question a little, to make it a better question:

DO MANY PEOPLE IN THIS DAY AND AGE BELIEVE IN ANGELS, AND IS THEIR BELIEF A REASONABLE—A DEFENSIBLE—BELIEF?

To that question, the answer is, *Yes, indeed!* A very large number—all who are orthodox in their Jewish, Christian, or Muslim beliefs.

Why do they believe in angels? Because, for them, Holy Scripture, the revealed word of God, in its many references to angels, is the basis of their belief.

Is their religious faith reasonable—defensible—against the skeptics and scoffers of the 20th century?

Yes, it most certainly is—and that is one of the main arguments in my book. The materialistic denial that angels are possible is completely groundless.

The materialist asserts that only bodies really exist.

That assertion, by the way, is
an assumption—a proposition that
has not and cannot be proved.

Since angels must be conceived as minds without bodies, the materialist then argues that angels must be impossible. They cannot exist. The inference is invalid. It does not follow. There is no ground whatsoever for asserting that angels are impossible.

4. Next question, asked again and again:

HOW MANY ANGELS CAN DANCE ON THE
HEAD OF A PIN?

That question was never asked by any serious theologian in the middle ages. It is one of those phony questions made up to mock the serious thought about angels in which mediaeval theologians engaged.

Angels—pure intellects—would not be so frivolous as to dance, and certainly not on the head of a pin, which is a poor place to dance if one wishes to do so.

Here the proper question, which should be asked and can be answered is:

IF ANGELS CAN ACT ON PHYSICAL BODIES BY THEIR
SPIRITUAL POWER, CAN TWO OR MORE ANGELS
EXERT SPIRITUAL POWER ON THE SAME BODY AT
THE SAME TIME?

The answer to that question is, No. Only one angel at a time.

Why? because the intensive or spiritual occupation of a physical place (the place occupied by a body) is just as exclusive as the extensive or material occupation of a place by the bulk of a body.

5. Now let me ask two good questions, questions that I wish I were asked by those who became acquainted with my book and its title:

First: WHY DID YOU WRITE A BOOK ABOUT
ANGELS?

Second: WHY DID YOU CALL IT "THE ANGELS AND
US"?

Answers:

My answer to the first is:

I wished to expose the error of materialists who, without sufficient grounds, deny the possibility of angels; and by doing so, I wished to show that the religious belief in angels is defensible.

My answer to the second is:

The philosophical consideration of the possibility of angels throws great light on the human mind and its limitations; our minds are associated with bodies. They are not like angels, minds without bodies, and that makes all the difference in the world.

There are many philosophical errors, made by Plato in the ancient world and by Descartes in the modern world, that arise from attributing to the human soul and the human mind properties that belong only to angels, because they are minds without bodies.

I have tried to expose and correct all the angelistic fallacies in modern thought—fallacies in politics, psychology, linguistics, and ethics, which I have called: angelistic politics, angelistic psychology, angelistic linguistics, and angelistic ethics.

6. A proper view of mankind and of human nature centers on the simple and basic truth that humans are neither angels nor brutes, less than the one and more than the other.

We stand on the boundary line that divides the corporeal world and the spiritual world (whether that be actual or only possible).

To understand correctly just how and why we stand at this midpoint in the whole universe is crucial to our having a correct understanding of our nature and our place in the whole scheme of things.

Making this understanding of human nature as intelligible and persuasive as possible—for the ordinary reader and without any use of technical jargon—is the main message of my book.

7. Let me conclude with two more questions that are sometimes asked, but of which I enjoy answering.

One question that is quite frequently asked:

**IF MY IMMORTAL SOUL GOES TO
HEAVEN WHEN I DIE, DO I THEN BECOME
AN ANGEL?**

The answer is *No*. Immortal souls may join the company of angels in heaven, but they never

become angels, because the human mind, not being angelic, needs a body in heaven, a resurrected body.

The other question is: IF THERE ARE EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCES ON OTHER PLANETS IN THE VAST COSMOS, AS CARL SAGAN THINKS THERE ARE, ARE THEY SUPERIOR TO US IN KIND OR ONLY IN DEGREE?

The answer is: *only in degree*. These extraterrestrial beings may be more intelligent than we are. But they cannot differ in kind from us and be superior to us without also being angels. And they cannot be, since they are parts of the physical or material universe, and therefore they are not angels—minds without bodies.



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Founded in 1990 by Mortimer J. Adler & Max Weismann

Max Weismann, Publisher Emeritus

Elaine Weismann, Publisher and Editor

Phone: 312-943-1076

Mobile: 312-280-1011

Ken Dzigan, Senior Fellow and Archivist

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