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Introduction to Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion

Beau Branson

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Abstract

Introduction to Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion introduces some of the major traditional arguments for and against the existence of God, as well as some less well-known, but thought-provoking arguments for the existence of God, and one of the most important new challenges to religious belief from the Cognitive Science of Religion. An introductory chapter traces the connection between philosophy and religion throughout Western history, and a final chapter addresses the place of non-Western and non-monotheistic religions within contemporary philosophy of religion

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INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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DEDICATION

To Roger Branson — the best dad I ever had.

For all the sacrifices I know you made.
And for all the ones I don't.

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WHAT IS AN OPEN TEXTBOOK?

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

An open textbook is like a commercial textbook, except: (1) it is publicly available online free of charge (and at low-cost in print), and (2) it has an open license that allows others to reuse it, download and revise it, and redistribute it. This book has a Creative Commons Attribution license, which allows reuse, revision, and redistribution so long as the original creator is attributed (please see the licensing information for this book for more information).

In addition to saving students money, an open textbook can be revised to be better contextualized to one's own teaching. In a recent study of undergraduate students in an introductory level physics course, students reported that the thing they most appreciated about the open textbook used in that course was that it was customized to fit the course, followed very closely by the fact that it was free of cost (Hendricks, Reinsberg, and Rieger 2017). For example, in an open textbook one may add in examples more relevant to one's own context or the topic of a course, or embedded slides, videos, or other resources. Note from the licensing information for this book that one must clarify in such cases that the book is an adaptation.

A number of commercial publishers offer relatively inexpensive digital textbooks (whether on their own or available through an access code that students must pay to purchase), but these may have certain limitations and other issues:

- Access for students is often limited to a short period of time;
- Students cannot buy used copies from others, nor sell their own copies to others, to save money;
- Depending on the platform, there may be limits to how students can interact with and take notes on the books (and they may not be able to export their notes outside the book, so lose access to those as well when they lose access to the book).

None of these is the case with open textbooks like the *Introduction to Philosophy* series. Students can download any book in this series and keep it for as long as they wish. They can interact with it in multiple formats: on the web; as editable word processing formats; offline as PDF, EPUB; as a physical print book, and more.

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See the next section, "How to Access and Use the Books," for more information on what the open license on this book allows, and how to properly attribute the work when reusing, redistributing, or adapting.

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HOW TO ACCESS AND USE THE BOOKS

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

We hope the books (or chapters in the books) will be adopted for introductory-level courses in philosophy, as part of required readings. You may use the books as they are, or create adaptations or ancillaries. One of the important benefits of the *Introduction to Philosophy* series is that instructors can mix and match chapters from various books to make their own customized set of readings for their courses.

Be sure to read the licensing information carefully and attribute the chapters or book properly when reusing, redistributing, or adapting.

Each book can be read online, and is also downloadable in multiple formats, from their respective book home pages (e.g., *Introduction to Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion*).

- The .odt format can be opened by Open Office, Libre Office, or Microsoft Word. Note that there may be some issues with formatting on this format, and hyperlinks may not appear if opened with MS Word.
- The PDF files can be edited with Adobe Acrobat (the full program, not just the Reader) or printed out. The print version of the PDF does not have hyperlinks.
- The EPUB and MOBI files can be loaded onto digital reading platforms like Adobe Digital Editions, Apple Books, and Kindle. They can also be edited using Pressbooks or tools like Calibre.
- Edits can be made using the XHTML format or via the Pressbooks XML format (for easier adaptation in Pressbooks).
- The book is also available for download as a Common Cartridge 1.1 file (with web links) for import into your learning management system (see instructions for importing Common Cartridge files, from the Pressbooks User Guide).

The multiple editable formats allow instructors to adapt the books as needed to fit their contexts. Another way to create adaptations is to involve students in contributing to open textbooks. Students may add new sections to an adapted book, link to other resources, create discussion questions or quiz

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questions, and more. Please see Rebus Community's *A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students* for more information and ideas.

If you plan to use or adapt one or more books (or chapters), we'd love to hear about it! Please let us know on the Rebus Community platform, and also on our adoption form.

And if you have feedback or suggestions about the book, we would really appreciate those as well. We have a separate form for keeping track of issues with digital accessibility, so please let us know if you find any.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

This book is part of the *Introduction to Philosophy* open textbook series, a set of nine (and counting?) open access textbooks that are designed to be used for introductory-level, survey courses in philosophy at the post-secondary level.

OVERVIEW OF THE SERIES

This set of books is meant to provide an introduction to some of the major topic areas often covered in introductory-level philosophy courses. I have found in teaching students new to philosophy that many struggle with the new ideas, questions, and approaches they find in introductory courses in philosophy, and that it can be helpful to provide them with texts that explain these in relatively straightforward terms.

When I began this project there were few textbooks that I was happy enough with to ask students to purchase, and even fewer openly licensed textbooks that I could pick and choose chapters from, or revise, to suit my courses. This series was created out of a desire to provide such resources that can be customized to fit different contexts and updated by instructors when needed (rather than waiting for an updated version from a publisher).

Each book is designed to be accessible to students who have little to no background in philosophy, by either eliminating jargon or providing a glossary for specialized philosophical terms. Many chapters in the books provide examples that apply philosophical questions or concepts to concrete objects or experiences that, we hope, many students are familiar with. Questions for reflection and discussion accompany chapters in most of the books, to support students in understanding what to focus on as they are reading.

The chapters in the books provide a broad overview of some of the main discussions and debates in the philosophical literature within a topic area, from the perspective of the chapter authors. Some of the chapters focus on historical approaches and debates, such as ancient theories of aesthetics, substance dualism in Descartes, or classical utilitarian versus Kantian approaches in ethics. Others introduce students to questions and topics in the philosophical literature from just the last few decades.

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The books currently in production for the series are:

- *Aesthetics* (Ed. Valery Vinogradovs and Scott Clifton): chapters include ancient aesthetics; beauty in art and nature; the nature of art; art and emotions; art and morality; aesthetics and politics
- *Epistemology* (Ed. Brian Barnett): chapters include epistemic justification; sources of knowledge; skepticism; epistemic value, duty, and virtue; epistemology, probability, and science; social epistemology; feminist epistemologies
- *Ethics* (Ed. George Matthews): chapters include ethical relativism; divine command theory and natural law; ethical egoism and social contract theory; virtue ethics; utilitarianism; Kantian Deontology; feminist ethics; evolutionary ethics
- *Logic* (Ed. Benjamin Martin): chapters include what is logic?; evaluating arguments; formal logic; informal fallacies; necessary and sufficient conditions
- *Metaphysics* (Ed. Adriano Palma): chapters include universals; finitism, infinitism, monism, dualism, pluralism; the possibility of free action; experimental metaphysics
- *Philosophy of Mind* (Ed. Heather Salazar): chapters include Descartes and substance dualism; behaviourism and materialism; functionalism; qualia; freedom of the will
- *Philosophy of Religion* (Ed. Beau Branson): chapters include arguments for belief in God; reasons not to believe; arguments against belief from the cognitive science of religion; from philosophy of (mono)theism to philosophy of religions
- *Philosophy of Science* (Ed. Eran Asoulin): chapters include empiricism; Popper's conjectures and refutations; Kuhn's normal and revolutionary science; the sociology of scientific knowledge; feminism and the philosophy of science; the problem of induction; explanation
- *Social and Political Philosophy* (Eds. Sam Rocha and Douglas Giles): chapters include the ideal society; the state of nature and the modern state; human rights, liberty, and social justice; radical social theories

We envision the books as helping to orient students within the topic areas covered by the chapters, as well as to introduce them to influential philosophical questions and approaches in an accessible way. The books may be used for course readings on their own, or in conjunction with primary source texts by the philosophers discussed in the chapters. We aim thereby to both save students money and to provide a relatively easy route for instructors to customize and update the resources as needed. And we hope that future adaptations will be shared back with the rest of the philosophical community!

HOW THE BOOKS WERE PRODUCED

Contributors to this series have been crowdsourced through email lists, social media, and other means. Each of the books has its own editor, and multiple authors from different parts of the world who have expertise in the topic of the book. This also means that there will inevitably be shifts in voice and tone between chapters, as well as in perspectives. This itself exemplifies the practice of philosophy, insofar as the philosophical questions worth discussing are those that do not yet have

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settled answers, and towards which there are multiple approaches worthy of consideration (which must, of course, provide arguments to support their claim to such worth).

I have been thrilled with the significant interest these books have generated, such that so many people have been willing to volunteer their time to contribute to them and ensure their quality—not only through careful writing and editing, but also through extensive feedback and review. Each book in the series has between five and ten authors, plus an editor and peer reviewers. It's exciting to see so many philosophers willing to contribute to a project devoted to helping students save money and instructors customize their textbooks!

The book editors, each with expertise in the field of the book they have edited, have done the bulk of the work for the books. They created outlines of chapters that were then peer reviewed and revised accordingly, and they selected authors for each of the chapters. The book editors worked with authors to develop a general approach to each chapter, and coordinated timelines for their completion. Chapters were reviewed by the editors both before and after the books went out for peer review, and the editors ensured revisions occurred where needed. They have also written introductions to their books, and in some cases other chapters as well. As the subject experts for the books, they have had the greatest influence on the content of each book.

My role as series editor started by envisioning the project as a whole and discussing what it might look like with a significant number of philosophers who contributed to shaping it early on. Overall, I have worked the Rebus Community on project management, such as developing author and reviewer guidelines and other workflows, coordinating with the book editors to ensure common approaches across the books, sending out calls for contributors to recruit new participants, and updating the community on the status of the project through the Rebus Community platform. I have reviewed the books, along with peer reviewers, from the perspective of both a philosopher who teaches introductory-level courses and a reader who is not an expert in many of the fields the books cover. As the books near publication, I have coordinated copy editing and importing into the Pressbooks publishing platform (troubleshooting where needed along the way).

Finally, after publication of the books I and the book editors will be working on spreading the word about them and encouraging adoption. I plan to use chapters from a few of the books in my own Introduction to Philosophy courses, and hope to see many more adoptions to come.

This project has been multiple years in the making, and we hope the fruits of our many labours are taken up in philosophy courses!

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PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

Philosophy of Religion provides an accessible introduction to several traditional as well as contemporary debates in the philosophy of religion, especially as developed in Europe, North America, and English-speaking countries around the world. The chapters provide overviews of traditional and non-traditional theistic arguments, surveys of atheistic and skeptical approaches to the truth claims of theism, and explorations of epistemological problems brought on by cognitive science for the justifiability of theistic beliefs. The book concludes with a final chapter that challenges the exclusively Christian theistic conception of religion seen in much recent and contemporary approaches to the field as well as in the preceding chapters.

Aided by a substantial introductory chapter tracing the history of Western philosophy and religion, alongside reflection on cross-cultural study of philosophy and religion, the book features the contours of an emerging shift—or divide—in the field of philosophy of religion, as some scholars pursue traditional approaches (Chapters 2-5) while others (Chapter 6) seek to redirect scholarship to better address philosophical problems arising from human diversity with respect to different forms of religiosity.

The book would be a helpful text for undergraduate philosophy of religion courses that are designed to feature the Western, theistic/atheistic metaphysical and epistemic debates as well as for courses that aim to cover that material while also exploring questions about the adequacy of a theistic model of "religion in general" for pursuing globally engaged philosophy of religion.

— Thomas D. Carroll, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (Peer Reviewer)

In a relatively short volume, this textbook manages to cover a huge amount of philosophical ground in both timescales and content. The book seeks to both portray the traditional issues raised in Western (monotheistic) philosophy of religion, such as arguments for the existence of God and responses to the problem of evil, while also providing a clear and well-argued critique of this approach to philosophy of religion in the concluding chapter. As the Editor notes in the Introduction, this juxtaposition is intended to enable the reader to not only understand traditional approaches to philosophy of religion but also to consider for themselves their response to the criticisms of what is often seen as the dominant Western paradigm.

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The chapters are designed to allow for bite-size reading with regular "questions to consider" throughout, prompting one to engage critically with the content of the book rather than passively accepting the authority of the authors—a crucial skill for all philosophy students to develop. Key terminology is highlighted with definitions throughout and alongside the questions makes this an accessible but robust introduction to philosophy of religion.

A breadth of authors are highlighted within the texts and further readings, adding more diverse voices to the philosophy of religion conversation. This volume provides an excellent, accessible introduction for the novice philosopher and the resources to support those who wish to delve more deeply into the topics covered.

— Finley Lawson, PhD Candidate & Research Fellow, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK (Peer Reviewer)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BEAU BRANSON AND CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

BEAU BRANSON, BOOK EDITOR

I'd like first to acknowledge Christina Hendricks, the series editor for the Introduction to Philosophy open textbook series of which this book is a part. A great debt is owed to her for her vision and initiative in conceiving of and executing the plan for the series as a whole. One of the most natural impulses for human beings is to ask questions, which, at bottom, is what philosophy is. Yet, many never become aware of the range or the depth of the questions that might be asked in life or the various answers proposed down through the centuries, either because they lack the opportunity, or because they are too intimidated by the reputation of philosophy even to make a beginning. Thus, producing textbooks that are both free and written in a style accessible to most any student is a noble goal that helps open up philosophy to all who might benefit from it. Christina's efforts in this regard are to be applauded, and we can all hope that this experiment will serve as a model for others in the future to build on.

Apurva Ashok was our project manager from Rebus, and her assistance was invaluable. Nobody who has tried to publish in academia could fail to marvel at the speed with which she responded to any request for information or assistance. Without her help, neither this book nor others in the Introduction to Philosophy series would have been completed as quickly as they have been.

Great thanks are also due to our peer reviewers, Thomas Carroll and Finley Lawson, as well as to Helena Fisher, our undergraduate reviewer. Drs. Carroll and Lawson were extremely gracious to volunteer their time for this project. They caught numerous issues and provided valuable questions, comments and objections at various points in every chapter, which helped make the final product simultaneously more rigorous and yet more accessible to undergraduates with no prior knowledge of philosophy. Helena Fisher was a brilliant addition to the reviewers, coming on board specifically to give us the perspective of an undergraduate on how understandable and relevant the text might be to most students. I have no doubt she has a bright future ahead of her, and wish her well in her further studies.

Finally, my greatest debt of gratitude is due to the authors, without whom the book would not be what it is. In chapter order, they are Marcus William Hunt, Robert Sloan Lee, Steven Steyl, Hans van

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Eyghen, and Timothy D. Knepper. All of them have been extremely easy to work with and highly professional, which has made my job as editor not only much easier, but even—gasp!—a joy. Each has brought something unique to the text, and I cannot thank them enough.

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS, SERIES EDITOR

I would like to thank the authors in this book for their patience as we worked through the process of conceiving the book and getting it to publication. Because this is one of the first books to be published in the Introduction to Philosophy open textbook series, we were sometimes creating processes and workflows as we went along, and this meant things may have taken longer than anyone expected at first!

Special thanks to Beau Branson, who signed up to this project early on and has been a joy to work with. He has shown great patience and flexibility as we worked through the process of figuring out just how to go about publishing the books in this series. He has also done an excellent job of selecting authors for chapters and editing those chapters to result in a clear, engaging, and accessible book.

Also instrumental to the success of this book are the peer reviewers, Thomas D. Carroll, Helena Fisher, and Finley Lawson, who volunteered their time and expertise to read through a draft of the whole book and provide constructive comments and suggestions.

Jonathan Lashley has done an amazing job with the design of the book covers for this series, using original artwork by Heather Salazar (who is the editor for the Philosophy of Mind book in this series). The book covers are exceptionally well done, and really bring the series together as a whole.

Colleen Cressman has provided much-needed help with copyediting. I am very grateful for her thorough and detailed efforts, and for the suggestions she made to help make the chapters as accessible as possible for introductory-level students. And thank you to Chris Hubbard for help with inputting and formatting the content into Pressbooks so that it looks and reads well. This is a great deal of effort to learn to do starting from scratch, and I am deeply grateful to Chris for taking it on.

When I started this project there were many discussions amongst philosophers from various parts of the world on the Rebus Community platform, and their ideas and suggestions contributed significantly to the final products. There were also numerous people who gave comments on draft chapter outlines for each book. Thank you to the many unnamed philosophers who have contributed to the book in these and other ways!

This book series would not have gotten beyond the idea stage were it not for the support of the Rebus Community. I want to thank Hugh McGuire for believing in the project enough to support what we both realized at the time was probably much bigger than even our apprehensions about its enormity. Zoe Wake Hyde was instrumental in getting the project started, particularly in helping us develop workflows and documentation. And I'm not sure I can ever thank Apurva Ashok enough for being an unfailingly enthusiastic and patient supporter and guide for more months than I care to count. She spent a good deal of time working with me and the book editors to figure out how to make a project like this work on a day-to-day level, and taught me a great deal about the open publishing process.

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Apurva kept me on track when I would sometimes drop the ball or get behind on this off-the-side-of-my-desk project. She is one of the best collaborative partners I have never (yet!) met in person.

Finally, I want to thank my family for understanding how important this work is and why I have chosen to stay up late so many nights to do it. And for their patience on the many groggy, pre-coffee mornings that followed.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

BEAU BRANSON

This short book mostly covers some of the more influential, or just interesting, arguments for and against belief in God. There are many other interesting philosophical questions that arise in the context of specific theological commitments (some philosophers would categorize these arguments under the heading of "philosophical theology" rather than "philosophy of religion"). For example, is the specifically Christian doctrine of the Trinity (which says there is one God, but three divine persons) logically coherent? Is the specifically Islamic view of God's providence and control over the universe compatible with free will, and moral responsibility along with it? Is the specifically Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura ("the Bible alone") self-contradictory, if the Bible itself doesn't explicitly teach it? Can we make coherent sense of the specifically Buddhist doctrine that, after death, the arhat or enlightened person, does not continue to exist, does not cease to exist, and does not do both or neither? And many more such philosophical puzzles about specific religious or theological doctrines could be asked. However, in this short introductory text, we are mostly introducing some general arguments about belief in God more broadly rather than delving into other, more specific religious doctrines. The first chapter clears up some misconceptions about the relation between philosophy and religion. The second and third chapters cover some influential arguments for belief in the existence of God, and the fourth and fifth cover some influential arguments against belief in the existence of God. The final chapter, on the other hand, questions how well this "general" approach to philosophy of religion accommodates various world religions, and critiques the very approach we are taking!

THE CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1, Beau Branson sketches the history of philosophy and religion from the pre-Socratic philosophers to today. He claims that philosophers have gotten a reputation as mostly espousing a very closed-minded atheism. In fact, the history of philosophy shows that, from its inception, it has been bound up with religious questions and ideas, and most of its figures had some kind of religious beliefs. Only in the last few centuries has philosophy taken a decidedly atheistic turn, and even then, many non-religious philosophers have still been intrigued by religious questions and ideas, and often influenced by religious thinkers. The reputation for closed-mindedness is probably to be blamed on a particular 20th-century movement, Logical Positivism. But even there, the accusation of closed-mindedness is not entirely fair, since the Positivists took the attitude they did because of technical

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views about the philosophy of language. After those views were called into doubt, in the latter part of the 20th century and up to today, there has been an explosion in the philosophy of religion.

In Chapter 2, Marcus Hunt presents what have traditionally been the three most influential arguments for belief in God. The Teleological Argument, also called the Design Argument, claims that the universe has the appearance of something that was put together purposefully and that this gives us reason to believe in an Intelligent Designer. The Cosmological Argument argues that the observable universe, consisting entirely of contingent beings, requires a necessarily-existent being as a "First Cause." And the Ontological Argument attempts to show that the atheistic supposition that a greatest conceivable being (God) does not exist leads to logical absurdity. In addition to these traditional arguments, Hunt explains what has come to be called Reformed Epistemology (after the "Reformed" theological tradition associated with John Calvin). Reformed Epistemology makes a strong, if somewhat startling argument, that it may be perfectly rational for people to believe in God without any particular evidence or argument at all.

In Chapter 3, Sloan Lee discusses three additional arguments for belief in God that approach the question from very different angles compared to those in Chapter 2. Pascal's Wager is the most well-known of the three, and does not seek to prove that God exists, but argues it is reasonable to believe that God exists, since belief in God is analogous to a bet with potentially infinite payoffs or losses. Next, arguments from Religious Experience begin with the fact that some people have had certain experiences that at least seem to them to be experiences of God, and claim that this gives us **prima facie** evidence for God's existence. So, in the absence of overriding evidence to the contrary, we are justified in believing that things are as they appear to be. Finally, Lee discusses what is at the same time one of the most fascinating and least discussed arguments in this literature, C. S. Lewis' Argument from Desire. Lewis begins with the premise that creatures are not born with innate desires that cannot possibly be satisfied. And yet, Lewis describes a kind of experience he calls "the inconsolable longing," a kind of nostalgic desire that naturally and spontaneously arises at certain times, but which cannot be satisfied by anything in this world. It follows that there must be something beyond this world towards which some of our desires (like the inconsolable longing) are naturally directed.

In Chapter 4, Steven Steyl presents three of the traditionally most influential arguments (or kinds of argument) against religious belief. First, he discusses a group of arguments purporting to show the incoherence of various alleged divine attributes, such as that if God is Omnipotent, He can presumably do evil, but if He is Omnibenevolent then He can't. Second is probably the most famous and influential argument against religious belief, the Problem of Evil. Why would any unnecessary pain and suffering exist in the world, if God is all-powerful (and so could eliminate any pain and suffering if He wanted to) and all-good or all-loving (and so would surely want to eliminate any pain and suffering that wasn't absolutely necessary)? Steyl also discusses a particularly tricky version of the Problem of Evil called the Problem of Hell. Hell presents an additional difficulty, since it is supposed to involve pain and suffering directly inflicted by God (not us, or the natural world). Last is the Problem of Divine Hiddenness. The sort of God envisioned especially in 20th- and 21st-century Evangelical Protestantism desires to enter into a personal relationship with us. But in order for us to enter into such a relationship with God, we have to believe He exists, which (at least for some of us!) requires at least a certain minimal amount of evidence. Why, then, does God remain "hidden"? That

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is, why does God not simply reveal Himself to us in some manner obvious enough to convince those who are cautiously skeptical but still open-minded? The fact, then, that there are such people who are open-minded, but still lack belief, is itself reason to believe that no God of that sort exists.

In Chapter 5, Hans van Eyghen presents an extended discussion of recent challenges to religious belief that arise out of the nascent field of Cognitive Science of Religion. In particular, Cognitive Science of Religion attempts to explain the mechanisms behind the formation of religious beliefs. However, these mechanisms appear to be seriously prone to error. It is argued that they arose by a process of natural selection for reasons that have little to do with truth, but simply are (or at least were, in our evolutionary past) connected to having better chances of survival. For example, one argument theorizes that a population of people who believe in an all-knowing and all-powerful being who will punish them for their evil deeds will be more likely to cooperate with each other and less likely to harm each other, increasing the odds of survival for everyone in the group. If our beliefs really do result from unreliable belief-forming mechanisms such as this, then, so it is argued, those beliefs themselves are unjustified.

Finally, in Chapter 6, Timothy Knepper presents us with a challenge to the very framework within which the rest of this book (and the current field of philosophy of religion, typically) works. He points out that the vast majority of what passes as "philosophy of religion" in academic philosophy is not really concerned with religion as such, but specifically with the Western theistic tradition. Indeed, the first chapters of this book perfectly illustrate this complaint. Knepper then discusses the historical reasons why the idea of "philosophy of religion" was constructed during the Enlightenment, and how and why it fails to fit other religious traditions, giving examples drawn from religions in South Asia (India), East Asia (China), West Africa (Yorubaland), and North America (Lakota) (specifically, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Yorùbá and Lakota religious beliefs). All of the specific religions he discusses present seemingly insuperable difficulties being fit into the mold of "the philosophy of religion" (i.e., the philosophy of (mono)theism). He presents us with some proposals for better ways of thinking about what a "religion" is, ways that might be both more inclusive and more fruitful, inviting non-Western religions that are otherwise marginalized by the traditional theistic paradigm to enter into the conversation.

GLOSSARY

There is a glossary at the end of this book. If you are reading the book on the web you will find glossary terms in the text with hyperlinks to their definitions. Click on the terms and the definition should pop up on the screen. If you are reading the book in another form you may only see the glossary terms in **bold**, and you will need to go to the glossary at the end of the book to find the definitions of those terms.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE BOOK'S STRUCTURE

A parting note of explanation (or defense!) may be in order, as to why the first chapters of the book approach philosophy of religion in just the way Knepper criticizes, and yet the final chapter argues against this approach. So, why include both Chapter 6 and Chapters 1 through 5? Is this a contradiction?

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To this question, there are two simple answers. First, even if one thinks Knepper is exactly right in his proposal for how to rethink philosophy of religion, one has to acknowledge that the task has not yet been accomplished, and that, in the interim, there is a practical problem in how best to pursue teaching (and learning about) philosophy of religion. Second, while much of the basis of Knepper's argument is almost certainly true, it's still possible to conclude that the goal of rethinking philosophy of religion can and should be done in a less radical way, and the editor of this volume maintains that students should be presented both with "traditional" philosophy of religion and with Knepper's critique of it, and allowed to come to their own conclusions about what the future of philosophy of religion should look like.

To the first point, to take the most extreme example, consider the Yorùbá religion that Knepper discusses. Prior to E. Bọlaji Idowu's 1962 publication of Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief, most of what was written in English about Yorùbá belief was, it seems, pretty wildly inaccurate. And even Idowu himself has been criticized as misrepresenting Yorùbá belief in an attempt to bring it closer to something people from a Western, predominantly monotheistic background would understand. It's perhaps only in the last decade or so of the 20th century with authors like Kola Abímbọ́lá and others that those unfamiliar with it begin to get a clearer picture of what Yorùbá belief even really is, on its own terms. Thus, while we can all hopefully agree that philosophers of religion ought to start engaging with religious traditions like those of the Yorùbá that are outside of the traditional Western canon, they can hardly be faulted if they haven't accomplished this task yet, as it will inevitably take time both for the very content of Yorùbá belief to become more widely known, and for philosophy of religion to find creative ways to enter into conversation with it.

Of course, other examples Knepper gives, like Buddhism and Hinduism, should be more of an embarrassment, since people in "the West" have known at least something about these religions since ancient times. (Though in these cases, at least some philosophy of religion addresses these traditions, even if surely not as much as one might expect or hope for.) But the point is that the task Knepper proposes simply has not yet been accomplished. Similar practical problems face many, if not all, areas in Western philosophy in terms of opening up further, not only to non-European cultures, but to women, to people from various economic classes, sexual orientations and identities, and so on. One school of thought might be to radically rethink the whole canon of Western philosophy "from the ground up," as Knepper puts it. But to do that immediately would seem to be a Herculean task. Others might seek simply to gradually change the canon in a direction of greater inclusivity. The opinion of the editor of this volume is that the former approach is simply too ambitious, but that voices like Knepper's nevertheless deserve to be heard, and that going forward philosophers of religion must take seriously the challenge presented.

To the second point, the editor thinks students should be presented with both philosophy of religion as it is typically done and a well-argued critique like Knepper's, and then allowed to come to their own conclusions. Knepper proposes that "if philosophy of religion is to be the philosophy of religions and not just the philosophy of (mono)theism, it must be rethought from the ground up, not merely expanded or enlarged." In other words, whether we accomplish the goal immediately or gradually, Knepper makes a call for us, ultimately, to reconstruct philosophy of religion in a fairly radical way. But some might argue that this sort of re-thinking of philosophy of religion would be throwing the

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baby out with the bathwater, as there is much of value in traditional philosophy of religion, even if its value is primarily, or even only, within the context of a broadly monotheistic paradigm.[1] Thus, even given the facts that Knepper cites, some readers might conclude that we should do exactly the opposite of what Knepper recommends. Namely, they might conclude precisely that we should find a way to expand what currently counts as philosophy of religion in such a way as to incorporate what Knepper calls the philosophy of (mono)theism into something bigger, rather than simply discarding the philosophy of (mono)theism in favor of something different.

For these reasons and others, the editor of this volume has made the careful decision to select and arrange the chapters so that readers begin with an introduction to philosophy of religion as it has been, and is, typically taught today, then presented with a strong and well-argued criticism of that paradigm, leaving them room to come to their own conclusions.

How to Use This Book

All of the books in the Introduction to Philosophy series are written specifically for an audience that has little to no previous exposure to philosophy. We have tried to steer clear of jargon as much as possible, and we hope you will find the language reasonably easy to follow and the arguments explained in ways that are as easy to follow as the subject matter permits. Almost every position or argument presented in this book is therefore, of necessity, presented on a basic level, and although various responses, objections and counterarguments are presented, there is in almost every instance a vast literature containing even more discussion on almost every point. What this book aims to do is only to give the reader a broad overview of the arguments presented. Each chapter then ends with a selection of Further Readings that have been chosen as being among the most beneficial places for novices to go for more information. Therefore, use a chapter in this book as a tool to help orient yourself to the topics, the "big picture" and the basic ideas that are in play, and then go to the Further Readings when you are ready to delve more deeply into a specific topic that has piqued your interest.

When it comes to religion, some readers will begin as firm believers in some religion, others staunch opponents of some religion, or of many, or of all religions. Some may be undecided, but curious to

1. Given the tangled history of both philosophy and religion in Western culture sketched in the first chapter of this book, there's obviously a good deal of value in knowing about the monotheistic tradition if for no other reason than to better understand the development of Western thought and culture in general. Indeed, as the first chapter hopefully makes clear, much of that entanglement goes un- or under-appreciated. And besides its merely historical importance, this traditional type of philosophy of religion has ongoing relevance to most of the world's population. Some demographic data is worth noting here. Christians (as of 2020) make up roughly 2.3 billion or 31.2% of the world's population; Muslims, about 1.8 billion, or 24.1% of the world's population; and Jews, about 14 million or 0.2% of the population. Thus, over 4.1 billion or 55.5% of the world's population fall within a broadly monotheistic paradigm in their religious beliefs. And arguably, most atheists and agnostics within Western cultures tend to think about religion within the categories they have inherited from this tradition, whether they are cognizant of that influence or not, and so could be added to the total number for whom the categories of theism are relevant (even if they are rejecting it, rather than embracing it). And while the percentage of the population consisting of Christians and Jews is projected to remain stable, by 2050 Islam is projected to rise to about 29.7% of the world's population, giving us at least 61.1% of the world's population fitting into this monotheistic paradigm. (After 2050, there is less certainty, but if things continue along the same trajectory, Islam should surpass Christianity as the world's largest religion by about 2070, giving us a total of 62.6% of the world's population within the monotheistic paradigm by 2070). So, while one must certainly be sympathetic to the other almost half (and even in the future still over one-third) of the world's population, one might also conclude that we cannot simply ignore the entire tradition of thinking deeply about issues within the monotheistic paradigm either. (For data on the demographics of religion cited in this note, see "Christians Remain World's Largest Religious Group, but They are Declining in Europe," Pew Research Center [2017], and "7 Key Changes in the Global Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center [2015].)

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learn more. And after reading about some of the arguments in this book, some readers may change their minds, while others may become more firmly convinced of what they already suspected to be true. But regardless of what you believe when you begin your study of the philosophy of religion or when you end it, one thing is certain: you will have a richer life, and a better understanding of others around you, for having thought things through from various sides of the issues.

And on that note, we end this introduction with the strangely religious sounding words of one of the most famous atheists of all time, Bertrand Russell:

> Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination, and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good. (Russell [1912] 2004, 113)

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PART I.

CHAPTERS

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CHAPTER 1.

THE INTERTWINING OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

BEAU BRANSON

Philosophers have gotten something of a bad reputation for widespread—and perhaps closed-minded—atheism. The reality, however, is quite otherwise. We will address the reputation of closed-mindedness towards the end of this chapter. But first we'll address the historical point. For most of their history, philosophy and religion have almost always been intertwined in one way or another, and the vast majority of philosophers have had *some* kind of religious beliefs, oftentimes central to their philosophy, whether or not they have made the links explicit. And this is not without good reason. Though their methods (sometimes) differ, philosophy and religion have always shared a number of similar goals in terms of seeking answers to life's "Big Questions," questions about the ultimate nature of reality, our purpose or place in the world, the meaning of life and how we should live it (compare the discussion of the "life is a journey" metaphor in Section 3 of Chapter 6). In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates famously says, "It is no small matter we are discussing, but the very question of how we are to live our lives" (Book I, 352d). Many religious believers would say the same thing when discussing their religious beliefs.

Indeed, outside of Western culture, where a sharp division has developed between philosophy and religion as a result of the Enlightenment, it is sometimes hard to tell the difference between the two. Scholars agonize over whether Confucianism is "really" a religion or "only" a philosophy—or maybe neither one (Taylor 1990; Adler 2006; Sun 2015). Likewise for whether Buddhism fits neatly into either category, or maybe into both at the same time (Prebish et al. 2019). Chapter 6 of this book discusses in more detail how and why the Enlightenment may have contributed to this sharp division between philosophy and religion in the West. But even in the Western tradition, the division between philosophy and religion was not always so sharp prior to the Enlightenment, as we will see.

If you are new to philosophy, many of the philosophers discussed below may be unfamiliar to you. That's OK! The point here is not to memorize names and dates, but to get a feel for how a representative sample of many of the "heavyweights" in the history of philosophy have interacted with religion, and how the two have, historically, not always been at odds with one another, but have rather been intertwined, mutually influencing one another.

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ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Ancient Platonists, if asked to summarize the essence of the philosophy of Plato (c. 429-347 BCE), would answer that it was a way of life directed towards *homoiosis theou*—becoming like God (Annas 1999, 52 ff.). At various points in Plato's dialogues, his descriptions of philosophy and of wisdom sound much more like descriptions of out-of-body experiences than like today's notion of "thinking deeply about important questions." For example, in *Phaedo*, Socrates says, "I am afraid that other people do not realize that the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death…" and then defines death as "the separation of the soul from the body" (*Phaedo 64a).* He goes on to discuss how the true philosopher is not concerned with things connected to the body (including sense perception), but with the soul, and trying to get the soul to be "by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it [the body] in its search for reality… the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flees from it and seeks to be by itself." Later Socrates continues, "if we are ever to have pure knowledge, we must escape from the body and observe things in themselves with the soul by itself" *(Phaedo* 66d-e*).* While there are other ways to interpret such passages, there is a long tradition of reading Plato as talking about something like an out-of-body experience that opens up some sort of mystical knowledge about reality, and even God. Certainly something along those lines is how he was read by the so-called neoplatonists like Plotinus and Porphyry (described below).

What we today call the "metaphysics" of Aristotle (382-322 BCE), he himself famously called "theology" (*Metaphysics* XI.7, $1064^{b}1$). Prior to Plato and Aristotle, the writings of the pre-Socratics (Greek philosophers prior to roughly 400 BCE) were filled with speculations about the nature of God, or the gods. For example, Thales (624-546 BCE) claimed that "all things are full of gods" (Kirk et al. 1983, 95). We know very little about Pythagoras (570-490 BCE); it's doubtful he actually discovered the theorem named after him. But one thing we do know about him is that he taught his followers to believe in reincarnation and engage in various mystical practices (Kirk et al. 1983, 214 ff.). And Parmenides (515-450 BCE) presented his philosophy in the form of a long poem about a spiritual vision he had, in which secret truths were revealed to him by divine beings (Kirk et al. 1983, 239 ff.).

The Stoics believed the universe was guided by a divine *Logos*. While "*Logos*" in Greek Philosophy often just means human reason or an argument, the word is also the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "*Davar*" or Aramaic "*Memra*," (the divine "Word" of God) which, in the later parts of the Hebrew Bible and in the Targums (Aramaic translations or paraphrases of books of the Hebrew Bible), began taking on many of the characteristics associated with God. (For example, in the Targums it is the *Memra* who delivers the Israelites from Egypt, and makes a covenant with them, and so forth.) And although the Stoics are considered a school of Greek Philosophy, the first Stoics happened to be Semitic immigrants from the East (Lightfoot 1894, 273, 299), so their view that the world is governed by a divine "Word" is especially noteworthy for its connection to Jewish thought.

This term "*Logos*" later shows up in the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE-50 CE), who describes the *Logos* as a kind of "second god," the "first-born Son of God," and the "eldest angel" (archangel) (Philo 1993, 834; 247). Philo's thought about the *Logos* shows deep familiarity with both Plato and the Stoics. Traces of this "*Logos* Theology" are to be found in Jewish **Midrash** as well (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, n.d.). It's perhaps unsurprising that Philo shows

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familiarity with the philosophy of his day, being from Alexandria, Egypt, one of the greatest centers of philosophical learning in the ancient world. The Gospel of Matthew claims that Jesus also spent time in Egypt as a boy (Matthew 2:13-21), which, if true, would almost certainly have been in Alexandria, where the vast majority of Jews living in Egypt at that time resided. This would place Jesus in the same city as Philo at just the time Philo's career there was flourishing. We also see Philo of Alexandria's term "*Logos*" playing an explicit, central role in a number of New Testament works, the most famous being the prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1): "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God." The term "*Logos*" has been described as a kind of bridge between Jewish and Hellenistic thinking (Boyarin 2011, 546-549).

Numerous individual passages in the New Testament, as well as the entire epistle to the Hebrews, also show influence on a number of points either directly from Philo, or else some common source from which Philo and the New Testament authors must both have been drawing (Siegert 2009, 175-209 *passim*; Runia 1993, 83, *passim*). For example, the author of Hebrews famously downplays the importance of the earthly temple in Jerusalem in favor of a heavenly temple, of which the earthly temple is merely a "copy and shadow":

> [They] serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:5)

The talk about "copy and shadow" recalls Plato's famous Analogy of the Cave in Book VII of the *Republic*, where prisoners are chained up, facing a wall, unable to see anything except "the shadows of copies of things," which they mistake for the truth (514a-c ff.). The talk about making all things "according to the pattern" recalls Plato's discussion of the "craftsman" or "demiurge" (creator of the universe) in *Timaeus* (28a6). Likewise, Hebrews 11:10 describes Abraham as searching for "the city having the foundations, whose artificer and constructor [is] God," where "constructor" is Plato's term "demiurge" used for the creator in the *Timaeus*.

Plato also famously divides all of "being" into two realms: (1) the "visible" (particular, concrete things like people, trees, animals, etc.), which is temporary and perishable, and (2) the "invisible" (the abstract ideas or "Forms" or essences of things), which is eternal and unchanging (e.g., *Phaedo* 79a-b). St. Paul seems to explicitly make use of this framework in 2 Cor. 4:18: "For the things which are visible are temporal; but the things which are invisible are eternal." Again in *Timaeus*, Plato describes his highest principle, the "Form of the Good" as "the Creator and Father of all" and thus, in a sense, even higher than both of these visible and invisible realms *(Timaeus* 28c*).* Again, St. Paul also speaks of God creating "all things, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16) in Christ. And famously, along with St. Paul and other New Testament authors, even Jesus himself is recorded as referring to God as "Father," a title very rarely used for God in the Hebrew Bible or the Jewish tradition more generally, but appearing in Plato and repeated constantly in the New Testament. Another Platonic theme found in the New Testament relates to Plato's saying that to "find" God is difficult, and "to declare him to everyone is impossible" (*Timaeus* 28c). Elsewhere he repeats that the highest principle is too difficult to grasp, so that we must reason instead about His / Its "Offspring" instead (e.g., *Republic* 506e-507 and 508b-509). We then find in multiple New Testament authors this familiar Platonic idea that we cannot have direct knowledge of God ("the Father"), but must have recourse to His "Offspring" or "Son" for any

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knowledge we would have of Him, the Son being an "image" of the Father. (John 1:18; John 14:9; Col. 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 1:3; 1 John 4:12).

Does all this mean Plato was the *source* of these ideas in the New Testament? As we've seen, it would be difficult to deny that several New Testament authors *make use* (apparently intentionally) both of Plato's thought and his vocabulary. As to whether Plato was the source of any of the New Testament authors' thoughts, however, it's hard to say, and scholarly debate continues. Of course, there are also deep differences that must be acknowledged as well. But while questions about *sources* and *directions* of influence may be debated, one thing is for certain: there was no *separation* into two distinct compartments of "philosophy" versus "religion" at this point in history. Thinkers at this time did not see two categories here, but one.

Questions to Consider

1. Brainstorm definitions of "philosophy" and "religion." To what extent do those definitions overlap, or differ? Consider a belief system like Buddhism or Confucianism. How do the definitions you came up with categorize that belief system? Do you think your definitions get the right result? What does this say about the relation between philosophy and religion?
2. Similarities between Greek philosophical texts and Christian texts are not always obvious in English translations. For example, the Greek "ὁ Θεός" is typically translated as "God" (Capital-G) in the New Testament but "the god" in Plato's dialogues. Likewise "ὁ λόγος" is typically translated "the Word" in the New Testament, but as "reason," "argument," or "account" in philosophical texts. Why might translators of the New Testament not want to highlight its similarities to Greek philosophical texts? Why might translators of Greek philosophical texts not want to highlight their similarities to a religious text?

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

After the rise of Christianity, the neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus (c. 203-270 CE) asks, "What can it be that has brought the souls to forget the father, God, and, though members of the Divine and entirely of that world, to ignore at once themselves and It?" *(Ennead V.1.1).* Here Plotinus refers to his interpretation of Plato's highest principle—The One, or The Good—with the particularly Christian-sounding terms, "Father," and "God" (*Ennead* V.1.1). Plotinus' greatest influence, the middle-Platonist Numenius of Apamea (c. 150-200 CE), created a new school of Platonism with the explicit purpose of demonstrating the overlap between Platonism and ancient near-Eastern religions, like Judaism (which he mentions by name). Indeed, he was the author of the much-quoted saying, "What else is Plato than a Moses who speaks Greek?" (Guthrie 1917, 2). And Plotinus, probably the most famous neo-Platonist in antiquity, saw Platonism not as a merely theoretical study, but as a *spiritual path*. He describes his own mystical experiences, inspired by Plato's teachings:

> Many times it has happened: lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and

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> self-encentred; beholding a marvelous beauty; then, more-than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine…. (*Ennead* IV.8.1)

At points he even gives guidance on how to achieve such mystical states, drawn from Plato's writings, and referring again to God as "Father":

> The Fatherland to us is There whence we have come, and There is The Father. What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? … all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see: you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use. (*Ennead* I.6.8)

This again shows us that in antiquity, what was called "philosophy" was not simply the modern-day concept of a kind of deep, critical thinking about important subjects, but was instead an attempt at what might be called a kind of "spiritual science." A spiritual path *supported by* a deep theoretical underpinning, but more than *merely* theoretical.

In this light, it makes much more sense that early Christians were often critical of "philosophy" (by which they meant Platonism), even when they were themselves engaged in something that—in *today's* terms—we would call "philosophy." They were opposed to it, not because they were opposed to critical thinking, but because Christianity and "philosophy" (i.e., Platonism) essentially constituted rival schools of spirituality, with teachings about the spiritual path that, while frequently overlapping, were often at odds. Indeed, Porphyry (c. 234-305 CE), Plotinus' star pupil, saw Christianity (as well as **Gnosticism**) not as something simply unrelated to "philosophy," but as schools of thought competing with "philosophy" and posing a major threat to Platonism. So much of a threat, in fact, that he wrote a 15-volume work *Against the Christians* to attack it! Later Platonists (like Iamblichus, c. 245-325 CE) took a different approach, and began incorporating aspects of **theurgy** (a kind of ritualistic "white magic") into their philosophical systems partly in an effort to compete with popular Christian rituals and liturgical (worship) practices.

After the emperor Justinian discontinued public funding for pagan schools of philosophy in 529 CE, those schools began to fade out for lack of financial support, although classical learning itself was kept alive by Christian scholars in the (Eastern) Roman Empire (usually erroneously referred to as the "Byzantine" Empire) for the next thousand years.[1] From the Christianization of the Roman Empire until its fall in 1453, most philosophical thinking was done in the context of theological thinking,

1. The reason this label is erroneous is that it was only the western territory of the Roman Empire that was taken over by Germanic "barbarians" and fell into the dark ages in the 400s. But by that time, the capital of the empire had already been moved East to the city of "New Rome" (which was referred to as "Constantinople," but only as a nickname), and had been so for about a century. Latin continued to be the official state language in New Rome/Constantinople for centuries, even though most people actually spoke Greek. The Germanic tribes that took over the West then began referring to themselves as "Romans" and to the Easterners as "Byzantines" in an effort to legitimize their rule and to drive a cultural wedge between the Western Christian subjects they had conquered in Rome, and their Eastern Christian (and equally "Roman") allies. This eventually culminated in the myth of the "Holy Roman Empire," which was famously neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. Unfortunately, a certain Euro-centric agenda has led, and sometimes continues to lead, some Western scholars to perpetuate this mythology, referring to the Empire's loss of the Western territories as though the Roman Empire itself had actually ceased to exist, or had "fallen." In reality, life in the remaining territory of the Roman Empire continued on mostly as normal for another thousand years, until the gradual encroachment of Islamic armies, and eventual betrayal by Western Christians, led to the fall of New Rome/Constantinople in 1453. For a good (as well as fascinating and well-written) corrective to many common misconceptions about this history see Brownworth (2009).

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whether by Greek-speaking Christians,[2] Latin-speaking Christians,[3] Muslims,[4] or Jews.[5] Although such thinkers gave intense scrutiny to many philosophical questions, they always did so with one eye towards the religious or theological implications of those philosophical questions.

Questions to Consider

3. Consider these facts: (1) Aristotle describes the subject matter of his book, *Metaphysics*, as "theology." (2) The New Testament employs technical terms from Stoicism and Platonism. (3) The second century Christian, Justin Martyr (AKA "Justin the Philosopher") describes his conversion from Stoicism to Aristotelianism to Pythagoreanism to Platonism (all schools of Greek philosophy) and finally to Christianity (as though it was the final and best form of philosophy). (4) The Platonist philosopher Porphyry felt that Christianity was such a threat to Platonism that he wrote a 15-volume work attacking it. Can such facts be easily explained if there is a sharp distinction between philosophy and religion? Revisit your definitions of "philosophy" and "religion" from question 1 above. Do your definitions make facts (1)-(4) easy to explain, or difficult?
4. Re-read Plotinus' description of his mystical experience of The One, and Plato's description of philosophy as "practicing for death." Plotinus thought he was simply following Plato. But beginning in the 1800s, historians of philosophy began calling him and his followers "neo-Platonists," assuming their unmistakably spiritual brand of Platonism was "new" and not "authentic" Platonism. Most specialists today see that as a mistake. Why might philosophers from the 1800s be reluctant to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of Platonic philosophy?

MODERN PHILOSOPHY

After the armies of the Fourth Crusade sacked the Eastern Christian city of New Rome/Constantinople in the 1200s, and brought back precious ancient manuscripts, Western Europe saw the Renaissance blossom in the following century (1300s). After the eventual fall of Constantinople in 1453 (which led many Greek scholars to flee west and bring more knowledge and manuscripts with them), the arrival of Europeans in the Americas in 1492, the rise of Protestantism beginning in 1517, and the Scientific Revolution (perhaps datable to Copernicus' publication of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* in 1543), we come to the Modern Period. The rapid pace of discovery of new knowledge and the overturning or questioning of previously-held beliefs from the mid-1400s

2. Such as Basil the Great (c. 330-379), Gregory Nazianzen (c. 330-390), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-399), John Philoponus (c. 490-570), Leontius of Byzantium (480-543), Maximus the Confessor (580-662), John of Damascus (c. 655 - c.750), Photios (810-891), Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), and Gennadios Scholarios (1400-1473).
3. Such as Augustine (353-430), Boethius (480-524), Anselm (1033-1109), Aquinas (1225-1274), Scotus (1266-1308), or Ockham (1287-1347).
4. Such as Al-Kindi (801–873), Al-Farabi (c. 870-950), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Al-Ghazali (1056-1111), or Ibn Rushd (1126-1198).
5. Such as Saadia Ben Gaon (882-942), Maimonides (1135-1204), or Gersonides (1288-1344).

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to mid-1500s led to a period in which Classical learning began to be questioned, doubted, and interrogated to a growing degree. Not surprisingly, and despite being in many ways revolutionary compared to Ancient and Medieval thought, Early Modern Philosophy was still deeply concerned with religious questions.

The philosophies of the great Rationalists—René Descartes (1596-1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716)—were all bound up in many ways with their respective Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant theologies. Descartes' famous *Meditations* are largely concerned with proving the existence of God and the distinction of the body and soul. Spinoza's *Ethics* argues for his version of pantheism. Leibniz wrote versions of both the **Cosmological** and **Ontological** arguments (See Chapter 2), as well as his famous *Theodicy*, a response to the Problem of Evil (See Chapter 4).

Turning from the Rationalists to the British Empiricists, John Locke (1632-1704) was a deeply religious man and authored arguments for God's existence. Even his political philosophy begins from the premise that we are all God's property (which he seems to have meant quite seriously), for example, in the *Second Treatise on Government* 2.6 (Locke [1689] 1980, 9). George Berkeley (1685-1753) was actually a bishop in the Church of England, and a key aspect of his philosophy of "idealism" was the idea that, since matter doesn't really exist, only minds and ideas do, there has to be one very powerful mind (God) that constantly perceives all things and holds them in existence. Last among the three great British Empiricists, only David Hume (1711-1776) could reasonably be called an atheist, though this label was more of an accusation by his opponents. His views on religion have been more accurately described as "attenuated deism." In other words, he seems to have held something like the belief that there is *some* kind of Creator, who may possibly be something like a Great Mind, but who is not likely to be directly concerned about anything that happens in the world, at least as far as anyone would have any way of knowing (Gaskin 1987, 223 ff.).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose "critical" philosophy was largely a response to Hume's skepticism, described his project in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (B xxxi) as a way to "deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith" (Kant [1781] 1998, 117). While the philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831) is today often summarized in the triadic phrase, "thesis-antithesis-synthesis," Hegel's own conceptualization of his philosophy had much more to do with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (as he interpreted it), which he explicitly stated he was trying to revive, since the *theologians* of his day had, in his view, abandoned it (Schlitt 2012; Schlitt 2016).[6]

Finally, although there had been atheist philosophers before, it is only really in the 1800s, with Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), that atheistic philosophies begin to gain what will turn out to be a more solid and lasting foothold in the intellectual history of the West. But of course, it would be completely wrong to say that Marx or Nietzsche were *not concerned* with religious questions. Rather, they were both *deeply* concerned with questions about religion—they simply came down on a negative side of those questions.

6. See Schlitt (2012) for the key role of the doctrine of the Trinity in Hegel, and Schlitt (2016) for the doctrine of the Trinity in other German Idealists.

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Questions to Consider

5. As we've seen, nearly every philosopher in the Western tradition during the medieval period was either Jewish, Christian or Muslim. And even in the modern period when people began questioning nearly all medieval thought (and rejecting huge swaths of it), most philosophers still had some kind of religious belief up through the 1800s. Revisit your definitions of "philosophy" and "religion" from question 1 above. If philosophy and religion are sharply distinct pursuits, what could explain the long-standing connection between the two? If they are similar or overlapping pursuits, what could explain why philosophers would begin abandoning religion in the 1800s?
6. Nietzsche described Christianity as "Platonism for the masses." Revisit your definitions of "philosophy" and "religion" from question 1 above. Assuming that Christianity counts as "religion," and Platonism counts as "philosophy," could Christianity *possibly be* "Platonism for the masses"? That is, would it even be possible, on your definitions, for a religion to count as a philosophy? What does this say about Nietzsche's claim, or about your definitions?

IS CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY DOGMATICALLY ATHEIST?

Having traced the intertwined history of philosophy and religion in the Western tradition from the pre-Socratics to the 1800s, we can now address the reputation of philosophy as dogmatically or closed-mindedly atheistic. Philosophical speculation can easily lead to beliefs that aren't the same as the surrounding cultural mainstream. So, it's easy to see why people would associate philosophy with heresy (beginning with Socrates himself). But it is probably with philosophers of the early 1900s, such as Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and the Logical Positivists of the so-called "Vienna Circle" (who met from 1924 to 1936) that we find the source of philosophers' current-day reputations as people who narrow-mindedly refuse even to consider the possibility of the existence of God or anything spiritual. This reputation of narrow-mindedness is rather unfair in context, however. It's true that the Logical Positivists held religious talk to be, not merely false, but *meaningless* (which of course is a bit of a conversation stopper). But this was not, or at least not simply, a matter of being closed-minded or dogmatic about religion in particular. Rather, the Positivists had very specific views about the nature of language and meaning, and the relationship of meaning to observation and experience. Namely, it was held, to put it succinctly, that the meaning of a sentence is just the conditions under which it could be verified to be true (see Ayer 1952 for a famous example of this view). From their presuppositions about language and meaning, it simply followed as a straightforward consequence that talk about God or anything spiritual would be meaningless (Ayer 1952, 72 ff.).[7]

World War I and World War II no doubt also shook many people's faith in any kind of benevolent

7. But then, the same holds for talk about cause-and-effect, about morality, about aesthetics, and many other subjects—religion was not being singled out in this respect.

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deity, and solidified the skepticism of those who already doubted. Yet, even during this early 20th century flowering of atheism within philosophy, we still see philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), whose manuscripts make frequent allusions not only to the Bible, but to Christian thinkers from St. Augustine to Kierkegaard, Newman, and Tolstoy. Wittgenstein was both baptized and buried as a Catholic, though between those times he was not a practicing Catholic. Nevertheless, he was deeply interested in religious questions. He is reported to have once said, "I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view" (Rhees 1970, 94). He also expressed to Maurice Drury his deep regret that their friendship had in some unintended way made Drury less religious, and later commented, "There is a sense in which we are both Christians" (Rhees 1981, 130). This is perhaps a great irony, given that Wittgenstein's early work was one of the inspirations of the very Logical Positivist movement that gave philosophy its reputation of hostility to religion. And of course, two of Wittgenstein's most famous students—the husband-and-wife pair, Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001) and Peter Geach (1916-2013)—were both deeply devout Roman Catholics who made no attempt to hide their faith, despite the manifest unpopularity of their religious views within the profession in their day. Anscombe was by anyone's admission one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century, and Geach was also an important figure both in the study of logic and in the history of philosophy.

Meanwhile, Continental Philosophy has often been bound up in one way or another with religion as well. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) did not grow up religious, and seems to have strayed away again in his later years, but we do know that at one point in his twenties after having read the New Testament he was converted to Christianity and baptized in the Lutheran Church (Moran 2012, 13). Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) actually began his studies as a Roman Catholic seminarian before switching to philosophy, and he was influenced by the neo-Thomism he had encountered in seminary (McGrath 2006, *passim*). Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was by no means religious in any ordinary sense. Yet his philosophy is in many ways deeply *engaged* with religion, insofar as it attempts to explore what the meaning of life could be once we reject the traditional Western religious paradigm. This at least indicates that there is a serious question about how to make sense of, and find meaning in, our lives in the absence of religious belief. Indeed, in "Existentialism is a Humanism," Sartre describes his entire existentialist project by saying that "Existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position" (Sartre [1946] 2007, 53). A close study of Sartre, including some unpublished writings, reveals he was deeply concerned with theological discussions about free will and determinism under the nomenclature of "sin and grace" (Kirkpatrick 2017, 207 and *passim*). Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is another 20th-century Continental philosopher one cannot describe as religious in any conventional sense, and yet it's been reported that he "would sometimes laugh about his fascination with Catholic topics," often criticizing Christianity, but sometimes becoming an unexpected defender of certain aspects of it (Jordan 2014). In his later years, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) wrote and spoke explicitly about his ambivalent relationship to his Jewish identity, and how deeply it affected much of his thinking (Peeters 2012, 502-504). Thus, even during the heyday of 20th-century atheism, although most philosophers didn't *adhere* to any traditional religion, they were still frequently *engaged* with religious thought at a deep level (whether or not this was always made explicit).

In the middle of the 20th century, philosophers' attitudes towards religion began changing, especially

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within the Analytic tradition of philosophy that grew out of Logical Positivism. These changes have apparently not yet been widely noticed outside of the profession of philosophy and in the wider culture. At the same time that philosophers began to see deep problems with the Logical Positivists' very narrow theory of meaning, a small number of mostly English-speaking, Christian philosophers began a firm and sustained series of defenses of the rationality of theistic belief against the then-crumbling Positivist theory of meaning. Among them, one in particular—Alvin Plantinga (1932-)—undoubtedly stands out as the primary force, though he was joined at first by a small number of friends (like William Alston (1921-2009) and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1932-), among others) and soon influenced others coming in his wake (Peter van Inwagen (1942-) being among the most notable, though numerous others could be mentioned). We will read about a few of Plantinga's contributions to the Philosophy of Religion in the section on Reformed Epistemology in Chapter 2 and the Free Will Defense in Chapter 4, as well as some of his associates or those he influenced, such as Richard Swinburne (1934-) and William Lane Craig (1949-) (both in Chapter 2).

Since that time, philosophy of religion has seen something of an explosion within Analytic Philosophy (the kind of philosophy most prominent in English-speaking universities today). This is due partly to the force of Plantinga's arguments themselves, and partly no doubt to a certain level of respect he commanded for making important contributions to metaphysics and epistemology—central areas of concern to all philosophers. Of course, religious belief has by no means won the day among philosophers, and the majority of professional philosophers would identify as atheists. Still, in contrast to the early and mid-20th century, when probably only a few philosophers had any religious beliefs (and even fewer were willing to admit it!), today almost 15% of professional philosophers say they believe in, or lean towards belief in, God. That figure bumps up to almost 30% among those who specialize in Medieval Philosophy (much of which is concerned with philosophy of religion, and the relation between philosophy and theology). And the figure bumps up again to well over 70% among those who specialize in philosophy of religion itself (Bourget and Chalmers 2014). There is controversy of course over what the last bit of data shows. It may mean that the arguments in favor of religious belief are just better than those against, and that those who specialize in philosophical arguments about religion (and so are in a better position to judge their merits) find themselves convinced of the existence of God. On the other hand, it may simply be a matter of self-selection—if one is an atheist, one might not be very likely to specialize in philosophy of religion!

We've seen that the reputation of closed-mindedness about religion among philosophers results from a misunderstanding of one particular school of thought that has somehow managed to overshadow nearly the entire history of philosophy from antiquity to the 20th century. The truth is that most philosophers throughout history have had religious beliefs of some sort, and many of the non-religious minority have been interested in, even consciously influenced by, religion. And while Logical Positivism's dismissal of religious talk as meaningless may sound insulting when viewed out of context, it was a straight-forward and unavoidable logical consequence of the then-dominant view about linguistic meaning in general. That view about language, however, met its demise some time ago.

We stand now at an interesting point in history. We saw a decline in religious belief among philosophers beginning in the 1800s, but are seeing something of a resurgence today. Is the long

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interconnection between philosophy and religion from antiquity to the late Modern period an historical accident? Or is it the result of a deep, natural affinity between the two? Does the decline of religious belief among philosophers from the 1800s to the 1900s mean that philosophy finally managed to rid itself of an irrational relic of a bygone age, and will the recent resurgence of philosophy of religion turn out to be nothing but a blip on the radar? Or will the prevalence of atheism for a century or so turn out to have been the blip on the radar, which we are now seeing the end of? History has yet to yield a final verdict.

Questions to Consider

7. Suppose someone believes (1) that all propositions in a certain category are false, (or perhaps meaningless, or unjustifiable), and (2) that all religious beliefs fall into that category. Since it follows from (1) and (2) that (3) all religious beliefs are false (or meaningless, or unjustifiable), this person is not interested in listening to arguments about religious beliefs. But suppose that person is open-minded enough to entertain arguments that they may be wrong about (1) or (2). And if they could be convinced they are wrong about (1) or (2), they would then abandon (3) and be willing to listen to arguments in favor of religious beliefs. Is it fair to say that person is "closed-minded" about religious beliefs? Why or why not?
8. Revisit your definitions of "philosophy" and "religion" from question 1 above. Given your definitions, can you explain why many 20th-century philosophers, despite being atheists or agnostics, still found many religious questions and writings deeply interesting or important? Or do they make those interests seem difficult to understand, or merely a coincidence? What does that say about those definitions?

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CHAPTER 2.

REASONS TO BELIEVE – THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

MARCUS WILLIAM HUNT

Thinking about God brings together our powers of speculation, our deepest values, and our greatest hopes and fears. It is therefore fertile philosophical territory. Some of the arguments for belief in God are theoretical in that they appeal to our reason. Other arguments are practical in that they invoke God to make sense of some of our practices, such as morality. In this chapter, we will review the most influential theoretical arguments for God's existence: the teleological, the cosmological, and the ontological arguments. The former two try to show God's existence using tools familiar from ordinary empirical reasoning; God is a hypothesis to be proven in much the same way as we prove more mundane hypotheses, marshalling the evidence as best we can. Just as a one might see a puddle and infer that it has been raining recently, one might observe certain other features of the world and infer God as the best (or only) explanation of them. The latter argument is more closely akin to mathematics and conceptual analysis; just as one might reflect on the concept of a triangle and ascertain that its internal angles must add up to 180°, one might reflect on the concept of God and ascertain that he must exist. Lastly, we will introduce the suggestion that it is legitimate to believe in God without providing arguments at all: that belief in God is more properly a cornerstone for our thinking, than a mere conclusion of some argument. Each of these arguments have been articulated in myriad ways, so we will focus our attention on some of the most influential versions.

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

"Telos" being Greek for "purpose" or "goal," the **teleological** argument takes as its starting point the appearance of purpose or design in the world. If there is design, there must be a designer. This thought is an ancient and cross-cultural one, appearing in classical Hindu thought (Brown 2008) and in the Psalms: "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). An influential formulation comes from William Paley (1743-1805). In *Natural Theology*, Paley offers numerous instances of apparent design, focusing primarily on biological organisms. Paley argues that organisms are analogous to human-created artifacts in that they involve a complex arrangement of parts that serve some useful function, where even slight alterations in the complex arrangement would mean that the useful function was no longer served. An eye, like a watch, evidently serves a useful function. The function is only achieved by a very complex arrangement

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of parts, which in turn serve various sub-functions, all ordered towards the higher function. Had this arrangement been different in any minute detail, the eye would not successfully serve its higher function. To explain this feature of the eye, we should, on an **analogy** with the watch, refer to a designing mind's activity, rather than the blind play of causal forces. As we are to the watch, so God is to the eye. To Paley, God is a powerful and simple hypothesis that must be invoked to explain the design resplendent in nature (Paley 1802).

Formulations of the teleological argument like Paley's have been subjected to searching criticisms, not least by David Hume (1711-1776). In his fabulously written *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume questions how close the analogy of design really is. For example, we produce artifacts by acting on pre-existing materials, but God is supposed to create from nothing. Most artifacts have a purpose that is evident to us, but God's purpose in having created this or that creature, or the world at all, is unclear. We have seen artifacts being manufactured on many occasions, but never an organism, or the world. Even granting unequivocally that there is design in the world, we would not be justified in inferring God to explain it. Hume notes that artifacts are usually the result of collaboration by many people. Nor is there any connection between the qualities of an artifact and the qualities of its designer; one need not be a giant to build a skyscraper or be beautiful to make a beautiful painting. So, the design in the world need not be the design of one being, or an especially exalted being. Rather, the evidence of design is equally consistent with the hypothesis of polytheism (Hume 1779). Perhaps as devastating for Paley's formulation, Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of evolution by natural selection is widely taken to show that the complex arrangement of parts and the functions of the parts of organisms can be accounted for without reference to a designing mind. The appearance of design is merely appearance; the analogy between artifacts and organisms is a misleading one. God is an obsolete hypothesis so far as the explanation of these phenomena are concerned. A distinct minority, the proponents of "Intelligent Design" contest this claim by offering examples of biological phenomena that supposedly cannot be explained by Darwinian evolution (Behe 1996). Barbara Forest argues that "Intelligent Design" theories lack a serious methodology, given that they invoke miraculous intervention in an unprincipled way to explain various phenomena (Forrest 2011).

However, teleological arguments continue to thrive in other forms. One line of thinking is the fine-tuning argument. Our universe seems to be governed by a batch of laws of nature—e.g. gravity, the strong nuclear force. It seems possible that these laws of nature could have been different in an unfathomable number of ways—e.g. we can conceive gravity as a billion times stronger than it is, or a billion times weaker. It seems that most of the ways that the laws of nature could have been would not allow for embodied moral agents (or, more broadly, life) by not allowing for the emergence of complex matter. Now, arguably God is a being who wishes there to be embodied moral agents. So, if there is a God, this predicts a universe with laws of nature that allow for the emergence of embodied moral agents, laws that are finely-tuned for such a purpose. By contrast, if there is no God there is no particular reason to predict that the laws of nature will be like this. Our universe seems to be one with laws that allow for embodied moral agents. Therefore, our universe is more consistent with the theistic hypothesis, so probably God exists. Finally, putting aside the fine-tuning of the physical laws we enjoy, Richard Swinburne contends that the fact that our universe is governed by laws at all, rather than being chaotic, is something that demands a design-based explanation (Swinburne 2004).

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Whether such arguments really identify phenomena that stand in need of a special explanation, and whether the explanations they offer are vulnerable to being supplanted by non-theistic alternatives, is a matter of ongoing debate.

Questions to Consider

1. What is the value of arguments by analogy, such as Paley's? Do they give new information, or just highlight information you already had, or can they even be misleading?
2. Suppose you were convinced that our universe is in fact fine-tuned. What, if anything, would you be entitled to infer about the nature of the fine-tuner(s)?
3. Many have thought that Darwinian evolution thoroughly undermines the view that biological phenomena are designed by God. Is there a consistent way of holding both views? Supposing there is, would the hypothesis of a designer-God still be a necessary part of the explanation of the biological phenomena, or a somewhat ornamental addition?

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

"Cosmos" being Greek for "world," the **cosmological** argument suggests God as the only adequate hypothesis in explaining why there is something rather than nothing. Cosmological arguments go back at least as far as Plato (428-348 BCE), with influential formulations being offered by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716). One influential formulation comes from Samuel Clarke (1675-1729).

In *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, Clarke argues for the conclusion that God is the reason for the universe's existence by showing the bankruptcy of the alternatives. Something must have existed from eternity, Clarke reasons, since to suppose otherwise would be to suppose that something arose from nothing, which is absurd. Further, this eternal something must be independent of the universe. Think of a sapling tree. Like every individual thing in the universe its existence is **contingent**—it could fail to exist—as demonstrated by the fact that it once did not exist and by the fact that it is susceptible to change and destruction. Therefore, its reason for existing must be sought outside it; if we seek the reason why the sapling exists we must refer to its parent tree, the soil, the sun, the air. But if everything in the universe is contingent, then so is the universe itself, and its reason for existing must be sought outside it. Even if the universe had no beginning in time, and we could trace the sapling's reason for existing backward indefinitely, we would still need to explain why there was this endless succession of contingent beings rather than nothing. Think of "reason for existing" as being like the parcel in the children's game "pass the parcel."[1] Even supposing an infinite number of players, or a circle of players passing the parcel for an eternity, if every player must receive the parcel from another (like a contingent being receives its reason for existing from another), then we would

1. Pass the parcel is a parlour game in which a parcel containing a prize is passed around and around in a circle.

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still face the question where the players got the parcel in the first place. Lastly, the being outside the universe must have a necessary existence; that is, it must contain the reason for its existence within itself, such that it could not fail to exist. By the difficulties attending all the alternatives, we are driven to accept that not all beings are contingent; our search for reasons for existing must reach its terminus in a necessary being, God. Clarke admits that the notion of necessary existence is difficult to conceive, since all the beings we encounter are contingent, but holds that it is the only adequate hypothesis in explaining why there is something (Clarke 1705).

Clarke's cosmological argument was also criticized by Hume in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Hume questions why the universe itself may not be the necessary being. Clarke's reason for rejecting this idea was that everything in the universe is contingent. But, Hume notes, Clarke is committing the fallacy of composition. A flock may be composed of sheep destined for slaughter, but this does not prove that the flock itself is destined for slaughter. Likewise, perhaps the universe's existence is necessary despite the contingency of every individual thing in it, a thought which is lent some credibility by the physical principle that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. Raising further havoc, Hume questions whether there can even be such a thing as a necessary being. It seems to be a feature of claims which are necessary—like "2+2=4" or "a nephrologist is a physician of the kidneys"—that their contraries cannot be conceived without contradiction, as with "2+2=5." But we seem able to conceive any being's nonexistence without contradiction; just as I can coherently conceive of the sapling's nonexistence, I can coherently conceive of God's nonexistence (as shown by the fact that we feel the need to debate God's existence).

Another issue is that Clarke's cosmological argument, like many other formulations, invokes the "principle of sufficient reason," or the idea that every state of affairs has a reason why it is so and not otherwise. This seems to be a principle that we make thorough use of from early childhood in endlessly asking "why?" and expecting that there must be answers. Because of this principle, we insist that the universe must have a reason for its existence, rather than allowing that the universe is an unaccountable "brute fact." But why should we accept the principle of sufficient reason? It does not seem to be a necessary truth or something we can infer from experience (Pruss 2006).

A quite different version of the cosmological argument is presented by William Lane Craig, drawing upon the Islamic philosophers of the 9th-12th centuries such as al-Ghazali (1058-1111), called the kalām cosmological argument. Craig argues that whatever begins to exist has a cause, that the universe began to exist, and that God must be invoked as its cause. Why believe that the universe began to exist? For one thing, it seems that the universe cannot have an infinite temporal duration since the successive addition of finites cannot add up to something infinite. Just as one cannot "count to infinity," the compounding of the moments that pass in time could not ever add up to an infinite temporal duration. For another, if we make the supposition that the universe has an infinite temporal duration various absurdities arise. Sundays are a subset (one-seventh) of all the days that have ever occurred. A very bored deity would count out six non-Sundays for every Sunday. But if the universe has an infinite temporal duration, then an infinite number of Sundays have occurred. And an infinite number of non-Sundays have occurred. Therefore, the subset is equal in magnitude to the set—an absurdity. So, the universe began to exist. Notice that Craig's argument avoids referring to necessary beings, or the principle of sufficient reason; Craig's argument requires only that if something begins

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to exist, then it has a cause. Supporters of the kalām cosmological argument may also cite scientific evidence to support the idea that the universe began to exist, for instance the Big Bang theory or the idea that if the universe had an infinite temporal duration, then **entropy** would guarantee that complex matter would not exist presently (Craig 1979).

One key question about Craig's kalām cosmological argument is whether the cause of the universe must be something like our conception of God, a kind of personal agent. Craig, following al-Ghazali, suggests that the cause of the universe must be timeless, outside of time entirely. Physical causes bring about their effects, as it were, immediately. For example, an effect like the process of water freezing will begin to happen as soon as its cause, a sub-zero temperature, is present. So, if the cause of the universe is timeless and is a physical cause, we would expect the universe to have always existed. But as we have seen, that cannot be. So, the cause of the universe must be non-physical. Aside from physical causes, we sometimes explain effects as resulting from actions—we have the idea that personal agents bring about effects spontaneously as and when they will to do so, in a way that is different than and not entirely determined by physical causes. On this model, plausibly the cause of the universe is the action of a personal, but non-physical, agent. Others have objected, though, that it is difficult to make sense of the idea of a personal agent who acts but is also outside of time, and again that we are having to rely too heavily on our limited repertoire of concepts: for all we know, there might be causes that are neither like the physical nor like personal agency.

Questions to Consider

4. It seems that the opponent of the cosmological argument can try to defuse it by denying that the universe has a reason for its existence, or a cause, or by denying the principle of sufficient reason. Are these unreasonable moves? Is there any claim or principle that it would be unreasonable to deny, if the alternative was the conclusion that God exists?
5. In theory, could science one day prove that the universe did not begin to exist? What impact would such a finding have on Clarke's cosmological argument? On Craig's kalām cosmological argument?
6. Is it reasonable to rely on our limited repertoire of concepts, as exemplified in the discussion about whether the cause of the universe is a personal agent? Should we be worried by the thought that reality may be stranger than we can conceive?

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

"Ontos" being Greek for "being" or "existence," the **ontological** argument is unusual in that it has no empirical premises at all; God is not called upon as an explanation for anything. Rather, God's existence is proven by reflection on the concept of God. This is an extremely unfamiliar way of proceeding, since ordinarily we think that by **analyzing** the concept of something, we may discover the **predicates** that will be true of it *if* it exists, but not *that* it exists. For instance, if I have a child

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then the predicate "has a grandfather named Patrick" will be true of it. The ontological argument proposes, in the case of God, to abolish this "if" and proceed directly from the concept of God to his existence. The argument's first proponent was Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). It's a familiar idea that God is great, the greatest in fact, so great one cannot think of anything greater. Anselm draws on this familiar idea in his *Proslogion*. There, Anselm characterizes God as "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived" (Anselm 1078). In more modern language, Anselm is saying that God is the greatest conceivable being, that it is part of the concept of God that it is impossible to conceive of any being greater than God. It seems that existence is greater than nonexistence. So, if we conceive of God as nonexistent, then we can conceive of something greater than God: e.g., a shoe, a flea. But God is the greatest conceivable being, so our assumption of God's nonexistence must have been false, and God must exist. Another way of putting this is that Anselm anticipates Hume's objection that no being's existence is necessary (since any being's nonexistence can be conceived without contradiction). Anselm insists that in this case the idea of God, properly understood, does give rise to contradiction if we suppose his non-existence. "The being which must exist does not exist" seems like a contradiction.

From the outset, the ontological argument has had difficulties heaped upon it. For one thing, although it may seem intuitively right that existence is greater than nonexistence, what does "greater" mean? Better than? Preferable to? More real than? A satisfying characterization is hard to find. Another early objection comes from Gaunilo of Marmoutier (994-1083), who makes the parodic suggestion of an island that is the greatest island that can be conceived. If such an island is to be greater than, say, Corsica, it must exist. Must we then say that such an island exists? Surely not. The difficulty raised by Gaunilo is that it seems that the predicate of existence can be bolted on to any concept illicitly. Anselm responds, however, that his argument applies uniquely to the greatest *being* that can be conceived (not a given, limited kind of being like an island), since although the imagined island would indeed be greater if it existed, it is not part of the concept of anything except the greatest being that can be conceived that it be greater than everything else, and so for it alone can we infer its existence from its concept. A similar response is that contingency is part of the concept of an island (or dog, or horse, or any other specific, limited kind of being which we are acquainted with), so that a necessarily existing island would simply be a contradiction. Only with the non-specific concept of "a being" in general would contingency not just be included in the concept.

The most historically influential criticism of the ontological argument, however, comes from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that existence is not a predicate (Kant 1781). Think about the concept of a banana. We can attribute certain predicates to it, such as "yellowness" and "sweetness." As time goes by, we might add further predicates to the concept, e.g., "nutritional potassium source." Now think about what happens to the concept of a banana when you suppose that bananas exist. It seems that the concept is not changed at all. To say something exists is not to say anything about the concept of it, only that the concept is instantiated in reality. But if existence cannot be part of a concept, then it cannot be part of the concept of God, and cannot be found therein by any sort of analysis.

Kant's argument was widely taken to be calamitous to the ontological argument. However, in the 1960s, the argument was rejuvenated, in a form that (perhaps) avoids Kant's criticism, by Norman

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Malcom (1911-1990). Malcolm suggests that although existence may not be a predicate, necessary existence is a predicate. As contingent beings, we are the sort of things which can come into and go out of existence. But if God exists, then he is a necessary being rather than a contingent being. So, if he exists he cannot go out of existence. This is a predicate God enjoys, even if existence per se is not a predicate (Malcolm 1960). Intuitively, "indestructibility" and "immortality" are predicates that alter the concept of a thing. Another modern version of an Anselmian ontological argument is offered by Lynne Rudder Baker (1944-2017). Baker's version avoids the claim that existence is a predicate (as well as several other traditional difficulties). Instead, Baker notes that individuals who do not exist have mediated causal powers, that is, they cause effects but only because individuals who do exist have thoughts and beliefs about them: Santa Claus has the mediated causal power to get children to leave cookies out for him, children who themselves have unmediated causal powers. In short, to have unmediated causal powers is intuitively greater than having mediated causal powers, so given that God is the greatest being that can be conceived of, God must have unmediated causal powers, and so he must exist (Baker 2013).

A final difficulty that we may mention for these three theistic proofs is whether they prove the existence of the God of Abraham, or the God of classical theism (supposing that the two are the same) — which it is the concern of most theistic philosophers to do. The teleological argument may show a designer, which corresponds tolerably well to the creatorhood of God, but seems to fall short of showing God's other attributes, like omnibenevolence. Similarly, the world-cause or necessary being purportedly shown by the cosmological and ontological arguments may seem far distant from a personal God who is interested in our affairs. One theistic response is that these arguments may work in combination, or be supplemented by the evidence of revelations, religious experiences, and miracles (See Chapter 3 for a few such arguments), or we may be able to find ways in which one divine attribute implies the others. Bear in mind also that there are many less well-known theistic arguments beyond these three traditional ones (McIntosh 2019). (For some specific examples, see Chapter 3.)

Questions to Consider

7. Do we really have a conception of "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived"? Is that something we are able to frame in our minds, or have we just begun to misuse words?
8. If existence is not a predicate, why do we treat it as one in ordinary sentences, like "the pecan tree exists"? Further, how do we delineate the domain of fiction? Isn't our concept of "Homer Simpson" a concept of a character who does not exist? If not, what is it a concept of?
9. Even once you grasp it, does the ontological argument seem intuitive to you? Does it seem less intuitive than the cosmological argument? Should you put much weight on your intuitions about these arguments?

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REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

It strikes some people as very odd to base belief in God on theoretical arguments like those we have discussed. It seems that someone who did so would be obliged to regularly check the philosophical journals to ensure that their favorite argument had not been undermined, and as you may have noticed the fortunes of each argument wax and wane over time. Surely, belief in God should not depend on such vicissitudes. But without relying on such arguments, would belief not become theoretically unjustified, irrational, and dogmatic?

One suggestion, drawing on the Reformed theology of John Calvin (1509-1564), comes from Alvin Plantinga (1983). We can think of our beliefs as being arranged in a structure. Some beliefs are high-up in the structure. We can only justify these beliefs by making complicated arguments from other beliefs (e.g. "inflation reduces unemployment"). But other beliefs are at the foundation of the structure; they are not based on other beliefs, and so are themselves "basic." Basic beliefs need not be arbitrary. Rather, basic beliefs are justified ("properly basic") if they arise from the exercise of reliable faculties such as our senses or our reason. For instance, I don't infer the belief that I am cold from any more well-known beliefs. I justifiably believe it since it is evident to my senses. And, although a mathematician could prove "2+2=4" from axioms that are in some sense more fundamental, that isn't how ordinary people arrive at this belief. Rather, people justifiably believe that "2+2=4" since it is self-evident to their reason.

Could it be that belief in God is properly basic, rather than something high-up in our belief-structure, as the arguments that we have canvassed assume? The apparent objection to allowing this is that God's existence is neither evident to the senses, nor self-evident to reason. If a belief does not meet either of these criteria, then how can it be properly basic? Plantinga's response is that there are many beliefs which seem to be properly basic for us yet which do not meet these criteria. For instance, consider your belief that other people are not automatons, that they have an inner mental life like your own. This belief is usually basic for us; we believe it spontaneously when we see a human form, rather than believing it because of some complicated argument. Is this belief evident to the senses? No, we cannot "see" other people's minds, only their observable, outward behavior. Is it self-evident to reason? No, unlike a mathematical truth, it is the sort of thing which we can conceive to be false without contradiction (since we can conceive of other people being mindless robots). So, it seems this belief is basic for us, despite neither being self-evident nor evident to the senses, and is properly basic if whatever the faculty is that delivers this belief is reliable. Perhaps belief in God is just the same way, something we spontaneously believe in certain circumstances, as when viewing a dramatic sunset or following the prevention of impending peril. Such a belief will be properly basic if it results from the exercise of a reliable faculty. Following Calvin, Plantinga postulates such a faculty under the term *sensus divinitatis* ("sense of divinity"). Plantinga notes that taking belief in God as basic need not be dogmatic, since basic beliefs can be overturned if they are shown to be false or shown to have resulted from unreliable faculties—but he conjectures the failure of the arguments against God's existence, which are addressed in Chapter 4.

Questions to Consider

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10. If belief in God can be properly basic, why couldn't all sorts of strange beliefs be properly basic?
11. If there is a faculty that generates basic beliefs about religious claims, how do we explain the occurrence of unbelief or of indifference to religious claims? On the other hand, if there is not such a faculty, how do we explain the widespread belief in something so exotic and far-removed as God? Would anyone have thought-up the idea of God, if it were not the sort of idea that spontaneously occurs to us under certain common conditions?

CONCLUSION

We have looked at some arguments that purport to provide evidence for God's existence either by invoking God as an explanation for various aspects of the world (the teleological and cosmological arguments) or by analysis of the concept of God (the ontological argument). Each argument has formidable proponents and detractors, and both the arguments and the responses to them raise difficult philosophical problems about the nature of thought (concepts, beliefs, arguments) and the nature of nature itself (time, causality, purpose). One thing we can learn from this state of affairs is that anyone with an interest in proving God's existence, or in resisting those proofs, needs to take an interest in philosophy, and likewise that those with an interest in philosophy can see philosophical problems in new and different lights by examining the arguments for God's existence.

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FURTHER READING

Books Surveying Arguments for and against the Existence of God

Accessible sources assessing the three arguments considered here, and more:

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Online Resources

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy contain many excellent articles on the main arguments for and against God's existence. There are many websites and blogs focusing on the philosophy of religion. Good ones include:

- Strange Notions: The Digital Areopagus–Reason, Faith, Dialogue
- Edward Feser's blog
- Alexander Pruss's blog
- Arguments for the Existence of God on The Secular Web
- Atheism: Proving the Negative
- Ex-apologist: A philosophy of religion blog
  Consider watching a video lecture series, such as Professor Matt McCormick's video lectures

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CHAPTER 3.

NON-STANDARD ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

ROBERT SLOAN LEE

The attempt to demonstrate the existence of God by way of reason and argument has been called "the most ambitious intellectual enterprise ever undertaken" (Schmitz 1992, 28). The standard arguments typically employed in this enterprise (namely, the ontological argument, the argument from design, and the cosmological argument—see Chapter 2) are the arguments that are usually discussed in introductory philosophy textbooks. Other arguments, ones not usually covered in introductory philosophy textbooks, can be called non-standard arguments for God's existence. Here, we will discuss a small sample of the non-standard arguments that attempt to show that belief in God's existence is either rational or well-evidenced. Specifically, we will focus on the following three arguments: Pascal's Wager, Arguments from Religious Experience, and C.S. Lewis's Argument from Desire. After examining these arguments, we will mention a few other non-standard arguments for the existence of God and recommend sources for further reading.

PASCAL'S WAGER

Pascal's wager is not strictly an argument for God's existence. Rather, as Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), a brilliant polymath and the founder of probability theory, presents it, the argument attempts to show that one should believe in God even if there is no evidence for or against God's existence.[1] Specifically, Pascal thinks that it is in one's own best interest to believe in God's existence in the absence of any evidence for or against God's existence.[2]

If there are no good reasons for believing or disbelieving in God's existence, Pascal holds that there are four possibilities:

- Option (a): God exists and one believes that God exists
- Option (b): God exists and one believes that God does not exist

1. An accessible account of Pascal's life and impressive accomplishments can be found in Thomas V. Morris, *Making Sense of It All: Pascal and the Meaning of Life* (Morris 1992).
2. The wager was originally presented in Blaise Pascal's posthumously published and incomplete book, *Pensées* (Pascal 1966, 149-155). The title of this book can be translated as *Thoughts*.

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- Option (c): God does not exist and one believes that God exists
- Option (d): God does not exist and one believes that God does not exist

Pascal argues that each possibility will have a particular outcome or payoff. Further, on the assumption that there is no evidence available to decide whether or not God exists, Pascal thinks we should choose the option which has the best payoff. Since we cannot choose whether or not God actually exists, our only choice is whether or not we *believe* that God exists. We are in the game, as it were, and we must place our bets.

Under possibilities (c) and (d) God does not exist, so any losses or benefits will be limited. In other words, if one believes that God exists when God does not exist (possibility c), then one might forgo some temporary pleasures or may gain temporary benefits from living one's life in a different way. Further, Pascal holds that benefits or losses associated with not believing in God's existence when God doesn't exist (possibility d) will also be limited.

However, Pascal thinks the outcomes for possibilities (a) and (b) are more striking. In fact, he thinks that if God exists and we choose to believe that God exists, then our gain will be unlimited. Further, if God exists and we choose to believe that God does not exist, Pascal says our loss will be unlimited. Since unlimited gains and losses will always outweigh limited gains and losses, we should choose to believe that God exists even if there is no evidence that would demonstrate God's existence or non-existence.[3] If Pascal's wager is a correct assessment of our options, then it turns out that not believing in God is irrational in terms of our self-interest.

There are different types of objections to Pascal's wager. Some of the argument's opponents think that making a decision to believe in God on the basis of self-interest is somehow morally problematic. However, whether or not that type of objection can be spelled out in a persuasive manner is another question, given that people blamelessly act in their own self-interest all the time (for example, eating and sleeping are acts of self-interest). Further, there is no reason to think that believing on the basis of Pascal's wager would harm anyone else's interests.[4] Further, one advocate of Pascal's argument writes that the "benefits invoked" by the argument "need not be self-centered prudential benefits only" (Jordan 1997, 353). He adds that these benefits "may involve the good of other persons, and even the common good of a large number of people" (Jordan 1997, 353). He concludes that prudential arguments, like Pascal's wager, "cannot be easily dismissed as morally suspect, selfish appeals to base considerations" (Jordan 1997, 353). In short, this objection to Pascal's wager is not very convincing.

A more important objection raises the question of whether the options and outcomes described by Pascal above are the only possibilities. Perhaps some other view of God is correct. For example, why should we think that God rewards belief without evidence? Perhaps there is a deviant God who perversely punishes belief and rewards unbelief. This objection is sometimes referred to as the many-Gods objection. Stephen Davis puts the objection this way: "Indeed, there are scores of other Gods or gods that are actually worshiped in the religions of the world, and there is no guarantee that they will

3. Of course, Pascal thought there was good evidence for God's existence (and for the truth of Christianity), but exploring that would take us too far out of our way.

4. A discussion on the difficulties of advancing this sort of objection can be found in Philip L. Quinn's essay, "Moral Objections to Pascalian Wagering" (Quinn 1994).

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dispense rewards and punishments in the way that Pascal says that the Christian God will do" (Davis 1997, 165). If this objection is correct, then the issue is not merely one of deciding between whether or not God exists, but of deciding which type of God exists.

Defenders of Pascal's wager are not without responses to this type of objection. Regarding the notion of a perverse deity that punishes belief and rewards unbelief, Jeff Jordan says the following:

> Such a hypothesis being "cooked up" is not … a "genuine option." That is to say, these cooked up "religious" hypotheses are so bizarre that one is justified in assigning them, if not a zero probability, a probability assignment so small as to warrant only neglect. This procedure is illustrated by the simple case of coin tossing. When one tosses a coin considered fair, it is possible that it land on its edge, remain suspended midair, or disappear, or any number of bizarre but possible events might occur. Yet, because there is no reason to believe that these events are plausible, one quite properly neglects their possibility and considers the partition of "heads" and "tails" jointly to exhaust the possibilities. (Jordan 1994, 107-108)

Jordan thinks that the notion of the perverse deity considered above should be treated with similar neglect. Nevertheless, while we might dismiss gerrymandered ideas about perverse gods, the various deities of the world's religions (say, Vishnu, Yahweh, or Allah) constitute a more formidable objection to the wager argument. Some philosophers think that this objection defeats this basic statement of Pascal's wager (Flew 1984, 66-68; Harrison 1999, 598-599). (See Chapter 6 for more on how the diversity of the world's religions may cause difficulties for traditional arguments in favor of monotheistic belief.)

While the basic version of Pascal's wager does not seem to survive this objection based on the actual religions of the world, the wager argument can be revised. On the revised version of the argument, all the religions that promise unlimited gain as a result of belief are grouped together under one option and all the other choices (namely, the view that all religions are false along with any religions that don't promise unlimited gains) are grouped together under another option. Given this partition, prudence says that one should pursue a religion from the first group (rather than disbelieving all religions or pursuing a religion from the second group). We can refer to this as the *ecumenical wager*. Jeff Jordan says the following about this revised argument:

> The ecumenical version of the wager shows that theistic belief (as well as, perhaps, other sorts of religious belief) carries a greater expected utility than does disbelief, and so one ought to try to believe….But it is important to note that even if the wager is no help in deciding which religious option to believe, it does nonetheless show that one ought to believe one of them. (Jordan 1994, 110-111)

In short, this version of Pascal's wager encourages one to explore certain sorts of religions—namely, those that offer some sort of unlimited gain.

Now that we've seen how some of the objections above may be answered, one should keep in mind that there are other objections to Pascal's argument (as well as replies to those objections). Further, it is also important to realize that there are other types of wager arguments. For example, James Beattie (1735-1803) argues that theism is so consoling or encouraging that we are justified in believing in God's existence even if God's existence is highly unlikely, and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) offers a pragmatic argument that one is justified in hoping that something like theism is true. These and other versions of the argument can be explored in Jeff Jordan's book, *Pascal's Wager: Pragmatic Arguments and*

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Belief in God (Jordan 2006).[5] Another treatment of the wager argument worth mentioning is Michael Rota's book, *Taking Pascal's Wager: Faith, Evidence and the Abundant Life* (Rota 2016).

Questions to Consider

1. Suppose there is some good (but not conclusive) evidence for the type of God that Pascal believes in. Would that lend credibility to Pascal's basic wager argument?
2. Pascal's basic wager argument says nothing about Hell or punishment for not believing in God's existence (if God exists). Does noticing that fact make the argument more attractive or plausible? Why or why not? If it did include mention of punishment for disbelief, would that make the argument more compelling? Why or why not?
3. Suppose that you will die in one year if you don't believe (by the end of that year) that elephants live on Mars. So, you decide that you will try to make yourself believe this. Could you make yourself believe that elephants live on Mars? If not, then does that count against Pascal's wager or against Jeff Jordan's ecumenical wager? Explain why or why not.
4. Is it plausible to think that God could be displeased for someone coming to hold theistic belief as a result of the wager argument?

GOD'S EXISTENCE AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Another argument for God's existence (or for the rationality of believing in God's existence) is the argument from religious experience. William James (1842-1910) and Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) are well-known authors who have discussed different kinds of religious experience and described the features of these experiences (James 1982; Otto 1950). However, contemporary philosophers have skillfully argued that religious experience provides justifying grounds for belief in God's existence (Alston 1991; Yandell 1993; Swinburne 2004, 293-327). Religious experience is a ubiquitous feature of human history and culture. Such experiences might range from a general sense of divine presence (rather than specifically *theistic* experience) to a mystical vision of the light of God. For a contemporary discussion of the features of religious experience and the different types of religious experience, see Chapter 2 of Caroline Franks Davis's book, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Davis 1989, 29-65).

While not everyone thinks that religious experience counts as evidence for God's existence, some hold that religious experience does justify belief in the existence of God. One way of formulating this sort of argument is the following:

5. Jeff Jordan explores prudential arguments presented by authors other than Pascal (for example, by J.S. Mill, James Beattie, H.H. Price, and others) in chapter 6 of his book (Jordan 2006, 166-198). One can also find a brief survey of Pascal-styled arguments in writers predating Pascal in John K. Ryan's essay, "The Wager in Pascal and Others" (Ryan 1994). Also of interest here is Nicholas Rescher's book, *Pascal's Wager: A Study of Practical Reasoning in Philosophical Theology* (Rescher 1985).

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1. Some people have experiences that seem to be experiences of God.
2. If some people have experiences that seem to be experiences of God, then there is *prima facie* evidence for God's existence.
3. *Therefore*, there is *prima facie* evidence for God's existence. (from 1 and 2)

Here the notion of ***prima facie*** evidence is just the notion of initial evidence—where *prima facie* simply means what seems to be true before the situation is examined in greater detail. Given the frequency of religious experience (across both times and cultures), the first premise is virtually undeniable. However, why should one accept the second premise that claims experiences of God give one initial evidence for God's existence?

One reason to accept the second premise of this argument is offered by Richard Swinburne. He advances a principle of reasonable belief (namely, the Principle of Credulity). Swinburne's principle can be stated like this: if something appears to be present to a person, then (in the absence of special considerations) it probably is present to them (or it is at least rational to believe it to be present) (Swinburne 2004, 303-304). In other words, we are justified in thinking that things *are* a certain way based on things *appearing* to be that way—barring extenuating considerations. One philosopher provides an illustration of this principle in action: "For example, the experience of it seeming to me that my keys are locked inside my car is good evidence in support of my supposing that my keys are locked inside my car" (Geivett 2003, 181). Now, if we found out that this person has frequent hallucinations of his keys being locked in the car or that he has been hypnotized to believe this about his keys, then those extenuating circumstances would overturn the judgement that this man has good evidence (or justification) for believing that his keys are locked in his car. But in the absence of any such extenuating circumstances, his belief about his keys is justified. Likewise, advocates of the argument from religious experience often see religious experience in a similar way (namely, that an experience of God's presence is *prima facie* or initial evidence of God's presence).

Critics of the argument may think that it is easily defeated by some simple objections. However, it turns out that this type of argument possesses an unexpected resilience. For instance, one objection to the argument is that religious experiences (or something like them) can result from the use of drugs, extreme stress, extraordinary hardship, or other natural factors (involving, say, brain chemistry or the environment). Under these conditions purely natural factors can bring about religious experiences, and this throws doubt on the legitimacy of all religious experiences. In response to this objection, William J. Abraham writes, "We do not generally believe that because some reports of ordinary natural objects sometimes involve illusion, hallucination, and the like, then all reports do so" (Abraham 1985, 45). He continues, "If we insist that they apply only to religious experience, then we face the embarrassing fact that we apply standards in the religious sphere which we do not apply elsewhere" (Abraham 1985, 45). This sort of double-standard suggests that "religious experience must always be seen as guilty until proven innocent," but that would fallaciously beg the question against Swinburne's principle of reasonable belief (Abraham 1985, 45). To illustrate this point, suppose it can be shown that some people frequently hallucinate their car keys being locked in their car. That fact would not give us a good reason to think that no one is ever justified in believing that their keys are locked in their cars, and similar considerations should apply to religious experience.

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Another objection to the argument from religious experience highlights a dissimilarity between sensory experience and religious experience. Specifically, according to this objection, sensory experience is public, but religious experiences are private. Whereas the sensory experience of locking one's keys in the car can be verified by others, religious experience is subjective and there are no independent ways of confirming that one's religious experiences are reliable by comparing them to the religious experience of others. As a critic of the argument from religious experience, C.B. Martin writes, "What I apprehend," when I have a visual experience (of, say, car keys or a piece of blue paper), "is the sort of thing that can be photographed, touched, and seen by others"—but there seems to be no intersubjective way of verifying religious experience. (Martin 1959, 87-88). Given this consideration, Martin thinks that we should not consider religious experience as providing *prima facie* (or initial) evidence for God's existence. This response to the argument constitutes a rejection of the second premise of the argument which says that if some people have experiences that seem to be experiences of God, then there is *initial* evidence for God's existence.

However, one philosopher, Kai-Man Kwan, responds by denying Martin's claim. Specifically, the only way one can check the reliability of sense experience (of, say, seeing one's keys locked in the car) is by verbal reports from other people describing their sensory experience. In a similar way, people can give verbal reports to each other of their religious experiences. Kwan explains that "experiences of God are present in almost all ages, all places, and all cultures…" and Kwan adds that these reports, "to a considerable extent, match" (Kwan 2009, 506). He concludes that, in this way, religious experience "is also public" (Kwan 2009, 506). In other words, the dissimilarity between sensory experience and religious experience is not nearly as great as the argument's critics suppose.[6]

Of course, there are other objections (and replies) to the argument from religious experience, and there are many other versions of this sort of argument.[7] William P. Alston deals with numerous objections to the argument from religious experience (Alston 2003). However, for a more fully developed treatment of the argument, consult his book, *Perceiving God* (Alston 1991). Also of interest here is Keith Yandell's essay, "Is Numinous Experience Evidence that God Exists?" (Yandell 2003), and his book-length development of the argument that takes into consideration religious experiences in both Eastern and Western religious traditions, *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Yandell 1993).

Questions to Consider

6. There have been attempts to verify and falsify religious experience in the field of cognitive science or neurobiology. To pursue that line of thought, one may explore the collection of essays dealing with both sides of this issue, *The Believing Primate* (Schloss 2009) and the book, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience* (McNamara 2009). (Also, see Chapter 5 for more on the relationship between cognitive science and religious belief.)
7. It is important to keep in mind that (for some philosophers) religious experience is not used in an argument for God's existence. Rather, religious experience constitutes direct (non-inferential) grounds for believing in God's existence (Plantinga 2000, 167-198). However, that very interesting distinction need not detract from our examination of religious experience as the basis of an argument for God's existence.

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5. Suppose a machine is used to stimulate someone's brain in order to make them have a religious experience. Would that discredit the religious experiences of other people (or discredit the argument for God's existence from religious experience)? If so, then suppose that this same machine could stimulate someone's brain and cause them to see, feel, and taste an apple that isn't there. Would that discredit the claims of other people to have seen apples? If not, then what is the relevant difference between these cases?
6. If one person, A, has a genuine religious experience of God (that was caused by God) and another person, B, does not have any religious experience at all, then could A's experience of God provide B with reason or evidence for believing in God? Explain why or why not.
7. If a person's religious experience of God counts as evidence for God, can that evidence outweigh other evidence against God's existence (say, from suffering or evil)?

C.S. LEWIS'S ARGUMENT FROM DESIRE

A British scholar who taught at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), changed his views from atheism to a general belief in God (and, eventually, to Christianity in particular) over the course of his career. There were three arguments motivating Lewis's change from atheism to theism: the argument from reason, the argument from morality, and the argument that we will examine, the argument from desire. Lewis's argument from desire is rarely discussed and often misunderstood, but we can avoid one misunderstanding of the argument by saying at the outset what the argument is not. Lewis's argument is not the claim that God exists because one wants God to exist. Further, the argument is not an argument from religious experience. The basic idea behind the argument is explained by Lewis:

> Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. (Lewis 1952, 120)

Before stating the argument more precisely and in greater detail, we need a better understanding of the experience that motivates the argument.

Lewis uses different names for the experience that propels his argument: *the inconsolable longing*, *Joy*, *enormous bliss*, *immortal longings*, and other names. The inconsolable longing is a feeling of nostalgic longing connected to a sense of absence or open-ended possibility. The experience that Lewis refers to here is not a religious experience or a mystical experience. Rather, it is an ordinary and natural desire, and Lewis's first experience of this desire occurred when he was eight years old:

> As I stood beside a flowering currant bush on a summer day there suddenly arose in me without warning, and as if from a depth not of years but of centuries, the memory of that earlier morning at the Old House when my brother had brought his toy garden into the nursery. It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me; Milton's "enormous bliss"…comes somewhere near it. It was a sensation, of course, of desire, but desire for what? (Lewis 1955, 16)

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Lewis also experienced the inconsolable longing while reading Norse mythology, and he describes the longing as being "cold, spacious, severe, pale and remote" (Lewis 1955, 17). Lewis indicates that while his first experience of this desire "had taken only a moment" of time, other things that happened to him seemed to pale in comparison (Lewis 1955, 16).

Lewis provides a description of the inconsolable longing that can help one identify when one is having the experience. Specifically, the inconsolable longing is distinct from happiness and pleasure, it is desirable in itself, and it is brought about by a variety of objects and events that fail to satisfy that desire. Lewis explains, "I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure" (Lewis 1955, 18). He adds that it is an "unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction" (Lewis, 1955, 17-18). The fact that this inconsolable longing is desirable makes it distinct from other kinds of longing (like hunger) which can be unpleasant. Further, the experience of inconsolable longing may be described as a melancholic Joy or "dizzying exaltation" which provides an intense satisfaction that feels like "swallowing light itself" (Lewis 1986, 24-25). This experience will sometimes accompany one's appreciation of beauty in music, art, or nature. However, the object of this longing is not identical to any of these (because one can appreciate these things without having an experience of inconsolable longing). Lewis writes:

> There is a peculiar mystery about the object of this Desire. Inexperienced people (and inattention leaves some inexperienced all their lives) suppose, when they feel it, that they know what they are desiring. Thus if it comes to a child while he is looking at a far off hillside he at once thinks "if only I were there"; if it comes when he is remembering some event in the past, he thinks "if only I could go back to those days." If it comes (a little later) while he is reading a "romantic" tale or poem of "perilous seas and faerie lands forlorn," he thinks he is wishing that such places really existed and that he could reach them.…When it darts out upon him from his studies in history or science, he may confuse it with the intellectual craving for knowledge. But every one of these impressions is wrong.…Every one of these supposed objects for the Desire is inadequate to it. (Lewis 1958, 8-9)

The point here is that the object of this unique desire is not found in the realm of our sensory experiences.

Now that we have a somewhat better understanding of the natural experience that inspires the argument, we are in a position to state the argument concisely:

1. We have good reason to think that all of our natural desires have existing objects that satisfy those desires.
2. There exists, in most people, a natural desire (that is, the inconsolable longing) which is satisfied by neither anything within the range of sensory experience nor by anything in the natural world.
3. Therefore, we have good reason to think that something exists beyond the range of sensory experience and beyond the natural world that can satisfy the inconsolable longing. (from 1 and 2)

Now we add another premise that brings us to the final conclusion of the argument:

4. If we have good reason to think that something exists beyond the range of sensory experience

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and beyond the natural world that can satisfy the inconsolable longing, then we have some good reason to think that God exists.

5. Therefore, we have some good reason to think that God exists. (from 3 and 4)

Notice that Lewis is not arguing that there is something beyond nature based on the idea that life's experiences do not make us happy. It is often through happiness (or along with happiness) that the inconsolable longing is experienced. Further, religious experience is not the means by which the inconsolable longing is satisfied. Instead, Lewis's argument is an argument based on a natural desire (for something beyond nature) that is commonplace and produced in people in a spontaneous fashion as a result of both ordinary experiences and unique experiences.

The most obvious objection to the argument is the claim that people often desire things that are not real. However, this objection (while true) does not apply to Lewis's argument, because Lewis' argument is that the inconsolable longing is a *natural* desire, which he distinguishes from *artificial* desires. Artificial desires are cultivated by our cultures and environments (for example, through advertisements or other cultural means), and must be built up out of natural desires, which are produced within us spontaneously. For example, the desires for food or sleep constitute natural desires, while the desires to become invisible, to become the president, or to fly like a bird are not natural desires. In the case of desiring to be president, one actually desires other things that are natural desires (for example, things like the desire for prestige or influence). Given this distinction, artificial desires do not always have corresponding objects of satisfaction, but are based on more fundamental desires that do.[8] Of course, there are other potential objections to this argument. For a detailed refutation of five other objections to the argument from desire, see the essay, "As if Swallowing Light Itself: C.S. Lewis's Argument from Desire, Part II" (Lee 2017).

Of course, if someone has a reason to think that there is something beyond the natural realm, then this raises the probability of the claim that God exists. However, it also raises the probability of any other view according to which there is something beyond nature. It does this in the same way that evidence may implicate multiple murder suspects in a murder case (where only one person committed a murder). For example, suppose the police find a certain shoe print at a crime scene and also find out that two suspects (say, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones) both have that same style and size of shoe. That fact raises the probability that Mr. Smith committed the crime, but it also raises the probability that Mr. Jones committed the crime. It does this simply by *lowering* the probability that various *other* suspects committed the crime because they wear different shoe sizes or different shoe styles. In a similar fashion, the plausibility of theism is raised given the conclusion of Lewis's argument, even if it raises the probability of any other view that also holds that there is something beyond the natural world. It does this simply by *lowering* the probability of any view according to which there is *nothing* beyond the natural world.

8. For more on the distinction between natural and artificial desires, see Peter Kreeft's essay, "C.S. Lewis' Argument from Desire" (Kreeft 1989, 250).

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Questions to Consider

8. Make one list of natural desires and a second list of artificial desires. What is different between the desires on the first list versus the desires on the second list?
9. Have you ever experienced what C.S. Lewis calls *the inconsolable longing*? If so, then how would you describe that experience? If not, is it possible that you have had the experience but have not noticed it (or have confused it with other feelings)?
10. What sorts of distractions, amusements, or biases could prevent someone from noticing an experience of the inconsolable longing?

OTHER NON-STANDARD ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

The arguments considered above are not the only non-standard arguments for rational belief in God's existence. Many other arguments for God's existence have been developed and defended by philosophers—even within the last fifty years. A good place to begin is the following text which covers a wide variety of arguments for God's existence: *Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God* (Walls 2018). This work covers a great many non-standard arguments for God's existence, including arguments from mathematics, intuition, intentionality, sets, meaning, counterfactual statements, morality, consciousness, induction, and other arguments. In what follows, we will briefly highlight some of these non-standard arguments and their advocates, specifically the moral argument, the argument from consciousness, and a few others.

One non-standard argument for God's existence that has grown in popularity over the last few years is the moral argument for God's existence. The moral argument comes in many varieties, but only a few of its more recent defenders will be mentioned here. First, David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls defend theistic ethics and advance an argument from morality for God's existence in *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (Baggett 2011). In this work, Baggett and Walls argue that "moral freedom, ethical obligations, and genuine responsibility" are a better fit with theism than with a naturalistic outlook affirming the existence of only the "physical world" (Baggett 2011, 28).[9] Next, Linda Zagzebski—in her essay "Does Ethics Need God?"—advances the claim that theism prevents the moral enterprise from being seen as futile and provides grounds for thinking that we can have moral knowledge. She holds that these considerations make belief in God's existence rational (Zagzebski 1987). Another advocate of the moral argument, Mark D. Lindville, argues that theism can provide a framework that accounts for moral knowledge and personal dignity whereas naturalism cannot (Lindville 2009). John E. Hare (whose work builds upon and develops an argument initially suggested by Immanuel Kant) lays out the case that the demands of morality are too stringent for humans to satisfy without divine assistance—and, since we are nevertheless obligated to meet the demands of

9. These authors go on to respond to a common objection to the moral argument for God's existence known as "the Euthyphro dilemma" (Baggett 2011, 31-48).

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morality, we have reason to believe God exists and can assist us in satisfying those demands (Hare 1996). Katherin Rogers argues that only theism can provide the objectivity and normative power needed for a robust account of objective morality (Rogers 2005). Further, she argues that grounding morality in the nature of God provides a better account of morality than divine command theory, and that grounding morality in God's nature allows one to rebut the notion that God has no bearing on the solution to moral problems. Her final conclusion is that, given her account of God and morality, evil itself serves as evidence for God's existence. Finally, the debate between William Lane Craig and Paul Kurtz (along with the essays by various philosophers responding to their debate) does a nice job at setting out many of the core issues on both sides of the debate in *Is Goodness without God Good Enough?* (Garcia and King 2009). As one can see, there are many types of moral argument for theism. However, in general, advocates of moral arguments for God's existence will highlight various features of morality (say, for example, the objectivity of moral obligation, our ability to possess moral knowledge, or the rationality of the moral enterprise) and then argue that such features are best explained by (or entail) the existence of God.

In recent years, another argument receiving greater attention is the argument from consciousness for God's existence. Richard Swinburne has argued that the correlation of brain events with mental intentions and mental events (such as pains, thrills, and beliefs) gives us reason to think that God exists (Swinburne 2004, 192-212). Robert Adams advances a similar argument in his essay, "Flavors, Colors, and God" (Adams 1987, 243-262). There, Adams suggests that the likelihood of God's existence is increased given the existence of qualia—that is, specific instances of conscious experience such as the subjective experience of seeing red or feeling cold—because there is no naturalistic explanation for how these sorts of qualitative states of mind exist. Theism, in contrast to naturalism, can provide such an explanation given that God is a mind. J.P. Moreland gives an extensive treatment of the argument from consciousness in his book, *Consciousness and the Existence of God: A Theistic Argument* (Moreland 2008). In that work, Moreland argues that the existence of consciousness and its correlation with physical states gives us evidence for God's existence. Like the moral argument mentioned above, the argument from consciousness comes in many varieties. Generally, defenders of arguments from consciousness appeal to the fact of conscious awareness or to certain features of consciousness (say, for example, the apprehension of qualia, the mind's intentionality, or to other features of conscious experience) and then argue that such facts or features are best explained by (or entail) God's existence.

A few other arguments deserve to be briefly mentioned. First, the argument for God's existence from beauty has received a careful presentation and defense in Mark Wynn's book, *God and Goodness: A Natural Theological Perspective* (Wynn 1999, 11-36). This argument is a development and refinement of F.R. Tennant's argument from beauty given in the 1930s (Tennant 1956, 89-93). An attractive feature of their argument, at least for some readers, is that it does not require that beauty be an objective property. Rather, the argument only requires that the subjective experience of beauty be produced by certain non-subjective features of the world (Wynn 1999, 16-17). Second, George Berkeley is infamous for his arguments for the non-existence of matter and how the non-existence of matter leads to the conclusion that God exists. For a better understanding of Berkeley's arguments, one place to begin is his short book first published in the 1700s, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Berkeley 1979). A good supplemental work for understanding this type of argument is Robert Adams's essay, "Idealism Vindicated" (Adams 2007, 35-54). Third, one type of argument receiving

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little attention from contemporary philosophers is the argument from the intelligibility of reality. Hugo Meynell introduces this sort of argument, saying that he wants to suggest that the world "is intelligible; and to insinuate that this constitutes rather good reason for belief in the existence of God" (Meynell 1977, 23). Drawing on the work of Karl Popper and Bernard Lonergan, he goes on to explain that the practice of science (along with things required to practice science, namely physical objects, minds with mental contents, and irreducible propositions and concepts) implies the intelligibility of the universe (Meynell 1977, 23-28). Further, he argues that if there exists nothing analogous to the human mind involved in the constitution of the universe (something like God), then the universe would not be intelligible (Meynell 38-39). Therefore, the intelligibility of the universe gives us reason to believe in the existence of God. C.S. Peirce advanced, in broad outline, a similar sort of argument in the early 1900's (Peirce 1998, 434-450). Finally, we will mention an argument found in the same neighborhood as the previous argument. This version of the argument, however, is based primarily on the laws of nature. Specifically, John Foster's book, *The Divine Lawmaker* (Foster 2004), presents an argument for God's existence by appealing to both the laws of nature and induction, where induction is a type of inference in which one draws conclusions, say, about the future, by appealing to one's past experience (or in which one draws conclusions concerning unobserved cases based on observed cases) (Foster 2004).[10] While these last few arguments have received comparatively little attention, they are interesting and creative arguments for God's existence that some philosophers find compelling. Obviously, much more could be said in laying out the details of each of these arguments.

Questions to Consider

11. Can morality and self-interest conflict with each other?
12. Is the moral intuition that *innocent people should not be harmed for no good reason* anything more than a social agreement or personal preference? If it nothing more than a social agreement or preference, then is there any reason to follow that intuition if one does not wish to do so and can avoid any negative consequences for not doing so?
13. Suppose that an evolutionary account can be provided for what we call moral behavior. Would that account succeed in making sense of objective moral obligations or would that account need to be supplemented in some way? If so, then how?
14. If everything is ultimately physical or material, then how can we make sense of the idea that physical things (which are not about anything) give rise to mental things (which are about other things)?
15. Some take human conscious awareness as a requirement of any possible scientific inquiry (and, therefore, more fundamental than any scientific theory of space-time, mass, charge, and so on), and they hold that this prerequisite of science should make it difficult for us to think of

10. In a similar line of thought, Del Ratzch advances an argument for the existence of God. However, his argument focuses on the subjunctive feature of the types of natural law statements that one finds in science (Ratzsch 1990).

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consciousness as being nothing more than brain activity (Taliaferro 2009, 9-10). If this is correct, does that make the hypothesis of God's existence more plausible? Why or why not?

16. Why should we expect reality to be rationally comprehensible (at least in part) by means of empirical investigation or by the methods of scientific investigation? Would God's existence make it more or less surprising that reality can be rationally comprehended?
17. People often have personal goals, projects, and purposes. However, if naturalism is true, then all of a person's goals, projects, and purposes will be destroyed, forgotten, and lost in the depths of time (no matter how successful one is in reaching one's goals or achieving one's purposes). What relevance (if any) could God's existence have in relation to whether or not a person's life has objective purpose, meaning, or value?
18. Suppose that three or four of the non-standard arguments provide some good evidence for God's existence. Do these arguments make a better case for God's existence when they are taken together (rather than individually)? If not, then why not? If so, then how do these arguments stack up against arguments for God's non-existence?

CONCLUSION

This survey of arguments could not possibly explore (or even list) all of the non-standard arguments for God's existence. Nevertheless, it hopefully provides the reader with a better idea of the variety and range of arguments that have been developed and deployed in making a case for the rationality of theistic belief.[11]

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CHAPTER 4.

REASONS NOT TO BELIEVE

STEVEN STEYL

INTRODUCTION

Arguments against God, religious belief, and the supernatural have long attracted the attention of philosophers. Atheism, as a socially viable, seriously considered alternative to theism, has taken root only in the last few centuries, but many arguments now associated with atheism have been debated in philosophical circles for much longer—not in the form of proofs of God's non-existence, but more often in the form of concerns that any adequate belief set must resolve. In this chapter, we shall examine some of the most prominent arguments against theistic belief.

Theism, of course, encompasses a multitude of belief sets, ranging from monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, to polytheistic religions such Hinduism and (arguably) Buddhism, and even pantheism, so it will be necessary to limit our scope somewhat. Philosophical arguments against theism normally target a specific subcategory of monotheism typified by the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). This brand of monotheism worships what some philosophers of religion call the "omniGod," a god possessing the following omni-properties:

- omniscience, or knowledge of everything;
- omnipotence, or the power to do anything; and
- omnibenevolence, or perfect (moral) goodness.

Other gods may, of course, possess some combination of these, but critiques of theism tend to aim explicitly at the versions of the omniGod in these three traditions, so this form of monotheism shall be our focus.

The omniGod is usually viewed through the lens of personalism, the claim that God is a person of some sort. Personalists are not committed to the claim that God is an embodied person, as though God had a genetic makeup, a spleen, and so forth. Rather, theistic personalists conceive of God as responsive or reflective in ways akin to our own. God has, for instance, emotional responses to worldly events much like we do. Personalism, however, is not the only option for omniGod

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theists. Classical theists like St. Augustine (354-430) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) had a very different, non-personal concept of God. According to **classical theism**, God is simple, so that all of their properties are identical to one another and also to God (God's benevolence *is* their timelessness, and God *is* God's benevolence); immutable, so that their properties cannot change; impassible, unable to be acted upon by us or anything in the causal world; and timeless, existing outside of time.[1] But here we shall be dealing primarily with the personalist omniGod, since it (a) is a more popular conception of God among philosophers, and is therefore the subject of most attempts to discredit theism, and (b) is more familiar to theists today.

THE INCOHERENCE OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Philosophers have been thinking about God's properties for millennia. One popular argument against this concept of God also arises from such reflection. It maintains that the omni-properties are either internally or externally incoherent, and therefore a god which possesses these traits cannot possibly exist.

Omnipotence, as defined above, is a common target for such arguments, because it seems to lead to paradoxes. These paradoxes usually have to do with God's ability to restrict their own power. Can God create a stone that is too heavy for them to lift? Can God create something indestructible, so that it cannot be later destroyed by its maker? If the answer to either question is "yes," then there are some things that God cannot do. If God can create an object that cannot be destroyed by its maker, then they cannot destroy that object, and the same is true, mutatis mutandis (that is, with the necessary changes), for a rock that they cannot lift. On the other hand, if the answer to either question is "no," and God is incapable of limiting themself in this way, then again there are some things God cannot do. So omnipotence, defined as an ability to do anything at all, cannot be one of God's (or any being's) traits, since the very concept of omnipotence is internally inconsistent.

There are a number of responses available to the defender of divine omnipotence. One is to suggest, as René Descartes (1596-1650) does, that God can in fact create a stone that is too heavy for them to lift, but that this is not problematic because God is not bound by the laws of logic or similar metaphysical truths. We suppose that it is contradictory for a human being, who cannot perform logically impossible feats, to create a rock that is too heavy for her to lift. But why think that God, the Almighty, would be bound by similar laws? If we believe that God is all-powerful, then they could well be capable of suspending the laws of logic!

Such solutions raise other problems, however. One might reasonably ask, in response to this answer, whether such a god can be reasoned about at all.[2] There are, after all, certain claims about God that theists will typically want to make. And it seems that many of those claims are only tenable because

1. For those wishing to learn more, see Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1934), Book 1, and Augustine's *The City of God, Part II* (2013), Book 11. There are many different editions and translations of ancient and medieval philosophers' works, and it is common practice in the philosophical community to use a standard referencing system that is the same across all of these rather than using page numbers (which differ across the various editions). Here I shall follow the standard referencing, so that students can find the passages cited regardless of the editions they are using.
2. As J. L. Mackie once put it, if God was capable of doing what is logically impossible, "he could certainly exist, and have any desired attributes, in defiance of every sort of contrary consideration. The view that there is an absolutely omnipotent being in this sense stands, therefore, right outside the realm of rational enquiry and discussion" (Mackie 1962, 16).

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they are logical. Consider, for example, omnibenevolence. If God is omnibenevolent, we know that they always do what is good. But if God is not constrained by the laws of logic, then we have no reason to accept this statement. God's omnibenevolence only entails morally good actions because it follows logically. So theists who defend omnipotence by claiming that God is in some sense beyond logic may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Another option is to concede that the definition of omnipotence above ought to be revised. One could, for example, qualify the above definition by appending "except that which is logically impossible," without deviating too radically from our original conception of God as all-powerful. Though we have shelved his concept of God, we might still like to borrow an idea from Thomas Aquinas, a prominent Medieval philosopher and theologian, who defended such a view:

> since power is said in reference to possible things, this phrase, "God can do all things," is rightly understood to mean that God can do all things that are possible; and for this reason He is said to be omnipotent. (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, 25, 3)[3]

Such a manoeuvre is not without its hazards, of course. One might think that such a God fails to satisfy conditions of adequacy for an object of worship, appealing perhaps to an Anselmian view that God is that "than which no greater can be thought."[4] It is, nevertheless, open to the omniGod theist to either challenge the supposed inconsistency, or to revise their account of omnipotence.

Another problem arises when we question whether the omni-properties are consistent or coherent with one another. One could claim that any of the traits mentioned above is internally consistent and non-paradoxical, but that the set of traits attributed to God generates contradictions and cannot therefore be possessed by a single entity. Consider the following premise:

1. Omniscience interferes with free will.

If we take omniscience to include infallible knowledge of every future event, then God knows with absolute certainty that they will do x at a given time t.[5] If this is true, then it looks as though omniscience interferes with free will. But if omniscience interferes with free will, then it looks as though omniscience also interferes with omnipotence. If God cannot be mistaken about how they will act at t, then God is incapable of doing anything other than x. Thus, we arrive at:

2. If God lacks free will, then God lacks omnipotence.

And omniscience may also conflict with omnibenevolence. The freedom to do otherwise is often thought of as a precondition for morally good action (I am not performing a praiseworthy action if a mind control device forces me to rescue a drowning child). Yet if God infallibly knows how they will act and thus cannot act otherwise, then one could plausibly argue that there seems to be a similar lack of moral freedom with respect to their actions. So it appears as though omnibenevolence is inconsistent with omniscience, and we can add the following premise to the argument:

3. See also the *Summa Theologiae* (1912-36), Ia, 25, 3.

4. See Chapter 2 for more about St. Anselm and his ontological argument for the existence of God.

5. Note that this problem does not necessarily threaten classical theists, since on their view God is timeless.

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3. If God lacks free will, then God lacks omnibenevolence.

If these premises are all true, omniscience interferes with free will, and as a result it interferes with *both* omnipotence *and* omnibenevolence. The argument would thus reach the following conclusion:

4. If God is omniscient, God cannot be omnipotent (2) or omnibenevolent (3).

And notice that one could present a different argument that begins with either omnibenevolence or omnipotence, and goes on to claim that either of these properties is inconsistent with the others. Consider:

1*. Omnibenevolence seems to interfere with free will

2. If God lacks free will, then God lacks omnipotence.

If omnibenevolence amounts to moral perfection, then we can infer that God necessarily does what is morally best in any given scenario. But this is just to say that God cannot do anything that is morally suboptimal. God cannot, therefore, be omnipotent if we take omnipotence to mean an ability to perform morally imperfect actions.

So it appears as though all of the omni-properties can be brought into ***prima facie*** conflict (that is, into conflict at first glance) with any of the others. If any of these inconsistencies hold water, then once again, the omniGod cannot exist, because in order to exist, they must possess a set of traits that are logically inconsistent with one another.

Questions to Consider

1. Do you think that God can suspend the laws of logic and bring about contradictions? Why or why not?
2. Select one of the apparent inconsistencies between two omni-properties and respond to that apparent inconsistency on the omniGod theist's behalf.
3. Is it open to the theist to abandon one or more omni-properties altogether? Can you think of reasons for them not to do so?

PROBLEMS OF EVIL

The omni-properties may be inconsistent not only with each other, but with observable or indispensable facts about the world. In this subsection we shall look at the apparent inconsistency between the omni-properties and the existence of evil. Take the following example:

> Suppose in some distant forest lightning strikes a dead tree, resulting in a forest fire. In the fire a fawn is trapped, horribly burned, and lies in terrible agony for several days before death relieves its suffering. (Rowe 1979, 337)

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For many philosophers, and many reflective non-philosophers, it is difficult to reconcile the existence of such evils in the world with belief in an omniGod. How could an almighty creator, who brims with loving-kindness, allow any evil to exist in the world, let alone evils of the scale and severity we see in the world today? This apparent tension between the existence of evil and the existence of the omniGod has birthed a number of arguments from evil, designed to show that belief in God is at best unreasonable and at worst outright irrational. Here, we shall focus on **moral evils**, evils for which some agent is morally responsible or blameworthy. As we shall see at the end of this section, other evils must also be dealt with.

Of those arguments, J. L. Mackie's argument from evil has been by far the most influential. Mackie argued that belief in the omniGod is irrational because evil could not coexist with a God who possesses two of the omni-properties above. On Mackie's view, the inconsistency emerges once we begin to flesh out each of omnipotence and omnibenevolence:

1. If God is omnipotent, there are "no limits to what [they] can do" (Mackie 1955, 201).
2. If God is omnibenevolent, they are "opposed to evil, in such a way that [they] always eliminate[ ] evil as far as [they] can" (Mackie 1955, 201).

Together, premises (1) and (2) suggest that if the omniGod existed, evil would not.[6] The omniGod of Abrahamic theology is perfectly able and entirely willing to eliminate all of the world's troubles. But it is quite clear, Mackie insists, that evil does exist. The upshot of Mackie's argument, then, is that if evil exists (and it certainly seems to) then God is either not omnipotent or not perfectly good. In other words, the omniGod does not exist. David Hume articulates this position more forcefully in an oft-quoted passage from his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Hume 1948): "is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"[7]

One of the most renowned responses to such problems of evil, defended by philosophers like Plantinga (1974), is known as the free will defence. The free will defence begins with an intuitively plausible premise: free will is very valuable and ought to be preserved. More specifically, the free will defence begins by noting the import of libertarian free will, a capacity to choose your own actions without being caused to act by anything external (e.g. a mind control device or being held at gunpoint). A person exercises libertarian free will whenever their actions are not brought about by outside interference. But this sort of free will therefore requires God's non-interference. God cannot force us to act in certain ways without thereby sacrificing libertarian free will. So they cannot coerce us into morally upstanding actions without eliminating something of great value. The crux of the free will defence is thus a dilemma. God must choose either to allow us our libertarian free will and in doing so run the risk that we will sometimes act reprehensibly, or to intercede in human life, preventing us

6. Many philosophers go on to add a third premise, taking it to be a hidden or necessary premise in Mackie's argument:

    3. If God is omniscient, he knows about all of the world's evils and how to eradicate them;

    This makes the conclusion a *tri*lemma instead of a *di*lemma, but the conclusion remains the same – the omniGod still does not exist.

7. Classical theists like Aquinas do acknowledge the challenge evil poses, but the argument plays out rather differently if God is immutable and impassible.

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from causing evil, but at the cost of our libertarian free will.[8] Despite possessing the omni-properties, God is faced with forced choices in much the same way we are, and it is better (or more modestly, it could be better for all we know) that God leaves our free will intact.

Many theists find this response satisfying, and it is certainly an elegant solution. But it is a solution which resolves only part of the problem. The free will defence makes sense of evils like murder and theft, which are freely chosen. But some evils seem to have nothing to do with free will at all. More specifically, some philosophers have argued that the free will defence cannot explain **natural evils**, evils for which no agent is morally responsible or blameworthy—like volcanic eruptions, forest fires, and tsunamis. How, after all, can Rowe's example above be explained by reference to free will? There is no discernible libertarian free will on which to lay blame there, since such evils are caused by natural processes. So we might think that the free will defence yields only a partial solution to the problem of evil, and that there are other cases of evil which require other solutions.

The Problem of Hell



Figure 1: The Last Judgement by Fra Angelico (1425-1430) via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

Hell comes in many forms, but whether one conceives of hell as an eternal state of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42), or a state of unrepentant debauchery and wickedness, hell is universally seen as an evil of the worst order, and it thus raises an acute problem of evil. The problem is also exacerbated by hell's finality, since it is often thought to be eternal or infinite, and by its direct administration (or at least explicit permission) by God. For some omniGod theists, another aggravating factor also holds true: some non-believers are consigned to hell for committing no special sin other than non-belief. Philosophers of religion are rightly

8. The argument thus assumes that God could not have created a world in which people both possess libertarian free will and never bring about evil—a questionable assumption, to be sure, but one we shall not challenge here.

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concerned about the philosophical defensibility of such accounts of hell, and many have for that reason embraced a *universalist eschatology*—that is, a view on which every person, regardless of their beliefs, character, or actions in this life, eventually reaches heaven.

Questions to Consider

4. Are you convinced by Mackie's problem of evil? Why or why not?
5. In order for the free will defence to succeed, it will need to provide good reasons for thinking that libertarian free will is of greater value than the prevention of evil. Does this seem plausible? Why or why not?
6. Do you think the free will defence can explain natural evils like earthquakes and volcanoes? Why or why not?
7. How can God's omnibenevolence be reconciled with the existence of hell? Are theists forced to be universalists about heaven?

DIVINE HIDDENNESS

> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest (Psalm 22:1-2 [NIV]).

It is also peculiar that the omniGod, who loves us infinitely and who so strongly desires for that love to be reciprocated, is entirely hidden from many of us. This apparent absence from the world gives rise to a cluster of objections to omniGod theism. Which subspecies pertains depends in part on what exactly we mean by "hidden." In the passage from the Book of Psalms quoted above, God is hidden from a believer in such a way that they sink into a sort of existential crisis. God's existence is not hidden, since the Psalmist is not questioning whether God exists or not. Rather, the Psalmist is puzzled and upset by God's failure to interact. So Psalm 22 raises a problem of what one might call divine withdrawal. An objection from divine hiddenness could also adopt a different tack and say that God's existence is discoverable, but that their nature or their plans are hidden from us in some problematic way, in which case we might prefer to call our problem one of divine mysteriousness. Here, however, we shall focus on moral and epistemological problems raised by divine hiddenness in a different sense. We shall examine divine hiddenness in the context of non-resistant non-belief, where God has not made their existence sufficiently perceptible to non-believers.

John Schellenberg is perhaps the most well-known proponent of this argument from divine hiddenness, and his argument in *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason* (1993) is widely recognized as the first modern statement of the problem. In this subsection we shall reconstruct that argument, taking on board some of the revisions he has made since it was published. Schellenberg's argument,

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in essence, is that the existence of an omnibenevolent God is inconsistent with the existence of non-resistant non-believers. A perfectly loving God would not allow for non-resistant non-belief, because belief constitutes a precondition for personal relationship.

What do we mean by "non-resistance" here? Schellenberg himself has not always used that term. Indeed, he initially preferred the language of culpability, and this does perhaps shed some light on what he means. Schellenberg also offers several illustrative examples of resistance:

> We might imagine a resister wanting to do her own thing without considering God's view of the matter, or wanting to do something she regards as in fact contrary to the values cultivated in a relationship with God … imagine careless investigation of one sort or another in relation to the existence of God, or someone deliberately consorting with people who carelessly fail to believe in God and avoiding those who believe, or just over time mentally drifting, with her own acquiescence, away from any place where she could convincingly be met by evidence of God. (Schellenberg 2015b, 55-56)

Resistance thus involves "actions or omissions (at least mental ones)" which "shut the door" to a relationship with God. One cannot be ignorant of the fact that one is resisting, so there is some element of intention in resistant non-belief, specifically an intent to end or diminish or preclude belief in God. Non-resistant non-belief, on the other hand, means non-belief in God where the non-believer has not "shut the door"—where, for example, some trauma or major life-event has preempted belief, or where someone has never come across the concept of God.

Schellenberg begins his argument for the incompatibility of God's existence and non-resistant non-belief with the following thought:

1. If a perfectly loving God exists, then they are always open to a personal relationship with any person capable of entering into one.

Openness, here, means nothing more than being willing to enter into a relationship. It does not mean that God is or ought to be actively pursuing a relationship with every one of us, or that we cannot choose to spurn them. It means simply that God is not actively ruling out a relationship with any person. Unless you yourself have rejected God, there is nothing to stop you from participating in a relationship with them. Schellenberg goes on to add another premise to his argument:

2. If there is a God who is always open to a personal relationship with any person, then no person is ever non-resistantly in a state of non-belief about God's existence.

This premise says just that God's openness to a relationship with us rules out non-resistant non-belief. In order to be in any sort of loving relationship with another person, you must first believe that they exist. So in order for you to be open to a relationship with God, you must accept that he or she exists. Thus, an omniGod would guarantee that you are always capable of relation by ensuring that you always believe in their existence. Schellenberg explains:

> by not revealing his existence [God] is doing something that makes it impossible for [the non-resistant non-believer] to participate in personal relationship with [God] at the relevant time even should she try to do so, and this … is precisely what is involved in [God's] not being open to having such a relationship with [non-resistant non-believers]. (Schellenberg 2015a, 23)

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Schellenberg's argument, then, is that a perfectly loving (i.e. omnibenevolent) God would always be open to a personal relationship with those whom they love, and would always take steps to maintain the possibility of such a relationship even if it never comes to fruition. A necessary precondition for any personal relationship is that each participant believes the other exists. So in order for a personal relationship to be possible, God would make their existence known. Yet, Schellenberg continues, God has not made their existence known.[9] Non-resistant non-believers do exist, and therefore the omniGod does not.

Responses to this problem have often consisted in pointing out reasons why God might choose to remain hidden. Daniel Howard-Snyder, a prominent commentator, has argued that a non-believer's justifications for non-resistance could supply God with a good reason for remaining hidden. It seems reasonable, Howard-Snyder argues, to suggest that some motives for non-resistance are improper, and the omniGod could choose to remain hidden from such a believer until they adopt better reasons for being non-resistant. Consider someone who is non-resistant, but only because he or she wants to avoid damnation and spend eternity in bliss.[10] The motive for non-resistance, in such a case, is pure self-interest. Yet we can envision an omniGod deciding to remain hidden from such a person until they have better reasons for being non-resistant, and this does not seem, at first glance, as though it is morally wrong. So perhaps God's hiddenness is not proof of their non-existence.

Questions to Consider

8. Is the problem of divine hiddenness a version of the problem of evil? Why or why not?
9. Does Schellenberg's exposition of divine love seem reasonable to you? Can you think of everyday examples of, or counterexamples to, his account of perfect love?
10. Can you think of other reasons why God might choose to remain hidden from non-resistant non-believers? Do you think, for instance, that there is something valuable about freely choosing to believe in God without their revealing themself? Is this the kind of free choice an omnibenevolent God would pursue? Consider our discussion of free will in Section 3.
11. Do you think the problem of hiddenness exacerbates the problem of hell? Does it conflict even more with omnibenevolence to both (a) put people into hell for non-belief and (b) remain hidden?

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10. See the discussion of Pascal's Wager in Chapter 3, Section 1.

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Online Resources

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, a reputable and free online resource covering a variety of philosophical topics. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, a free online resource

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which also covers select topics in philosophy. Consider also Crash Course Philosophy, a Youtube series dealing with a number of philosophical topics.

- Crash Course Philosophy
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Miracles

Readings Specific to Each Topic

Internal/External Inconsistency of Divine Properties

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CHAPTER 5.

DEBUNKING ARGUMENTS AGAINST THEISTIC BELIEF

HANS VAN EYGHEN

INTRODUCTION

Most arguments against theistic belief argue on the metaphysical level.[1] They argue that one or more phenomena (e.g. evil, the hiddenness of God, etc.) are incompatible or very hard to reconcile with God's existence (see Chapter 4). The arguments I discuss below, however, are epistemological arguments.[2] They do not conclude that God does not exist, but that belief in God is not rational or not justified. In other words, if one of these arguments is successful, then even if God does exist, it still would not be rational for us to believe that he does. As all debunking arguments do, the arguments I discuss below aim to show that religious belief is (often) based on bad evidence or bad grounds. The arguments I discuss refer to new scientific developments. The science can be taken to show that there is something fundamentally wrong with how theistic beliefs are formed.

Below, I first explain some key terms. In section 3, I explain the general pattern debunking arguments against theistic belief follow. In section 4, I discuss the science to which debunking arguments refer, i.e. Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR). In section 5, I discuss a number of ways existing debunking arguments give content to the general argument. I end with some possible replies in section 6 and a summary in section 7.

KEY TERMS

Some general key terms I will use below are:

- **Belief-forming faculty (BFF)**: Any human mechanism or ability that gives rise to beliefs. Examples are visual perception or reasoning.
- **Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR)**: The discipline that offers explanations of how and why humans form religious beliefs, have religious experiences or manifest religious behaviors in terms of human cognitive processes or evolutionary processes.

1. Metaphysical arguments deal with whether something actually exists.
2. Epistemological arguments deal with whether a belief is rational or justified.

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- **Debunking argument**: An argument that aims to undermine the rationality or credibility of a class of beliefs. It usually does so by showing that a class of beliefs is based on false evidence or is badly formed. Well-known examples of debunking arguments are arguments against conspiracy theories.
- **Epistemic deficiency:** Any quality of a belief indicating that the belief suffers from some defect. Examples are being not rational, being unjustified or being unsupported by evidence.
- **Theistic belief:** Belief about the existence or nature of God or gods.

THE PATTERN OF DEBUNKING ARGUMENTS

As we will see below, debunking arguments attack the epistemic status of theistic beliefs in a number of ways. But all of these arguments follow roughly the following pattern of claiming that human belief-forming faculties (BFFs) are prone to produce erroneous or false beliefs. The shared pattern is the following:

(1) Science shows that theistic beliefs are formed by BFFs that are prone to error.

(2) Beliefs formed by BFFs that are prone to error suffer from a serious epistemic deficiency.

(3) Therefore theistic beliefs suffer from a serious epistemic deficiency.

I will discuss the science to which debunking arguments refer (in premise (1) above) in the next section. Here, I take a closer look at premise (2) and the conclusion (3).

All defenders of debunking arguments argue in some way that our BFFs are not properly related to reality or produce many false beliefs. A BFF that is not properly related to reality is called "insensitive." A BFF that produces many false beliefs is called "unreliable."

Jonathan Ichikawa and Matthias Steup define "sensitive belief" as follows:

> *S*'s [a subject's] belief that *p* is sensitive if and only if, if *p* were false, *S* would not believe that *p.* (Ichikawa and Steup 2018)

For example, my belief that the door to my office is open right now is sensitive because the door is in fact open and I can see that it is. If the door were not in fact open, but shut, then I would not believe it was open. Contrast this with, say, almost every parent's belief that their child is the smartest in her class. Even though, for most of them, that isn't true, their belief probably won't change. Their beliefs are not sensitive to reality.

Some defenders of debunking arguments argue that BFFs that produce theistic beliefs are such that they would produce theistic beliefs whether those beliefs were true or not. BFFs for theistic belief are thus not sensitive to reality like proper BFFs should be, and the beliefs they produce are not sensitive. In their arguments, "sensitivity" is considered a property of BFFs rather than of beliefs.

A belief is unreliably formed if:

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> The process by means of which *S* forms a belief that *p* produces, on average, more false beliefs than true beliefs.[3]

Some debunking arguments state that BFFs that produce theistic beliefs produce a lot more false beliefs than true beliefs. Therefore, the BFFs are unreliable.

BFFs that are insensitive or unreliable are generally considered bad guides for truth.[4] As a result, the beliefs they produce are not in a good epistemic position. Those who offer debunking arguments disagree about exactly what they show, and how bad the result is for theistic beliefs. Some arguments conclude that theistic beliefs are *debunked* (shown to based on bad evidence). Others that they are *unwarranted* (meaning roughly, just lucky). Still others conclude that theistic beliefs should be *held with less confidence*. While defenders differ over how severe the impact of debunking arguments is (losing confidence is less severe than being debunked), they agree that the impact is serious. If successful, religious believers could not continue to carelessly judge their theistic beliefs as true.

THE DEBUNKING SCIENCE, COGNITIVE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

Most recent debunking arguments refer to theories from **Cognitive Science of Religion** (CSR). CSR consists of a large number of rather different theories that probe the mental or cognitive mechanisms that produce theistic and other religious beliefs. They nonetheless converge on some claims. Two claims in particular are important for debunking arguments. They are:

(i) BFFs for theistic belief were selected for by natural selection.

(ii) BFFs for theistic belief are not mere transmitters of input but actively shape theistic beliefs.

If a particular CSR-theory accepts both of these claims, then it can be used as part of a debunking argument.

Let's consider claim (i) first. Most CSR-theories agree that BFFs for theistic beliefs were transmitted as a response to adaptive challenges. Two camps can be distinguished. The first camp argues that theistic beliefs have *adaptive value in themselves*. A notable example is the Broad Supernatural Punishment Theory (Bering and Johnson 2005). Defenders of this view argue that believing in moralizing, punishing gods encouraged cooperation among individuals. Subjects who believe in a god who (a) cares about human social behavior and (b) punishes or rewards people in accordance with their behavior, are more likely to act cooperatively and less likely to take advantage of others' work without contributing anything themselves. Since cooperation is hugely important for human survival, having theistic belief would be an evolutionary advantage.

The second camp argues that theistic beliefs do *not* have adaptive value in themselves. Instead, they evolved as a *by-product* of other adaptive traits. For example, Stewart Guthrie argues that humans evolved a hypersensitivity towards detecting agency (Guthrie 1993). For most of human history, it was

3. My definition is drawn from Goldman and Beddor (2015).

4. Some have argued that there are insensitive or unreliably formed beliefs that do not suffer from serious epistemic deficiencies. Giving a thorough overview of the criticisms lies beyond the scope of this chapter. Overall, it does seem as if the responses can only salvage a limited number of insensitive or unreliably formed beliefs. Therefore, it is not clear whether the responses can salvage theistic beliefs.

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safe to be on guard for predators or other humans. Because predators posed a great threat, subjects who quickly jump to the conclusion that an agent is out there will have better odds of survival than subjects who do not. Subjects who jump to the conclusion that a snake is out there based on very limited evidence, like a curly branch that vaguely resemble a snake, will often jump in the air for no reason. They are, however, far less likely to miss an actual snake than subjects who are not as easily triggered. Missing one snake is all it takes to die and not be able to transmit one's genes. For this reason, natural selection would have favored people who are hypersensitive over people who are not. Hypersensitivity for agents would in turn have favored theistic beliefs. People who frequently have hunches that some agent is around (because of their adaptive hypersensitive agency detection) could easily grow to believe that invisible agents are around. This in turn can lead to belief in spirits and gods. This tendency towards forming beliefs in spirits and gods is itself not evolutionarily beneficial, but evolved along with a hypersensitivity for agents.

Another example of a by-product theory sees theistic beliefs as a by-product of "mind-reading" (Bering 2002). Many psychologists argue that humans cannot directly see mental states in others. Instead, they make hypotheses about what someone else might be thinking or feeling based on her external behavior and facial expressions as evidence. These hypotheses can be revised or expanded if necessary.[5] Being able to build hypotheses about other people's mental states is itself adaptive. It allows people to preempt human attacks and to select partners for cooperation. Bering argues that "mind-reading" of this kind is so important for humans that it spills over into other domains. Humans also regard non-human behavior or phenomena as evidence for mental states. People are prone to see meaningful events, like a natural disaster or the birth of a child, as evidence for a supernatural mind. Bering thus argues that theistic beliefs are formed as a by-product of ordinary mind-reading. While ordinary mind-reading is adaptive, applying mind-reading to things and events that are in fact inanimate is not. If natural selection selects for minds capable of mind-reading, it will, however, also easily select for minds that apply mind-reading to things and events too.

In both cases—whether theistic beliefs are an adaptation or a by-product—BFFs for theistic beliefs are the way they are because of selective pressures. In one case, natural selection selected for BFFs that produce theistic beliefs because they served an adaptive purpose themselves. In the other, natural selection selected for some other adaptive trait and BFFs for theistic beliefs arose as its by-product.

Next, claim (ii) is (almost) universally accepted by CSR-theorists. BFFs for theistic beliefs would be triggered by sensory input and actively build a representation of what that input could be. We already saw that on Guthrie's theory subjects would sometimes process input like noises, patterns and movement as caused by an invisible agent. On Bering's theory, meaningful events are processed as signs of a supernatural mind. Much of the information that the representation (i.e. of an invisible agent or a supernatural mind) contains is not given in the sensory input, but is added by the operations of the BFF.

VARIETIES OF ERROR-PRONENESS

We now have a general pattern for debunking arguments and some grasp of the science to which they

5. This theory is known as the "theory-theory."

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refer. Debunkers differ considerably in how they argue for premise (1), the claim that theistic beliefs are formed by BFFs that are error-prone. In this section, I discuss 3 ways in which they argue for this claim. The first (evolutionary debunking) argues that BFFs for theistic belief are *insensitive* to reality. The second and third (false beliefs and misattribution) argue that they are *unreliable*.

Evolutionary Debunking

A first way of arguing for premise (1) draws on claim (i) above.[6] Debunkers argue that natural selection would have selected for BFFs that produce theistic beliefs whether they produced true beliefs or not and are therefore insensitive. This is the case because theistic beliefs evolved as a response to an adaptive problem that was unrelated to truth.

Proponents of evolutionary debunking arguments note that natural selection above all selects for fitness and not for having true beliefs. For BFFs, this means that they are selected for because the beliefs they produce increase a subject's odds of survival or reproduction. This does not mean that having true beliefs is irrelevant to natural selection. Having true beliefs can be selected for if it gives an evolutionary advantage. For example, subjects with the true belief that humans cannot walk on water have better odds at survival than subjects with the belief that they can. This logic applies to most of our common sense beliefs because having (approximately) true common sense beliefs helps humans to better navigate their environments. Being able to better navigate one's environment increases one's odds of survival. In this way, having (approximately) true common sense beliefs is an evolutionary advantage.

According to proponents of evolutionary debunking arguments, having (approximately) true theistic beliefs does not increase one's odds of survival. Most CSR-theories claim that BFFs for theistic beliefs were selected for because of *other reasons than truth*. On some theories they were selected for because they aided cooperation (see section 3). If the theory is true, natural selection would have selected for BFFs for theistic belief whether they were true or not. This suffices to show that BFFs for theistic belief are not sensitive to truth and hence are prone to error.

A similar claim can be made if by-product theories are taken into account. Here, BFFs for theistic beliefs arose as a by-product of another adaptive trait. Natural selection arguably would have selected for this adaptive trait regardless of whether its by-product, i.e. BFFs for theistic beliefs, were aimed at truth or not. Therefore, if a by-product theory is true, BFFs for theistic beliefs are insensitive to reality as well. For a response to this debunking claim see section 6.2.

False Belief Debunking

A second way to argue for premise (1) is by arguing that BFFs for theistic beliefs produce many false beliefs. Because they do so, they have proven unreliable guides to truth. I discuss two ways to argue for this claim.[7]

The first way argues that BFFs for theistic beliefs produce many false beliefs from different

6. A similar argument was defended by John S. Wilkins and Paul E. Griffiths (2013). W&G do not use the term "insensitive," but argue that CSR shows that theistic beliefs are "unconstrained by reality."

7. The argument was made by Matthew Braddock who discusses both ways (2016).

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perspectives. Defenders of this version note that BFFs for theistic beliefs produce both monotheistic and polytheistic beliefs. For most of human history, polytheistic beliefs were dominant.[8] All religions of the ancient Near East, ancient Rome, ancient India and ancient Mesoamerica had a large pantheon of gods. With the rise of Abrahamic religions, monotheism grew dominant. Today most religious believers adhere to a monotheist religion (Hackett, et al. 2012).

Monotheists believe that there is only one god. Polytheists believe that there are multiple gods. Naturalists believe that only natural phenomena exist and nothing supernatural like gods do. So, from the perspective of monotheism, the polytheistic beliefs are judged as false. From a polytheist perspective, all monotheistic beliefs are judged as false. From a naturalistic perspective, both monotheistic and polytheistic beliefs are judged as false. Therefore, everyone (monotheists, polytheists and naturalists alike) should judge that BFFs for theistic beliefs produce many *false theistic beliefs* and are therefore unreliable.

A second way need not take any perspective (religious or naturalistic). By noting that they produce both monotheistic and polytheistic beliefs, it is clear that BFFs for theistic beliefs produce *mutually incompatible beliefs*. If monotheistic beliefs are true, polytheistic beliefs are false and vice versa. Since among mutually incompatible beliefs, at most one can be true, a BFF that produces many mutually incompatible beliefs will produce many false beliefs. Therefore it should be judged unreliable as well. For a response against both false gods arguments, see section 6.3.

Misattribution Debunking

A third argument for premise (1) draws on claim (ii). Many theories argue that BFFs actively shape how input is registered when they produce theistic beliefs. This argument then adds the claim that the input is registered wrongly. In particular, the input on which BFFs for theistic beliefs operate would be *natural* but BFFs for theistic beliefs mistakenly register it as *supernatural.*[9]

Defenders of misattribution arguments sometimes refer to Stewart Guthrie's theory of hypersensitive agency detection (see section 3). Guthrie unambiguously claims that detection of invisible agents results from false positives. False positives (sometimes called "type 1 errors") are errors in data reporting when a test wrongly indicates the presence of something when it is in fact not present. Well-known examples are found in medical screening. For example, a positive result on a mammography test means that a patient roughly has a 10% chance of breast cancer. This implies that 9 out of 10 patients with positive results do not have breast cancer. Their positive results are false positives. According to Guthrie, theistic beliefs are formed when subjects identify vague patterns or noises as the activity of an invisible agent. He claims that these patterns or noises are in fact caused by natural phenomena like wind or erosion. Because subjects are highly sensitive for cues of agency, they mistakenly regard the patterns or noises as caused by an invisible, supernatural agent.

A BFF that misidentifies input is clearly unreliable. It produces an inaccurate representation of reality and thereby produces false beliefs. Theistic beliefs therefore stem from wrongful representations of reality. If BFFs for theistic beliefs suffer from this defect, they not only produce a lot of false beliefs,

8. Defenders of this argument draw support for this from archaeology and written records.
9. Arguments of this kind were put forward by Robert Nola and Stephen Law (Law 2016; Nola 2018).

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they produce *nothing but* false beliefs. This shows that BFFs for theistic belief are vastly unreliable. See section 6.4 for a response against this argument.

Questions to Consider

1. Should truth always have a role in the evolution of BFF's for them to be reliable? Why?
2. Can one sometimes rely on a BFF that produces many false beliefs? Why?
3. When is a subject (or her BFF's) misidentifying input?

REPLIES

A number of replies have been stated against debunking arguments. We can distinguish two broad strategies.[10] One strategy more or less accepts the debunking argument and its conclusion but adds that theistic beliefs can regain a positive epistemic status by adding additional reasons. The second strategy does not accept the debunking arguments and argues that the case for insensitivity or unreliability is not sufficiently strong.

Additional Reasons

A response in terms of additional reasons is the most popular response. Jonathan Jong and Aku Visala argue that debunking arguments conflate the context of discovery with the context of justification.[11] The context of discovery pertains to how a subject comes to hold a belief (by means of BFFs), and the context of justification pertains to how a subject justifies her beliefs (by means of evidence or reasons). Whether theistic beliefs merit a positive or negative epistemic status hinges largely on how they fare in the context of justification, according to Jong and Visala. They add that an explanation of theistic belief that only takes the way it is formed (by a BFF) into account does not do justice to the role reasons play. Therefore, BFFs as discussed by CSR-theories do not fully explain theistic belief (Jong and Visala 2014).

As examples of additional reasons, Jong and Visala refer to arguments from natural theology like the fine-tuning argument (see Chapter 2).[12] They, however, concede that their response does not aid all theistic beliefs equally. For a religious subject who does not have additional reasons available, her theistic belief is fully explained by the operations of her BFFs for theistic beliefs. If the BFFs prove to be insensitive or unreliable, her theistic beliefs will not have a positive epistemic status (Jong and Visala 2014).

10. The distinction was drawn from Lari Launonen (2017). Launonen calls the first strategy a "reasons response" and the second a "reliabilist response."
11. Philosophers of science often make the distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification. The former refers to how scientists formulate theories. The latter refers to the arguments they provide for the theories.
12. The fine-tuning argument states that God's activity is the best explanation for the precise fine-tuning of cosmic constants that were needed for life to emerge.

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The concession shows how vulnerable this response is. It is likely that a majority of religious believers do not know about most reasons for theistic belief Jong and Visala cite—like the fine-tuning argument—or have not seriously studied them.[13] Since their theistic beliefs are not salvaged by reasons, a debunking argument can seriously harm the majority of theistic beliefs. Furthermore, most (if not all) additional reasons for theistic belief are controversial. The philosophical discussion over arguments for God's existence is far from settled, and other reasons, like reliance on authority or religious experience have also been disputed (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3).

BFFs for Theistic Belief are Sensitive to Something

Another response is directed against the insensitivity claim in evolutionary debunking arguments. It argues that theistic beliefs are not insensitive to reality but that they instead appear to be shaped by contact with some reality. Because theistic beliefs appear to be shaped by some reality, having sensitive BFFs for theistic beliefs could have been selected for by natural selection.[14]

The response draws on an empirical claim about theistic beliefs. If BFFs for theistic beliefs would be insensitive, we would expect theistic beliefs to be different than they are. Beliefs produced by insensitive BFFs can be expected to be rather rigid. A clear example of an insensitive BFF is the self-serving bias. The self-serving bias produces the belief that success can be attributed to oneself while failure can be attributed to others. The self-serving bias would aid in preserving an individual's sense of worth and value. Because the bias is not aimed at truth (success should often be attributed to others and failure to oneself), it has a rather fixed outcome. It will on most occasions produce the belief that a subject is responsible for success herself. That belief will not be subject to much change, since it is usually easy to find a way to attribute one's failures to the interference of others.

Many theistic beliefs do not resemble beliefs produced by an insensitive BFF (like the self-serving bias). Theistic beliefs *do* change over a subject's lifetime. In extreme cases, believers adopt new theistic beliefs. More often, believers experience smaller changes in what they believe. Often, believers attribute these changes to some putative religious experience. For example, some believers report a change in religious outlook after participating in religious festivals or after sustained religious practices like praying or meditation.

BFFs for theistic beliefs therefore appear to respond to some reality. Religious believers often claim that this reality is God or another supernatural being. A debunker could respond that this reality that alters the outputs of BFFs for theistic beliefs is not in fact God or anything supernatural. This, however, requires additional argumentation.

The response can also go one step further and argue that BFFs for theistic beliefs could be selected for by natural selection *because* they respond to some reality. We saw how natural selection can be expected to select for reliable perceptual BFFs. The response argues that a sensitive BFF for theistic beliefs also yields an evolutionary benefit over insensitive BFFs for theistic beliefs. That benefit is increased flourishing. On most religious traditions, engaging with God or other supernatural beings

13. Subjects can also have other reasons for theistic belief that are not drawn from natural theology like religious testimony or evidence from sacred texts. Reasons like these are arguably more widespread.

14. This reply was put forward by myself elsewhere (Van Eyghen 2018).

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has mostly good consequences for humans.[15] Engaging with (benevolent) supernatural beings would lead to better behavior, lower levels of stress and more existential security in the here and now.[16] Having these benefits increases the odds of human survival.

Having a BFF that is sensitive to a supernatural reality will likely lead to more human flourishing than a BFF that is not. If there is a God, being able to engage God leads to benefits for humans. Natural selection could therefore have selected for BFFs that are sensitive to that supernatural reality.

Broadening BFFs for Theistic Belief

A further response can serve to respond to false-god debunking arguments, which claim that BFFs for theistic beliefs are unreliable because they produce many polytheistic and finite god beliefs. This response argues that debunking arguments have too narrow a conception of BFFs for theistic beliefs. The debunking argument over-emphasizes the role of the cognitive architecture of humans and under-emphasizes how the operations of that cognitive architecture can be adapted or mended by other processes like upbringing or culture. In this way, defenders of monotheistic belief could accept that BFFs for theistic beliefs produced many polytheistic beliefs in the past and in some present-day cultures, but argue that because of cultural changes the BFFs have changed.

Defenders of this response argue that BFFs for theistic beliefs never operate in a cultural vacuum. While the cognitive architecture of humans can make them prone to form both polytheistic and monotheistic beliefs, subjects will form more monotheistic beliefs in a culture where monotheism is dominant and more polytheistic beliefs where polytheism is dominant. By proper education and socialization, the operations of BFFs are altered to only (or mainly) produce monotheistic or polytheistic beliefs.

The role of culture is regarded as constitutive for the operations of BFFs for theistic beliefs. The cultural setting is an intrinsic part of a BFF. When the BFF is assessed globally across cultures, debunkers are in fact assessing multiple different BFFs. We can apply this to the evolutionary theory we discussed in section 3. We saw how one theory argues that natural selection favored belief in moralizing gods because it fostered cooperation. If the theory is true, humans evolved a BFF for theistic belief that makes them prone to form the belief that one or more moralizing gods exist that watch their every move. In North America or the Middle East, this BFF will likely produce the belief that there is only one moralizing God. In Sub-Saharan Africa or Polynesia, the BFF will likely produce the belief that there are multiple moralizing gods. According to this response, people in North America and the Middle East have a different BFF than people in Sub-Saharan Africa and Polynesia. Because of the large impact of cultural setting on what beliefs people form, cultural setting cannot be separated from cognitive architecture. The reliability of both BFFs should therefore be assessed separately.

Methodological Naturalism

A final response is directed mainly against misattribution arguments (the arguments that claim

15. Some traditions also believe in malevolent supernatural beings like demons. Contact with these is regarded as disadvantageous.
16. Some religious traditions also claim that engaging with supernatural beings has beneficial effects in the afterlife. These obviously have no effect on evolutionary fitness.

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theistic belief results from wrongfully identifying natural input as supernatural input). It argues that the case for misattribution is underdetermined because of certain presuppositions in the scientific evidence. The scientific study of BFFs for theistic beliefs would assume that they make misattributions because its methodology does not allow any reference to supernatural entities. As a result, scientists do not take the possibility of supernatural input seriously, and debunkers only have a weak case for misattribution claims.

When discussing misattribution arguments, we saw that Stewart Guthrie sees theistic beliefs as the result of false positives in agency detection. Defenders of this reply argue that Guthrie (and others who make similar arguments) do not give sufficient evidence to show that BFFs for theistic beliefs draw on mere natural input. Guthrie gives some examples of natural input (patterns, noises) that could trigger agency detection but does not consider whether agency detection could *also* be triggered by actual invisible agents. Bering also does not consider whether meaningful events could be caused by an actual supernatural mind.

In general, scientific theories do not refer to anything supernatural to explain phenomena. This practice is often called "methodological naturalism," the view that the scientific method or practice does not allow any reference to anything supernatural. Philosophers differ as to whether methodological naturalism is an ***a priori*** limitation of scientific practice, or is the result of the higher explanatory power of natural explanations over supernatural explanations. In any case, the claim that BFFs produce theistic beliefs by misidentifying natural input is unsupported by the evidence. If methodological naturalism prevents scientists from taking the possibility of supernatural input seriously, they need to provide a stronger case that theistic belief is triggered by natural input.

Questions to Consider

4. When is giving additional reasons a good response to a debunking argument?
5. Are there other ways to connect religious BFF's to truth? When is such a connection stronger?
6. How could a misattribution argument avoid the charge of methodological naturalism?

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I laid out what debunking arguments against theistic belief are and what common features they share. I also discussed three debunking arguments against theistic belief based on CSR and four potential responses.

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CHAPTER 6.

FROM PHILOSOPHY OF (MONO)THEISM TO PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIONS

TIMOTHY D KNEPPER

If you have studied the previous chapters in this book, by now you will have learned all about philosophy of religion in what I have called the "theistic" tradition, but for the sake of this collection will call the "(mono)theistic" tradition.[1] This tradition begins in the European Enlightenment, though it has roots that stretch back through medieval Abrahamic philosophy and theology to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy.[2] For understandable reasons, this tradition primarily pursues philosophical questions relevant to a Christian-(mono)theistic God:[3] What are the attributes of such a God? Can the

1. Definitions and uses of "theism" are subject to variability and ambiguity. Merriam-Webster, for example, defines theism as "belief in the existence of a god or gods; specifically: belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world." There are a couple of issues here. First of all, what exactly is a "god or gods"? Are god(s) only person-like in the sense of having the ability to perceive, think, communicate, and act? Or do they also include non-personified cosmic sources and principles like Brahman, Buddha-nature, Dao, and so forth? What about ghosts, spirits, and ancestors? What about cases of religions in which there are a lot of people-like gods but no ultimate, creator God?Secondly, what force should be given to the *specifically* above? When we think of theism, should we think *specifically* of mono-theisms in which the one God creates the universe and remains involved in it (e.g., answering prayer, performing miracles)? My hunch here is that those who grew up in contexts dominated by Abrahamic religions will think of normative religion as that which has one creator God (and no other gods), and they will therefore think *specifically* of monotheism as the normative form of theism.More relevantly, it is certainly the case that traditional philosophy of religion thinks of "theism" *specifically* as monotheism; after all, its central issues include the attributes of God, proofs for the existence of God, and the problem of evil, none of which make much sense nor matter very much to non-monotheistic "theisms" (as I argue in this chapter). What concerns me, then, is if we think of theisms as existing on a scale from monotheisms to everything else, we might make the mistake of thinking that the philosophical problems for monotheism are the very same philosophical problems for non-monotheistic theisms. But they are not.Whatever the case, the authors of this book use "theism" in the broad sense, i.e. the sense that precedes the "specifically." In my chapter, therefore, I will use the term "(mono)theism" to indicate the monotheistic form of theism that traditional philosophy of religion philosophizes about, placing the "mono" in parentheses to suggest that traditional philosophy of religion thinks of monotheism as the normative form of theism and assumes that the philosophical problems for monotheism translate for non-monotheistic theisms.
2. See, for example, Robert Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis's five-volume history of philosophy of religion (Oppy and Trakakis 2009). See also the essays in Part II of the *Blackwell Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Quinn and Taliaferro 1997) and James Collins's *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (1969).
3. I am skeptical of the idea that the God of (mono)theistic philosophy of religion is representative not only of the Christian tradition (if it is one such thing) but also of other so-called (mono)theistic traditions such as Judaism, Islam, and (mono)theistic Hinduism. Not only are Jewish, Islamic, and (theistic) Hindu religious philosophers largely absent from (mono)theistic philosophy of religion; so are Jewish, Islamic, and (theistic) Hindu philo-religious questions, topics, and issues. For example, the history of Jewish or Islamic or Hindu philosophy of religion with the content of (mono)theistic philosophy of religion are very different. Also, textbooks in philosophy of religion sometimes take up philosophical issues in Christian doctrine (see *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of*

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existence of such a God be proved or disproved? (See Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) Can the existence of random and pervasive "evil" be reconciled with the existence of such a God? (See Chapter 4) Although these are appropriate philosophical questions to ask about Christian-(mono)theistic religion, they are not so for the majority of the religious traditions, texts, and thinkers of the world. Or so I will argue here—viz., that so-called "philosophy of religion" is not in fact philosophy *of religion* but rather philosophy *of (mono)theism*; and therefore that if philosophy of religion is to be the philosophy *of all religions*, it will need to be reconstructed from the ground up.

My plan is simple. First, I will show how and why the philosophy of religion was constructed as such in Enlightenment Europe. Next, I will show how this model of philosophy of religion not only misfits but also distorts several religious traditions. Finally, I will advance my own model for how philosophy of religion can be reconstructed in a globally appropriate manner.

PHILOSOPHY OF (MONO)THEISM AND THE EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT

It was during the **European Enlightenment** that the title "philosophy of religion" was first used.[4] This period was characterized, above all, by the championing of reason as the primary source of authority and legitimation of knowledge. It was a time of "scientific revolution," with respect not only to the remarkable growth of scientific knowledge but also to a growing confidence in the scientific method as the only reliable means of producing knowledge. It was also a period in which the rule of absolute monarchs and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church was challenged, with constitutional democracies sprouting and spreading in place of divinely sanctioned monarchies.

This Enlightenment context was one in which religion was "belief-ified" and "privatized." The former term, "belief-ification," refers to the growing tendency to reduce religion to its supposedly core beliefs, which are then evaluated to discern which can be rationally proved. (Think, for example, of most of the arguments presented in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.) Increasingly, this became the goal of philosophy of religion during and after the Enlightenment—to show which beliefs were true and therefore compatible with what science reveals about the natural world. (With respect to compatibility with science, think for example of the issues discussed in Chapter 5.) No longer were the Church and its theology the source and standard of knowledge. Rather, the tradition-specific beliefs of religious traditions were a matter of mere opinion or faith; only what agreed with reason was true.

In the case of "privatization," Enlightenment religion increasingly became a matter of what people did in their private lives. Religion was removed from the public realm of the state, as constitutional democracies began to legislate the separation of church and state. This is where the practice of religion comes in—people were free (supposedly) to practice whichever religion they chose, just so long as it did not interfere with the workings of the state. For the first time, we had a distinction between the secular (public) and the religious (private).

Religion, in which 3 of 12 debates are on matters of specifically Christian doctrine)—thereby belying the claim that (mono)theistic philosophy of religion is generically neutral with regard to religious traditions. What, then, are we to make of the attempt by Christian-(mono)theistic philosophy of religion to draw these other so-called (mono)theisms into its orbit?

4. For the purposes of philosophy of religion, I take the European Enlightenment period as running from René Descartes (1596-1650) to Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831). Descartes' formative *Meditations on First Philosophy* was published in 1641, and Hegel gave his equally formative "lectures on philosophy of religion" in 1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831. Perhaps the most influential philosophers of religion who lived during this time, however, were David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

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What does this context of "belief-ification" and "privatization" mean for the method and content of Enlightenment philosophy of religion? In the case of method, religious beliefs are interrogated from the standpoint of Western philosophy to determine which can be proved true or false. Western philosophical methods are paramount in this endeavor, as is agreement with what science shows about the natural world. Appeals to authority are therefore ruled out, especially where those authorities involve the dogmatic teachings of a church.

It is no surprise, then, that the content of Enlightenment philosophy of religion is lowest-common denominator religion, the religious beliefs that Enlightenment thinkers took to be common to all (mature) religious traditions at the time.[5] These beliefs include, first and foremost, the nature and existence of God: Who or what exactly is God? Does this God exist? Related to the nature and existence of God is the problem of evil: If God does exist, and if God is all-powerful and all-loving, then why is evil as prevalent and random as it seems to be? Another set of issues concerns the nature of the self: Can we prove the immortality of the soul? What can we say about how humans should live, i.e. religio-philosophical morality?

These questions remain the core issues for "Western" philosophy of religion right up to today.[6] This is not to say that other issues have not been added to this list. Given the privatization of religion, the topic of **religious experience** has been of increasing importance to Western philosophy of religion, especially insofar as **mystical experience** was claimed to be a common core of all religious traditions.[7] (See, e.g. Chapter 3, Section 2.) Given the growing awareness of religious diversity, the topic of **religious pluralism** has also been of increasing significance, particularly with regard to whether and how it is possible for all religious traditions to be "true" in some way.[8] Nevertheless, the dominant strand of contemporary philosophy of religion remains focused on divine attributes, proofs for the existence of God (as in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), and the problem of evil (as in Chapter 4).

Questions to Consider

1. How is the content of Enlightenment philosophy of religion a product of its cultural-historical context and political-rhetorical ends?

5. Not until Hegel's lectures on philosophy of religion (see note 4) do we see European philosophers of religion begin to wrestle with the religio-philosophical traditions of India and China, for it was not until the early-mid 19th century that texts from these traditions were available in translation.
6. See, again, note 2. See also Eugene Thomas Long's *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion* (2003). For many more examples of and references to contemporary philosophy of religion in both the analytic and continental modes, see the first three chapters of my *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion* (2013).
7. See Chapter 3 of this volume. See also William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), Steven T. Katz's edited volume *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978), Robert Forman's edited volume *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (1990), William Alston's *Perceiving God* (1991), Matthew Bagger's *Religious Experience, Justification, and History* (2009), and Ann Taves' *Religious Experience Reconsidered* (2011).
8. The classic work on religious pluralism remains John Hick's *An Interpretation of Religions* (1989). See also the essays in Philip L. Quinn and Kevin Meeker's *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity* (2000).

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2. How might different sets of contexts and ends produce different contents?

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION "ELSEWHERE"

So far, I have sketched the genealogy of philosophy of religion in the Enlightenment or Western or (mono)theistic tradition. My point is simply this: that this philosophy of religion is not somehow natural or essential but rather is a product of the contexts and interests of the European Enlightenment and the Western Academy. In this next section, we will take a quick tour of some philosophy of religion "elsewhere" to show that the (mono)theistic model of philosophy of religion not only misfits but also distorts it. Given space restrictions, this tour will be quick and will cover only four regions: South Asia (India), East Asia (China), West Africa (Yorubaland), and North America (Lakota).

Of these four regions, South Asian philosophy of religion is most similar to (mono)theistic philosophy of religion, in part because there are (mono)theistic conceptions of God in South Asia.[9] Of course, there are other conceptions of God there too. Of the six schools of "orthodox" (*āstika*) "Hindu" philosophy,[10] the **Vedānta** school is renowned for its debate concerning the nature of ultimate reality (***Brahman***) and its relationship to the rest of the cosmos, especially the innermost soul (***Ātman***). For the "non-dual" (*Advaita*) Vedānta of Śaṅkara (ca.788-ca.820), everything just is *Brahman*, which is without or beyond all attributes (*nirguṇa*), including ones analogized from humans (e.g. having power, having knowledge, being good, creating). Everything that appears to be individualized is therefore just an illusion (*māyā*). By contrast, the "qualified non-dual" (*Vishishtadvaita*) Vedānta of Rāmānuja (1017-1137) holds that although *Brahman* is everything, the world and souls emerge from *Brahman* and exist separately from *Brahman* before returning back to *Brahman*. This *Brahman* too is ultimately without or beyond attributes. Finally, the "dual" (*Dvaita*) Vedānta of Madhva (1238-1317) maintains that *Brahman* (who is in this case person-like), *Ātman*, and the world are entirely and eternally different substances.

In the case of the other five *āstika* schools (and elsewhere in "Hindu" thought), conceptions of ultimate reality run the gamut from "there is no such thing," to "it really doesn't matter," to "it is a person-like deity," to "it is an impersonal reality," to "it is many different deities or substances." Despite this variety of positions, however, there just isn't the kind of obsession with proving that "God" exists or determining "God's" attributes that there is in (mono)theistic philosophy of religion. Much more important is learning who you are, so you can cut the ties of *karma* (law of moral cause and effect) that bind you to the wheel of rebirth (*saṃsāra*).

9. One of the first collections of original sources in Indian Philosophy was Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore's *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* (1967). For three more recent introductions to Indian philosophy, see Richard King's *Indian Philosophy* (1999), Bina Gupta's *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (2011), and Roy W. Perrett's *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (2016).
10. I place "Hindu" and "Hinduism" in quotes here, since at the time when these philosophical schools arose, there was not yet any such concept as "Hinduism" *qua* organized, bounded, singular religion. The concept of a single "Hinduism" was not constructed until British occupation (18th century).

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In addition to these six *āstika* schools, there are *nāstika* or "unorthodox" schools such as Buddhism and Jainism that do not accept the authority of the *Vedas*, the sacred scripture of "Hinduism." In the case of Buddhism, there is neither an ultimate reality (*Brahman*) nor an eternal soul (*Ātman*); and in the case of Jainism, although there are eternal souls (*jivas*), there is no God in the sense of a first cause of the cosmos. Once again, however, I want to emphasize that the philosophical-debating tradition (*vāda*) in India is not limited to the topics of ultimate reality and eternal soul—just as important are issues like the nature and means of enlightenment, the nature and mechanics of causation, and the nature and expression of reality. So, although we have a partial fit to the God of Christian (mono)theism, few if any of the topics and questions of Christian-(mono)theistic philosophy of religion are present in South Asian philosophy of religion.

In China, by contrast, none of the influential "three teachings" (*san jiao*, 三教) hold person-like views of ultimate reality: for Confucians, ***Tian* (天)**, which can be translated as heaven or nature, is generally thought of as impersonal; for Daoists, ***Dao* (道)** is an impersonal cosmic source and force by which all things are balanced in continual change; and for (some) Buddhists, **Buddha-nature (佛性)** is the originally enlightened nature of humans and dynamic harmony of all things.[11] The chief philosophical questions, though, do not generally concern the nature of these "ultimate realities" but rather the means by which society, nature, and the mind can be harmonized. In fact, Confucianism and Daoism have their origins during a time of social chaos and strife known as the "Warring States" period (403-221 BCE). Confucius (551-479 BCE) taught a way to bring harmony and flourishing to the self and society both by expressing our human-heartedness (*ren*, 仁) in social rituals and behaviors (*li*, 禮) and by ordering society according to five basic kinds of relationships: father/son, elder-brother/younger-brother, husband/wife, elder/younger, and ruler/subject. One classical Daoist text, the *Daodejing*, by contrast, advised human beings in general and rulers in particular to act in a manner that is as spontaneous, natural, and effortless as possible, while another classical Daoist text, the *Zhuangzi*, was unconcerned with, if not antagonistic toward, political rule, focusing instead on the sage who could rise above it all, so to speak.[12] Here, then, we have a near, if not complete, misfit with the questions and topics of Christian-(mono)theistic philosophy of religion due to the fact that no such God is at issue in East Asian philosophy of religion.[13]

One of the more notable and widespread African religions is the West African religion of Yorùbá, which originates and is still practiced in the "Yorubaland" region of Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana.[14] Yorùbá religious thought and practice is so widespread because the Yorùbá not only are one of the largest ethnic groups in all of Africa but also, sadly, were the most enslaved ethnic group from

11. For some general introductions to Chinese religious philosophy, see Wing-Tsit Chan's *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (1969), JeeLoo Liu's *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy* (2006), and Karyn Lai's *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy* (2017). For a general introduction to Chinese philosophy and religion, see Mario Poceski's *Introducing Chinese Religions* (2009). And for some excellent studies of Chinese philosophy during its formative, "Warring States" period, see Benjamin I. Schwartz's *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (1985), A.C. Graham's *Disputers of the Tao* (1989), and Franklin Perkins' *Heaven and Earth Are Not Humane* (2014).

12. Only later, around the turn of the millennium, would Buddhism enter China from India; as it grew in influence, it was embraced as one of the "three teachings," with a focus on the harmony of the mind.

13. Thanks to Thomas Carroll for noting that Xiaomei Yang's "Some Issues in Chinese Philosophy of Religion" (2008) makes a similar general point, though in connection with the history of debates over the religiosity of Confucianism and Chinese state religion.

14. Accessible introductions to Yoruba religious philosophy include Kola Abí´mbọ́lá's *Yorùbá Culture* (2005), and Segun Gbadegesin's *African Philosophy* (1996).

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all of Africa. As a result, there are significant Yorùbá populations in many Central and South American countries, and Yorùbá religious thought and practice are present in several New World religions like Santeria in Cuba, Vodou in Haiti, and Candomble in Brazil.

Like many indigenous religions of Africa, Yorùbá is unlike Christian (mono)theism. There is not one God but many deities called *Òrìṣà*, which are invoked by humans through the help of priests to remediate suffering and misfortune as well as to secure safety and blessing. According to Yorùbá scripture—a divinatory corpus called *Ifá*—there are 400 primordial *Òrìṣà*, which are locked in eternal combat with 200 primordial "anti-gods" called *ajogun*. However, since new *Òrìṣà* and *ajogun* have been added since the creation of the world (and continue to be added), their numbers are represented by 400+1 and 200+1, respectively, where the " 1" = the set of all newly created entities. Although the Yorùbá do think of one deity as a "high god," Olódùmarè is just one of four deities to carry out the creation of the cosmos. Moreover, Olódùmarè plays little role in the practice of Yorùbá, which involves contracting a divinatory priest to learn the inner destiny that was given at birth (so as to navigate misfortune and illness during life). So, although the concept of Olódùmarè makes it conceivable that Yorùbá philosophers of religion could ask about his attributes and proofs, they don't. It's just not of any concern to them.[15]

Finally, we turn to one of the indigenous American tribes of North America—the Lakota of the North American plains.[16] The Lakota are one tribe or subgroup of the Titonwan, which is also composed of the Dakota and Nakota tribes. For many Euro-Americans, especially during the 19th century, the Lakota (along with the Dakota and Nakota) were known as "Sioux"; this is in fact a pejorative name, meaning "snakes in the grass," which was given to the Lakota by their Algonquian-speaking neighbors to the east. Although the Lakota were originally granted the entire western portion of South Dakota by the United States government in the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, this Treaty was reneged after gold was discovered in the Black Hills (which are sacred to the Lakota). Now, the Lakota mostly live on reservations in western South Dakota (none of which are in the Black Hills). As in the case of Yorùbá philosophy of religion, pre-colonial Lakota traditions of philosophizing about religion involved a special class of individuals—in this case, the "holy man" or "medicine man" (*wicasa wakan*). Holy men receive revelations, perform miracles, and otherwise communicate with the spiritual world through dreams and visions. This spiritual world comprises the creative force of *Wakan Tanka*, which means something like great incomprehensibility, great mystery, or great sacred. Although *Wakan Tanka* begins to resemble the Christian God after colonization, it apparently first referred to the sum total of sixteen sacred mysterious forces. As in the case of the Yorùbá God, Olódùmarè, we could conceivably conduct philosophical investigations about the attributes and proofs of *Wakan Tanka* (especially as *Wakan Tanka* gets Christianized), but that would be simply to redouble the colonial appropriation of Native American culture and thought.

15. There was one interesting attempt to interpret and analyze Olódùmarè in (mono)theistic philosophical terms, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief,* which was published by E. Bọlaji Idowu in 1962. Increasingly, though, this work has come under intense criticism, especially for its Christo-centric misrepresentation of Yorùbá religion. For two trenchant critiques, see Abi´mbọ́lá 2005 and Táíwò 2008. Put simply, Olódùmarè is neither similar to the God of Christian (mono)theism nor important for the practice of Yorùbá religion.

16. For Lakota religious philosophy, see especially Willliam K Powers' *Oglala Religion* (1975) and Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks' edited collection *Sioux Indian Religion* (1987).

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Questions to Consider

3. Given what you have learned above, what can you say about the contexts and ends of philosophy of religion in South Asia (India), East Asia (China), Africa (Yorubaland), and North America (Lakota)?
4. How do these contexts and ends shape the contents of these philosophies of religions?
5. How are these contents different from those of traditional-(mono)theistic philosophy of religion?
6. What conclusions do you draw about what the "proper" content of a more global philosophy of religion*s* should be?

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF *RELIGIONS*

How well do the questions and categories of (mono)theistic philosophy of religion apply to these philosophies of religion "elsewhere"? How does a Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Confucian, Daoist, Yorùbá, or Lakota philosophize about the attributes of God, proofs for the existence of God, or the problem of evil for an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God? Not well, because these "other" philosophies of religion just aren't very concerned with these questions. In most cases, there isn't the kind of God that there is in Christian (mono)theism, so these questions make no sense. And in cases where there is something like the kind of God that there is in Christian (mono)theism, philosophical questions about this God's attributes and proofs have no importance (not even to the philosophers from these traditions).[17] What happens, then, when we force them to play by the rules (categories) of (mono)theistic philosophy of religion? They appear deficient or strange or wrong.

I therefore contend that if philosophy of religion is to be the philosophy of *religions* and not just the philosophy of (mono)theism, it must be rethought from the ground up, not merely expanded or enlarged. How does one do this rethinking? I propose drawing on the cognitive metaphor theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980, 1999), which provides an account of how human thinking is structured by metaphors, especially those drawn from concrete bodily experience.[18] In particular,

17. Of course, we don't know what the future will bring. Perhaps all the religions of the world will increasingly continue to resemble Protestant Christianity (belief-ified, privatized, possessing a capital-G God). Perhaps the future will see only one religion qua some kind of non-institutionalized, nebulous spirituality. For now, though, if we want to practice philosophy of religion in a manner that is faithful to the religious philosophies of the religions of the world (through time and at present), then we'll need new questions and categories that better fit these religions.

18. At the heart of this account are two claims: humans draw on concrete bodily experience in understanding and expressing abstract concepts, and humans do so by systematically structuring abstract concepts in accordance with bodily experiences. For Lakoff and Johnson, this systematic structuring is performed by "primary metaphors," which map sensorimotor experiences to subjective experiences. Take, for example, the sensorimotor experience of warmth and the subjective experience of affection. The primary metaphor *affection is warmth* establishes neural connections between the sensorimotor experience of warmth and the subjective experience of affection, thereby providing us a way to think about the abstract concept of affection in terms of the concrete experience of warmth. Although the metaphor *life is a journey* is not a primary metaphor (according to Lakoff and Johnson), it does

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I propose drawing on the component parts of the *journey* metaphor, which is not only allegedly fundamental to cognition and culturally widespread but also actually utilized in many different religious traditions to metaphorically structure religious growth and maturation.

By the *journey metaphor*, I mean, more exactly, the metaphor *life is a journey*, which utilizes the conceptual structure of a journey to understand and express the temporal dimension of people's lives. Although there is much to say about this metaphor, I will here stick to its core, constituent parts: journeys have a point of origin and destination, a route that is planned, obstacles and sights that are encountered along the way, and a traveler who is accompanied by and encounters other travelers. Of course, these constituent parts are not themselves philosophical questions or topics; nevertheless, they can be used to generate such questions or topics, five of which are important and productive for global philosophy of *religions*:

1. Who am I?
2. Where do I come from?
3. Where am I going?
4. How do I get there?
5. What obstacles lie in my way?

Several comments are in order about these questions. First, each question is purposefully vague, requiring specification by means of the precise content of some religious philosophy; for example, the "I" might be understood as an individual, a certain group of people, human beings in general, or nothing at all. Second, these philosophical questions can be answered for a religious philosophy even if it does not portray individual lives as purposeful or draw on the metaphor *life is a journey*; for example, the questions "where am I going?" and "how do I get there?" might have meaningful answers even if the religious philosophy does not explicitly conceptualize human beings as having destinations and paths. Third, it is not the case that a religious philosophy has to have a positive or explicit answer to the five questions above to have a significant answer to them; for example, a religious philosophy might hold that thinking there is a self that travels some religious path to some other-worldly destination is precisely what needs to be overcome. Finally, an objection might be raised that although the five questions above are important and interesting questions that have been neglected by traditional philosophy of religion, they are also questions that neglect the topics of traditional philosophy of religion. Entirely missing in these five questions are the core problems of Christian-theistic philosophy of religion: the attributes of God, the existence of God, and the problem of evil.

My solution to this problem of leaving out Christian-(mono)theistic philosophy of religion is, I believe, simple and elegant. I begin by recognizing that in some philosophies of religion the cosmos can be thought of being on a sort of journey, at least in the sense of having an origin, destination, path, and obstacles. I then note that in some philosophies of religion, the crucial relationship is that between

draw on the primary metaphors *purposes are destinations* and *actions are motions* (1999, 52-53, 61-62). Thus it it culturally widespread and neuro-psychologically rooted.

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humans as microcosm and cosmos as macrocosm. Finally, I show how reduplicating the five questions above with regard to the cosmos yields a second set of rich questions for philosophy of religion:

6. What is the cosmos?
7. Where does the cosmos come from?
8. Where is the cosmos going?
9. How does the cosmos get there?
10. What obstacles lie in the cosmos' way?

Clearly (7) gives a place for traditional Christian-(mono)theistic philosophy of religion to discuss the existence and attributes of God, (8) and (9) give a place for discussions of redemption and the afterlife, (10) for sin and the Fall, and so on. Again, I hasten to add that the qualifications above also apply to this set of questions: these questions are vague and need to be made precise by concrete religious philosophies, religious philosophies can meaningfully answer or reject these questions, thus rejections of these questions are as important and significant as answers to these questions. Importantly, though, extending this set of questions from just a (mono)theistic God to the cosmos allows all the philosophies of religion to "get in the game."

With these qualifications in place, I am rather confident that the ten questions above offer a radically new point of departure for philosophy of religion, one that can be inclusive of the religious traditions of the globe in a manner that does not unduly privilege any one of them. It is now time to put this plan into practice.[19]

Questions to Consider

7. Take one or more of the journey-metaphor questions above and attempt to answer it for all of the traditions of philosophizing about religion identified in this chapter. (Do additional research if needed.) What range of answers do you get? (How) does this broaden the scope of philosophy of religion? (How) does it aid in your own search for meaning, truth, and value with respect to religion?

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GLOSSARY

a priori

A Latin phrase literally meaning "from what comes before." In this context, what is *a priori* is what is presupposed at the outset before one even begins looking at the evidence. For example, things that are true by definition or simply truths of logic or basic math would normally be taken to be known *a priori*, whereas what's in today's newspaper could only be known *a posteriori* (that is, after looking at the evidence).

analogy

A comparison between two objects, or systems of objects, that highlights respects in which they are thought to be similar.

analysis

Decomposing a concept into its simpler parts.

Ātman

For some Hindu philosophies, especially Vedānta, Ātman is the inner self or soul, which is not to be confused with the bodily or mental self. In some Vedānta philosophies, Ātman is thought to be identical with ultimate reality (Brahman); in other cases these are thought to be different; and in still other cases, they are considered both similar and different. Regardless, it is the Ātman that survives the death of the body, reincarnates, and eventually is released from the cycle of reincarnation.

belief-forming faculty

Any human mechanism or ability that gives rise to beliefs. Examples are visual perception or reasoning.

Brahman

For some Hindu philosophies, especially Vedānta, Brahman is the ultimate reality and first cause of the cosmos. In some Vedānta philosophies, Brahman is ultimately without qualities or beyond personhood; in other Vedānta philosophies, Brahman has qualities and is identified with a person-like "God."

Buddha-nature (佛性)

Derived from the Sanskrit term buddhadhātu, the Chinese term fóxìng and the Japanese term busshō refer both to the original nature of humans as enlightened as well as the cause or seed of

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enlightenment in them. Buddha-nature is therefore related to two additional Buddhist concepts: dharmakāya, the "truth body" or "reality body" of the Buddha, which is an interpenetrative harmony that is beyond all distinctions; and tathāgatagarbha, the womb or embryo of the Buddha.

classical theism

The view that God is simple, immutable (unchanging), timeless, and impassible (that is, incapable of suffering or being harmed, or otherwise affected by anything else).

Cognitive Science of Religion

The discipline that offers explanations of how and why humans form religious beliefs, have religious experiences or manifest religious behaviors in terms of human cognitive processes or evolutionary processes.

contingent

That which could fail to be the case, that which could either be the case or not be the case, contrasted with the necessary.

cosmological argument

Cosmological - from the Greek "cosmos," meaning world, especially the world considered as an ordered whole. Cosmological arguments invoke God to explain the existence of our world, often by noting some very general features of our world, such as that its existence is contingent, or that it began to exist.

Dao (道)

Meaning "way" or "path," Dao is for Daoists the original source and transformative force of all things. Dao is the way things operate, especially in their dynamic harmony. The ideal "way" of humans is to be in harmony with the "way" of the Dao.

debunking argument

An argument that aims to undermine the rationality or credibility of a class of beliefs. It usually does so by showing that a class of beliefs is based on false evidence or is badly formed. Well-known examples of debunking arguments are arguments against conspiracy theories.

entropy

The degree of disorder or uncertainty in a system: the degradation of the matter and energy in the universe to an ultimate state of inert uniformity.

epistemic deficiency

Any quality of a belief indicating that the belief suffers from some defect. Examples are being not rational, being unjustified or being unsupported by evidence.

European Enlightenment

From a philosophical perspective, the European Enlightenment stretches more or less from the philosophy of Rene Descartes (1596–1650) to that of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) or Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831). Philosophically, this period is characterized by a concern with

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epistemological issues (what we can know and how). For philosophy of religion, this involves a concern with proofs and disproofs for the existence of God above all other topics.

Gnosticism

A loosely-knit religious movement probably originating in the 1st or 2nd century BCE, incorporating aspects of Judaism (especially Jewish Apocalyptic literature) and Platonic philosophy (and later, aspects of Christianity as well).

Midrash

Ancient Jewish commentaries, interpretations, or explanations of a biblical text.

moral evils

Evils for which some agent is morally responsible or blameworthy.

mystical experience

Mystical experience is a subset of religious experience that is usually characterized as involving direct, unmediated experience of God or other divine things. Mystical experiences are ineffable, supra-rational experiences that cannot be put into words, and they are considered to be cross-culturally identical. Mystical experiences have therefore been claimed by some to be the common core of all religious traditions.

natural evils

Evils for which no agent is morally responsible or blameworthy.

ontological argument

Ontological - from the Greek "ontos" meaning being. Ontological arguments attempt to prove God's existence by reflection on the concept of God.

predicates

The properties, qualities, attributes, or relations that some thing or concept has.

prima facie

A Latin phrase meaning "on its face" or "at first sight." To say that a claim is true or justified "prima facie" is to say it seems to be true or justified on an initial examination, but that it is still possible that it could turn out to be false or unjustified in light of further evidence.

religious experience

Religious experience is simply subjective experience that is interpreted religiously. Philosophy of religion became particularly occupied with the topic of religious experience in the 19th and 20th centuries as a means of showing how experience of God or other divine things could bypass the strictures of human cognition or categories of human culture.

religious pluralism

For philosophers of religion, religious pluralism is generally taken to be a problem needing a solution. That problem, in short, is that different religious traditions make different claims about what is real, true, and good. Types of solutions to religious pluralism include exclusivism (only

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one religion is true, others are false), inclusivism (one religion is true, others are as well by virtue of being variations of the one true religion), pluralism (all religions are in some way true), skepticism (no religions are true), and perennialism (all religions are true by virtue of sharing an invariant, common core).

teleological argument

Teleological - from the Greek "telos," meaning purpose or goal. Teleological arguments suggest that various features of our world--biological organisms, the laws our world has, or the fact that our world has laws at all--are best explained by a supernatural designer.

theistic belief

Belief about the existence or nature of God or gods.

theurgy

A kind of religious ritual, sometimes considered a form of “white magic,” in which one or more deities are invoked with the intention of benefiting oneself in some way, often with the goal of perfecting oneself through achieving a kind of "union" with the particular deity or deities invoked.

Thomism

The philosophical and theological system of St. Thomas Aquinas. "Neo-Thomism" is a revival of Thomistic thought beginning in the latter half of the 19th century that was highly influential in the Roman Catholic Church up until the time of the second Vatican Council.

Tian (天)

Meaning "heaven," "sky," or "heaven above," Tian served as the God of the Zhou Dynasty in China (1046–256 BCE), as well as for much state religion thereafter. For Confucians, however, Tian was generally considered more impersonally as nature, especially with regard to the natural order of the cosmos and the moral order of humans.

Vedānta

One of six so-called "orthodox" (āstika) schools of Hindu philosophy that accepts the authority of the Vedas. Literally meaning "end of Vedas," Vedānta's philosophical teachings aim to correctly interpret the last section of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads. That interpretation, however, differs between the three main traditions of Vedānta: Advaita (non-dual), in which there is no difference between Ātman and Brahman; Dvaita (dual), in which Ātman and Brahaman are distinctly different; and Vishishtadvaita (qualifiedly non-dual), in which Ātman temporarily exists separately from Brahman.

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We would also like to acknowledge **the many philosophy students, faculty and researchers** who have contributed to the project by providing comments along the way, such as discussions on the Rebus Community platform when we were originally envisioning the series and what topics should be included, as well as giving feedback on drafts of chapter outlines for books. There have been many very helpful contributions from too many people to list here, and the books would not have come together without them.

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This book has been peer reviewed by subject experts. The full-text received an open review from the reviewers, based on their area of expertise.

The review was structured around considerations of the intended audience of the book, and examined the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and relevance of content, as well as longevity and cultural relevance. Further review by the series editor and the copy editor focused on clarity, consistency, organization structure flow, and grammatical errors. See the review guide for more details. Changes suggested by the reviewers were incorporated by chapter authors and the book editor.

Beau Branson (book editor), Christina Hendricks (series editor) and authors Marcus William Hunt, Timothy Knepper, Robert Sloan Lee, Steven Steyl, Hans Van Eyghen and the team at Rebus would like to thank the reviewers for the time, care, and commitment they contributed to the project. We recognise that peer reviewing is a generous act of service on their part. This book would not be the robust, valuable resource that it is were it not for their feedback and input.

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Thomas D. Carroll, Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen)
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Wherever possible, we have identified ways in which anyone may contribute their expertise to improve the accessibility of this text.

We also welcome any feedback from students, instructors or others who encounter the book and identify an issue that needs resolving. This book is an ongoing project and will be updated as needed. If you would like to submit a correction or suggestion, please do so using the Introduction to Philosophy series accessibility suggestions form.

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Version	Date	Change	Affected Page(s)
1.0	December 11, 2020	original	
1.1	December 17, 2020	Dedication added.	Front matter (all formats)
1.2	February 19, 2021	Discussion questions added to Chapter 1	Chapter 1
1.3	August 11, 2021	Updated list of books in the series to reflect recent additions	Introduction to the Series
1.3.1	August 22, 2021	Updated list of books in the series to add the Epistemology book	Introduction to the Series

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