

If God lived on earth,
people would break his
windows.

—Jewish Proverb

7 Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, argues that unnecessary evil exists in the world because God is not able to prevent it. That is, God is finite, a less powerful deity than the traditional God. Do you think this is a good explanation of unnecessary evil? Why or why not? Would a finite God deserve your respect and devotion?

A God that can be understood is no God. Who can explain the Infinite in words?

—W. Somerset Maugham

Reason in man is rather like God in the world.

—Thomas Aquinas

are incompatible, and that we can legitimately come to know religious truths, including the existence of God, only through a leap of faith.

WRITING TO UNDERSTAND:

CRITIQUING PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

SECTION 2.1

1. Do you believe in God? If so, can you state reasons for your belief? Do you think your belief is rational? Would you believe in God whether or not you had good reasons? Explain your position on these questions.
2. Would you consider yourself an agnostic or atheist? If so, do you have reasons for your lack of belief in God? Is your lack of belief rational? Do you think that believers are irrational? Explain.
3. What is William Paley's teleological argument? Do you think the analogy between a watch and the universe is strong enough to prove the existence of a designer?
4. What is the argument from evil? Do you think the existence of evil shows that God doesn't exist? Why or why not?
5. Some philosophers and theologians believe that reason is a gift from God and should be used in the search for truth about God. Do you agree?

2.2 ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

We can sort the arguments for God's existence into two categories: (1) those that appeal to the evidence of experience (what philosophers call *a posteriori* arguments) and (2) those that appeal to logical relations (called *a priori* arguments). *A posteriori* arguments reason from empirical facts about the world to the conclusion that God exists. Cosmological, teleological, and religious-experience arguments are of this kind. *A priori* arguments logically derive the conclusion that God exists from concepts of God. Ontological arguments take this form.

Cosmological Arguments

Cosmological arguments can boast a long lineage, having been set out by many theorists from Aristotle, Plato, Ghazali, Averroës, Aquinas, and Spinoza to contemporary philosophers such as Richard Swinburne and William Lane Craig. They all begin with the empirical fact that the universe, or one of its essential properties, exists—and end with the conclusion that only God could be responsible for this fact. In his masterpiece *Summa Theologica*, the Roman Catholic scholar Thomas Aquinas