Philosophy of Religion
Part I
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Born in Weimar, Texas, in 1933, I spent my early childhood there and in New Orleans, Louisiana. Just before World War II, my family moved to Washington, D.C. I lived in that city and received my education from its public schools, museums, and newspapers, until I went off to college in Baltimore, Maryland, in the fall of 1951.

I knew that I wanted to teach by the time I graduated from high school, but I didn’t know what I wanted to teach until much later. So I made a career of being a student for twelve more years (at Johns Hopkins University, Southeastern Theological Seminary, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), before trying to earn a living full time.

I had discovered my discipline by 1959, but it was 1965 before I found my school and my city. Each of the thirty-seven years since then has confirmed my good fortune in joining the University of Richmond community and putting my roots down.

Teaching remains my calling and first professional priority. With more than forty years in the classroom, I have taught most of the standard undergraduate philosophy curriculum, including courses in Symbolic Logic, Moral Issues, and Philosophical Problems, to thousands of beginners, and advanced courses and seminars on Analytic Philosophy (especially the works of Russell, Ayer, Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin), Philosophy of Religion, and Epistemology, to hundreds of majors and minors. I have also pursued a number of issues beyond the boundaries of philosophy per se, in interdisciplinary courses as varied as Science and Values, Ideological Roots of the American Revolution, and Science, Pseudoscience, and the Paranormal. My research has produced two published books, Knowledge, Belief and Transcendence and Logic Problems, with two more in progress—Practically Profound and Taking the Dark Side Seriously.

A life totally confined to the ivied tower would be truncated and precarious. My own is constantly expanded and kept in balance by ongoing involvements in church (Episcopal), politics (Democratic), and music (from Bach to Durafle); by travel (Wales or the Pacific Northwest for preference); and by a daily bout with the New York Times crossword. Many people outside of the academy have enriched my life by their work—Herblock and Harry Truman, John D. MacDonald and David Lodge, to name four, and others by their friendship and character—chief among them my wife, Myfanwy, and my sons, Christopher, Jonathan, and Trevor.

My complete track record, academic and otherwise, can be seen on the Web at: http://www.richmond.edu/~jhall/. E-mail will always reach me at: jhall@richmond.edu.
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Philosophy of Religion

Scope:

Philosophically examining religion is a tricky enterprise. Teaching a series of lessons on it is trickier still. The problems begin with the fact that there are not only many different religions but many different concepts of what religion itself amounts to. They are further compounded by the fact that people have many different conceptions of what philosophy amounts to as well.

This series of lectures begins, consequently, with some careful attention to what philosophy is and a careful demarcation of the sort of religion that we will scrutinize philosophically. Working from a philosophical perspective generally called “British analytic,” attention is focused entirely on a religious tradition generally called “ethical monotheism.” Within the many concepts and practices of that religious tradition, particular attention is focused on the notion of divine existence as an issue for what philosophers call “epistemology” or “knowledge theory.”

Thus, our central questions are:

1. Can humans know whether the claim “God exists” is true or not?
2. If so, how?
3. If not, why not?

As a person, one may be more interested in the direct question “Does God exist?” But that is a question in religion; and, as a philosopher of religion, one gives priority to questions about its concepts and how they work, rather than to practicing the enterprise oneself. (This is not to say that no philosophers practice it. It is only to say that when they practice it, they do not do so as philosophers.)

After clearing a considerable amount of such methodological underbrush in Section I (Lectures One through Eight), we will begin to explore the positive side of our central question (“Can humans know that God exists?”) in the ten lectures of Section II. These map various alleged bases for answering in the affirmative, including reason, experience, and divine encounters. Throughout, the discussion traces the give and take of two basic principles of explanation: the “principle of sufficient reason” and “Ockham’s razor.” The bottom line, as might be expected, is essentially a “Scottish verdict,” that is, “not proved.”

Consequently, in the five units of Section III, we will raise the reverse side of the question, “Can humans know that God does not exist?” Tracing out a complex exchange of arguments and counter-arguments that focus on what is called the “problem of evil” and on various replies to it (called “theodicies”), Section III also invites a hung jury. Atheism is no more an obvious candidate for knowledge than theism is.

This leaves agnosticism, but that is a more complex posture than it is often taken to be. It includes not only the skepticism of the irreligious who recognize the virtue of epistemological modesty but also the “fideism” of the devoutly religious who are equally epistemologically modest. Because the latter stance seems to be unfairly shortchanged by many commentators, Section IV begins with an exploration of religious agnosticism: Lectures Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six on the pros and cons of faith without (or against) evidence, and Lectures Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight on the pros and cons of theological transcendentalism.

The problem with faith without (or against) evidence is its irrelevance to life, and the same problem is attached to theological transcendentalism with a vengeance. Fideists have trouble enough maintaining that the world’s harsh events don’t count against their conviction that God exists. The transcendentalists’ affirmations have so little grit (factually relevant content) that it is close to impossible for them to make any difference at all to life-in-the-world.

As a result of all this, one wonders if all these attempts to determine whether “God exists” is a true assertion or a false assertion are off on the wrong foot (either by assuming that it operates in the same paradigm and follows the same rules as ordinary assertions of fact or by assuming that it is an assertion at all). Thus, Section IV continues with two examinations of the utterances of ethical monotheism from radically different perspectives. Lectures Twenty-Nine through Thirty-One examine and assess them as part of a “form of life” operating under an alternative “paradigm” that includes intentionality as one of its basic categories of description and explanation. Lectures Thirty-Two through Thirty-Five examine and assess them as moves in one or another, possibly nondescriptive, “language game,” especially one that consists of stories-told-for-a-purpose (no more to be believed or disbelieved than any
such set of stories) that shape and illumine the lives of those who tell and retell them—stories that are not to be assessed as true or false, but as functional or dysfunctional, in terms of their life impact.

Then, in the last lecture, we will retrace the conceptual problems in ethical monotheism that urged its philosophical examination in the first place and the discoveries along the way that have led to characterizing it the way that we have. But, given that philosophy, in all of its applications, is an ongoing reflective enterprise, the very last point is an invitation to all who have worked through this series to carry the reflection on themselves.
Lecture One
What Is Philosophy?

Scope: Much of what people call philosophy today is a parody of the real thing: pretentiously obscure, often unintelligible, cryptic at best. We must work hard to avoid falling into that. Philosophy is a very practical matter, however “deep” some parts of it may be, and—with a little work—even the deepest parts can be made intelligible, lively, and useful. On the other hand, we also must avoid falling into that other contemporary parody of philosophy: bumper-sticker golden thoughts suitable only for Lucy Van Pelt. After a brief overview of the course, consequently, this lecture begins with an examination of philosophy itself. We will sort through a variety of misconceptions to get them out of the way, then, by comparing several different subjects for and methods of inquiry, bring the true character of philosophy into focus. Then, in the lectures to come, we will do some.

Outline

I. The target and scope of this course: an overview.

II. There are at least seven common misleading conceptions of what philosophy amounts to.
   A. Philosophy is more than “how one feels about things.”
   B. Philosophy may include, but is not limited to, the construction or examination of “worldviews.”
   C. Philosophy may include, but is not limited to, searching for the “meaning of life.”
   D. Although much philosophy is skeptical, it does not amount to skepticism.
   E. Philosophy is more than a collection of reflections and beliefs about this and that, however systematic the collection might be.
   F. Though it may have been the case at one time, philosophy no longer amounts to “inquiry in general” or “inquiry on all topics.”
   G. As a working discipline, philosophy must be carefully distinguished from the history of great ideas and great thinkers.

III. We can hone in on what philosophy really is by distinguishing four kinds of questions.
   A. Questions of fact have to do with accurately describing what is and what is not the case and help us to “come to terms with the way the world is”—whether at the abstract level of science or the everyday level of keeping appointments on time.
   B. Questions of value have to do with accurately appraising things that occur and things that might occur and help us to decide “what to do”—whether at a complicated level, such as determining national policy, or at an everyday level, such as deciding whether to keep a promise.
   C. Questions of explanation have to do with efficiently connecting our descriptions and evaluations into coherent packages and help us to see relationships and connections—whether causal, functional, or teleological.
   D. “Meta-questions” are distinctly philosophical inquiries and have to do with mapping and understanding the conceptual equipment used in asking questions of fact, value, and explanation.

IV. Philosophy primarily consists of asking and answering “meta-questions” in two important styles: “analytic” and “synthetic.”
   A. Philosophical analysis amounts to locating the presuppositions, implications, and logical structure of sets of ideas; determining the possibility of knowledge in their neighborhoods; exploring the relevance of different kinds of evidence on different parts of the intellectual map; and showing how the various parts of that map relate to each other.
   B. Philosophical synthesis amounts to putting everything back together as an integrated whole, as best one can, after the work of analysis has been done.

Essential Reading:

**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. What is the difference between a functional explanation and a teleological explanation for the fact that giraffes have long necks?
2. Why do we evaluate human behavior, animal behavior, and the weather in importantly different ways?
Lecture Two
What Is Religion?

Scope: There are as many ideas of religion as there are societies, perhaps as many as there are people in the world. Unless we carefully limit the scope of our inquiry, then, our project would take several thousand sessions. Accordingly, in this lecture, we will identify and focus on one particular idea of religion. Then, in the sessions ahead, we can philosophize on the same page and with some hope of closure. The idea of religion we will examine is “ethical monotheism.” It is not the exclusive property of any one religion. Indeed, it is the common core of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Given the culture in which we live, it is a reasonable place to center our attention. We shall move in on it step by step, contrasting it to other ideas of religion and bringing its salient features into clear relief.

Outline

I. There are importantly different approaches to “definition” that must be taken into account when trying to define anything as complex as religion.
   A. “Essential” definitions attempt to capture the necessary and sufficient conditions of the application of a term in each and every instance of its use.
      1. This is a “Platonic” approach to definition.
      2. It presumes that every term has one essential sense, regardless of reference.
   B. “Family resemblance” definitions attempt to capture the pattern of overlapping connotations that bind the use of a term together over the range of its applications.
      1. This is a “Wittgensteinian” approach to definition.
      2. It presumes that the notion of essential senses is a will-o-the-wisp.
   C. “Ostensive” definitions attempt to fix meaning by pointing at what is meant.
      1. This is the way vocabulary is sometimes taught at an elementary level.
      2. It can be useful, but it tends toward ambiguity and doesn’t always work.
   D. “Operational” definitions attempt to confine reference to what is observable.
      1. This is a “pragmatic” approach to definition.
      2. It attempts to reduce abstractions to their “cash value.”

II. There are at least five important family resemblances that identify religion.
   A. Religion typically involves a system of beliefs, with certain common characteristics and components.
      1. Religious belief systems tend to be all-inclusive, subsuming all aspects of the world and the events that occur in it.
      2. Religious belief systems tend to be primary for those who believe them, the benchmark against which all their other beliefs are measured.
      3. Belief in the existence of the “supernatural,” a dimension of reality over and above common everyday events and things, is an almost universal component in religious belief systems.
      4. Belief in the existence of a supreme being, usually called “God,” is a very frequent, but not universal, component in religious belief systems.
      5. Belief in the possibility of life after death (i.e., “immortality”) is also a very frequent, but not universal, component in religious belief systems.
      6. Belief in the eventual occurrence of a “judgment,” on which occasion human lives will be appraised and suitably rewarded, is also a very frequent, but not universal, component in religious belief systems.
   B. Religion typically involves construing everything that occurs in the world as intentional and, consequently, as the locus of value and purpose.
   C. Religion typically involves a complex system of behavior, with certain common components that include: worship, prayer, complex rituals, and a supernaturally sanctioned system of moral practice.
   D. Religion typically has both institutional and private dimensions—hierarchies, bureaucracies, and authorities—superimposed on individual lives of contemplation and devotion and, consequently, it is not
unfamiliar with conflicts (whether between priests and prophets or between orthodoxy preservers and revolutionary radicals).

E. Religion typically is a prolific source of cultural artifacts, such as music, literature, poetry, and theater, and a dramatic influence on other cultural artifacts, such as science, history, and philosophy.

**Essential Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Considering the claim that everyone is religious, even if their religions are very different from each other, is it illuminating to think of capitalism and Marxism as religions, right along with Catholicism and Wicca, or does this way of thinking hide some important matters from view?
2. Considering that it is an open question whether tolerance or intolerance is more “natural” to people of a religious temperament, what do you think are the historical and present-day connections between religious commitment and so-called “holy war”?
Lecture Three
What Is Philosophy of Religion?

Scope: Just as there are many notions of what philosophy is, and many notions of what religion is, there are also many notions of what philosophy of religion is. Consequently, if we are to collaborate in doing some philosophy of religion with any hope of success, we need to explicate the particular notion of the enterprise and its methods with which we will be working in the sessions ahead. The goal here is to achieve, in advance, some understanding of what we are going to do and of how we will try to do it. We shall begin by explicating a number of common but unprofitable notions. Then, in the process of setting these notions of philosophy of religion aside, the best way in which philosophical analysis and synthesis can be brought to bear on religious belief and practice will emerge in clear focus.

Outline

I. There are many valuable enterprises that philosophy of religion might be but isn’t.
   A. It is not “apologetics.”
      1. Apologetics means rational arguments in defense of the faith.
      2. Unlike apologetics which are always committed in advance, philosophy of religion, like all philosophy, requires suspending judgment on how the arguments will turn out.
   B. It is not comparative religion.
      1. Comparative religion, a valuable pursuit, looks at how many different religions conduct themselves.
      2. Comparative religion is completely descriptive and never gets to the issue of whether or not beliefs are defensible. Philosophy of religion moves into a critique mode.
   C. It is not psychology of religion.
      1. Psychology of religion considers what it is about human personality that causes individuals to form themselves into religions and adopt religious beliefs and practices.
      2. Psychology of religion looks at religion from an historical or genealogical perspective, not from a consideration of the coherence or truth of their beliefs.
   D. It is not history of religion.
      1. History of religion, essentially descriptive rather than evaluative, is important to help us determine how we have come to be the way we are today.
      2. History of religion does attempt to explain as well as describe, but it is concerned with how people believe and act, not with whether their beliefs and actions are “correct.”
   E. It is not theology, and it is not religious philosophy.
      1. Religious philosophy is philosophy done from a religious point of view.
      2. Philosophy of religion is, instead, examining religion from a philosophical point of view.
      3. Theology is the systematic study of a system of beliefs about God. It is much closer to apologetics than to philosophy of religion.

II. There are a few not-very-valuable enterprises that philosophy of religion might be but isn’t.
   A. Though it is often perceived this way by religious people, philosophy of religion is not, or at least it need not be, a “slash and burn” raid on the faithful and their faith.
   B. Although it may be the case, for some people, that a “philosophy of life” or “worldview” serves as an “intellectual” variety of (or substitute for) religion, philosophy of religion cannot play that role any more than philosophy of science can be a variety of (or substitute for) science or philosophy of law can be a variety of (or substitute for) law.
   C. Neither philosophy of religion nor philosophy can be a substitute for religion.
III. Our central question is an epistemological one: Is religious knowledge possible?

IV. The sort of religion we are going to do philosophy to, contra “multiculturalism and diversity,” is a narrow perspective called “ethical monotheism.” In it, the existence of exactly one God is affirmed, and its notion of that God is essentially moral.

A. Why should we narrow our focus this way, given contemporary temperament?
   1. For practical reasons: We have only thirty-six lectures available to cover this topic.
   2. The religions that have been most important historically in the world in which we live are Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, all examples of ethical monotheism.

B. In the next lecture, we will look at the concept of God across a wide array of religions before narrowing in to the concept of God in ethical monotheism.

V. Your lecturer, like everyone, comes from concrete roots, has perspectives, and should be listened to with several grains of salt ready at hand.

A. The roots are commonplace Depression-era American, amounting to:
   1. Regional: small-town and rural Southeast and Midwest by way of Texas.
   2. Economic/social class: farmers, school teachers, one physician, many clergy.
   3. Political: agrarian populist.
   5. Philosophical: mostly unconscious pragmatism.

B. The perspectives, in a few cases, require a little explanation:
   1. Regional: mid-Atlantic urban south.
   2. Economic/social class: academic professional.
   5. Philosophical: analytic empiricism.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Considering the truth or falsehood, and the implications, of the proposition that an American’s religious affiliation has more to do with his or her economic status and regional and family traditions than with any issues of doctrine or creed, why do you think you subscribe to the religious tradition that you do?

2. Considering the relative amounts of theology and politics that have been at work in the conflict between “main line” Christian churches and the “religious right” in the United States from the 1951 presidential campaign to the present day, what do you think is the possibility that reflective reason might achieve consensus on any value issue in the United States today?
Lecture Four
How Is the Word “God” Generally Used?

Scope:  As a first exercise in the philosophical analysis of religion, we shall examine the presuppositions and implications of the common religious claim that there is or are one or more gods. This will require close attention to the word “god” itself, and to the niceties of its employment in a variety of settings. We will first parse out “god talk” in a variety of contexts, from animism to theism, and note the significance of its absence in certain others. That will set the stage for a tighter analysis (in Lecture Five) of the two central claims of ethical monotheists: (1) that there is Exactly One God and (2) that The One has certain particular characteristics.

Outline

I. Many (but not all) religions, and the people who subscribe to them, affirm the existence of one or more “gods.”
   A. This is part of the general religious tendency to believe in the reality of the supernatural and, in some cases, it amounts to little more than that.
   B. The belief in the supernatural may, however, include very specific beliefs about the existence or occurrence of one or more particular supernatural beings that are, in some sense, “supreme” beings (that is, not just “superior” to nature, animals, or humans).

II. In the contexts in which it seriously occurs, “god” generally designates some force, entity, being, or process that is affirmed as a proper object of human worship.
   A. So construed, “god” is a title, not a name, and as we shall shortly see, it can be quite variously assigned.
   B. To “worship” some X is to venerate it, address prayers and praise to it, be obedient to it, hold it in awe and as a target for ritual practice, and so on.
   C. Although those who worship some X would seem, by their practice, to imply that it deserves their veneration and so on, there remains an important question to the outsider: “Does the target of their worship actually deserve it?”
      1. Practitioners of different religions disagree about what it takes for something to deserve worship, usually setting their own god apart from the “gods” of those around them in terms of just those criteria.
      2. All would agree, however, that anyone (anyone else, of course) who worships something that does not deserve it worships a “false” god.

III. The affirmation that some X or other is a proper object of worship (and is, hence, to be called “god”) has been articulated in many ways.
   A. Dynamism aims its worship at objects that are seen as possessing remarkable, even “awesome,” powers.
   B. Animism aims its worship at spirits or beings that are seen as inhabiting the sorts of objects that dynamism singles out.
   C. Polytheism aims its worship at a generally shorter list of spirits or beings than animism or pantheism does and tends to identify its several targets with personalities, to identify each one with certain aspects of nature that are in its charge, and to place them in a hierarchy of some order of preeminence.
   D. Pantheism aims its worship at any and all things (either distributively or collectively), seeing them all as inhabited by spirits or beings of the sort that animism singles out.
   E. Henotheism aims its worship at a spirit or being that is identified with the local culture or tribe, while recognizing the reality of the “gods” of other cultures but seeing them as inferior or subservient to its own.
   F. Dualism/bitheism aims its worship at two spirits or beings that are typically distinguished by the roles that they play (light/dark, wet/ dry, and so on), thus strongly rejecting the pluralism of both polytheism and henotheism but retaining the tendency of both to “personalize” and/or “anthropomorphize” its targets.
   G. Deism aims its worship at one spirit or being that subsumes all roles, emphasizes the impropriety of targeting worship at anything less, and austerely rejects the “personalizing” or “anthropomorphizing” tendencies of dualism and monotheism.
The targets of worship of theism, monotheism, and ethical monotheism are treated in the next lecture, and the views of those who reject the propriety of worship altogether (including some Buddhists, many agnostics, and all atheists) are reserved to Parts III and IV.

**Essential Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. What might the billboard slogan “America Is God’s Country” and the U.S. motto “In God We Trust” mean to people of various religious persuasions of the sorts enumerated and described in this lecture?
2. What can be said, pro and con, for the notion that worshipping God is a good thing, regardless of what god you worship?
Lecture Five
How Do Various Theists Use the Word “God”?  

Scope: In this lecture, we shall progressively narrow our examination of the use of “god” from the polyglot of religious contexts explored in the previous lecture to the relatively clear voice of ethical monotheism (as exemplified in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). The intention is to clearly identify the presuppositions, internal logic, and implications of god talk that are wired into this way of thinking, as they contrast to the array of approaches previously seen.

The increasing refinement of this analysis will equip us for what lies ahead. Knowing what ethical monotheists mean by “God” is a necessary condition for asking why they say that The One exists and whether anyone is in a position to know whether they are right or wrong.

Outline

I. Theism, generally speaking, aims its worship at beings or spirits that have “personal” characteristics, interests, and passions and are capable of interaction with humans.
   A. In these rather obviously anthropomorphic characteristics, it stands in contrast to the austerity of deism and the impersonality of dynamism and animism.
   B. Theism comes in three distinct and progressively tighter forms: polytheism, dualism or bitheism, and monotheism.
      1. Polytheism recognizes many theistic gods (typical in ancient Greece and Rome).
      2. Bitheism recognizes exactly two theistic gods (typical of ancient Persians and contemporary Parsees).
      3. Monotheism recognizes exactly one theistic God (more or less typical of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).

II. Monotheism has been an arena of high theological development (as have been certain dualisms), with the result that many of the dimensions of this view of God have been very precisely articulated, parsed, and reparsed.
   A. Monotheism is typified by the notion that a proper object of worship cannot be contingent on, derived from, or limited by any other being or power. (This general state of divine non-contingency is called “aseity.”)
   B. As a function of the aseity of the divine, targeting anything like worship toward an inferior substitute or rival being or power is strictly inappropriate, taking on the flavor of idolatry.
   C. Aseity works itself out in two primary areas of the divine’s character in the form of “omniscience” and “omnipotence.” There is nothing that can limit what a completely non-contingent being can do and/or know.

III. Ethical monotheism incorporates all the dimensions of general monotheism and adds one important further characteristic, namely, that the divine is “without moral flaw.”
   A. If any X is worthy of worship, then it must be not only powerful and smart but good. Indeed, any X that deserves worship must be all powerful, all knowing, and all good.
   B. If moral values are embodied in and derived from the “other” then the dimensions of the world that do not display these values will generate problems for ethical monotheism.
   C. To see God as the source of moral values is to see God as having intentions.
      1. But if God is unlimited in power and wisdom, then how could divine intentions be thwarted?
      2. How could the sole source of all that is be simultaneously omnipotent, omniscient, without moral flaw, and interested in us…and the world be the way it is—beset by hosts of all too familiar “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’’?
   D. It is generally held that no more than one being can be “all powerful, all knowing, and all good”; thus, ethical monotheists tend to believe that all other worshippers are following after “false gods,” at best, or are “idolators,” at worst.

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Even if there can be no more than one such being, however, it is not clear to everyone that there is one at all. This poses a question set that is at the heart of philosophy of religion in the context of ethical monotheism:

1. Can one know whether one all powerful, all knowing, and all good being exists?
2. If so, how?
3. If not, why not?

We will look at various answers to these questions after exploring how people are ever in a position to know anything at all.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How similar (and how different) are the use and meaning of the word “God” in the early official documents of the United States and in the personal writings of such individuals as Washington, Franklin, Madison, and Jefferson to (and from) the use and meaning of the word “God” in ethically monotheistic religious writings?
2. Here is an ancient, but still intriguing, riddle: Could an omnipotent creator make a stone that is too heavy for “him” to pick up?
Lecture Six
What Is Knowledge?

Scope: In order to ask what can be known in religious contexts, and especially what can be known about the existence of god(s), we need to be clear about what it is to know anything at all. Spelling this out amounts to laying out the “necessary conditions” of knowledge. We shall begin laying that out in this lecture by examining an array of things that one might know, might believe but not know, doubt, disbelieve, or flatly deny. In the process, we will be using the traditional understanding of knowledge as “justified true belief.” We will give some attention to all three aspects of that traditional understanding but will focus our attention increasingly on the notion of “justification” or “evidence,” in preparation for the next two lectures (where we will explore the kinds of evidence that generally establish knowledge and the quality of evidence that is generally needed to do so).

Outline
I. Although it is possible, some say, that we don’t know anything at all, we will assume otherwise in order to get at the more precise question “Can we know anything about God, using the common standards for knowledge that we actually employ for everyday affairs?”
   A. Radical skepticism has been entertained since before the time of Plato.
   B. Though there may be no way to disprove radical skepticism, there is certainly no good reason to believe it is true.
   C. In the meantime, there are practical reasons to assume that it is not.
II. There are differences between what we know, what we believe, and what we disbelieve.
   A. There are some things that we would say we “know.”
      1. Some are “factual,” such as:
         More than ten people spoke at the University of Richmond commencement in May 2002.
         All swans are either white or black.
      2. Some are “formal,” such as:
         In base ten arithmetic, 10 is greater than 5.
         The negation of a conjunction is the disjunction of two negations.
      3. Some are “normative,” such as:
         Everything held equal, small classes are better than big ones.
         Everything held equal, child abuse is evil.
   B. There are some things that we believe, but might not say we “know.”
      1. Some are “factual,” such as:
         The Sudan is north of the equator.
         George Washington died in the eighteenth century.
      2. Some are “formal,” such as:
         The square root of a negative number is an imaginary number.
         Quantum mechanics doesn’t contradict Newton at the macro level.
      3. Some are “normative,” such as:
         Everything held equal, adultery is a bad thing.
         Everything held equal, allowing civil disobedience is a good thing.
   C. There are some things that others believe (or even claim to know) that we don’t believe and, hence, don’t know (and don’t believe they know either).
      1. Some are “factual,” such as:
         Appendicitis is caused by swallowing grape pits.
         Neutrogena™ will make you look younger.
      2. Some are “formal,” such as:
         The shortest distance between any two points is a straight line.
         The interior angles of any triangle add up to 180°.
      3. Some are “normative,” such as:
Pornography is okay if the subject consents to it. Capital punishment is never justified.

III. Whether one claims to know, to believe, or to disbelieve a proposition should be a function of the presence or absence of evidence (of the right kind, of sufficient quality, and in sufficient quantity) to underwrite the claim that the proposition is true.

A. At a minimum, knowledge is “justified true belief.”
   1. Beliefs are experiential expectations.
   2. True beliefs are reliable experiential expectations.
   3. Justified true beliefs are reliable experiential expectations that are backed up by enough evidence of one kind or another to generate confidence in use.

B. The big questions about evidence are: “What kind(s)?” “How good?” and “How much?”

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Given the truth of the saying “Wishing doesn’t make things so,” what does make things so?
2. Are the procedures used to discover what is so in contested and weighty puzzles (such as “Who killed President Kennedy?”) appropriate for everyday domestic puzzles (such as “What happened to the last of the strawberries?”), or would that be “overkill”?

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Lecture Seven
What Kinds of Evidence Count?

Scope: If evidence is what makes the difference between mere belief and real knowledge, then it is important to discover what kind(s) of evidence work. It is equally important to discover what quality of evidence it takes to be effective in a given setting. In this lecture, we will explore a wide variety of “kinds of evidence” that people actually appeal to from time to time, in order to spell out which kinds work and which kinds don’t. In the next lecture, we will move on to explore the standards for accepting or rejecting specific pieces of evidence (of the generally acceptable kinds).

Outline
I. What kinds of evidence might promote disbelief to belief or belief to knowledge?
   A. Experience is an important component of evidence, but it requires interpretation and inference to make it useful.
      1. The senses are primary avenues, including sight, taste, smell, feeling, and hearing.
      2. It is possible that there are other modes of experience as well.
   B. Reason is also an important component of evidence, but without something to reason about, it is sterile.
      1. The reasoning process relies heavily on association and pattern recognition, as well as on inference.
      2. Inference may operate inductively, deductively, and analogically.
      3. Reason is often used in the context of the construction and testing of hypotheses (the “deductive nomological method”).
   C. Appeals to authority of one sort or another play a frequent role here.
      1. Authority comes in two distinct varieties, expertise and position, but only the former constitutes legitimate evidence.
      2. Evidentially legitimate authority (that is, expertise) is nothing more than “secondhand” reason and experience.
   D. Intuition is sometimes offered as evidence, but except in cases where it amounts to quick or quirky reason, it requires justification rather than providing it.
      1. Intuition may amount to inference that uses acquired shorthand or that follows nonstandard, unfamiliar, or uncommon tracks.
      2. Intuition may amount to an immediate insight into (or a gestalt grasp of) a complex situation, taken as a whole.
      3. Intuition may amount to allegations of groundless understanding, in which case it slides toward category F, below.
   E. Revelation is frequently offered as evidence for knowledge claims in religious contexts, though is unfamiliar elsewhere.
      1. When revelation amounts to what one infers from or hypothesizes about “remarkable experiences,” it should be screened with the standard tests for experiential reliability and interpretive cogency.
      2. When revelation amounts to the claim that the content of a proposition is “inspired” or is “guaranteed by its source,” it is an appeal to authority and should be dealt with accordingly.
      3. When revelation amounts to byproducts of alleged “direct encounters” with the divine, it requires special treatment (as in Lectures Seventeen and Eighteen).
   F. Those who claim to know by faith are simply misusing language.
      1. “I just know,” says no more than, “This is what I believe.”
      2. “I know because I’m absolutely certain,” ignores the radical unreliability of strong convictions.
      3. “I know because I trust my source,” collapses back into an appeal to authority.

II. The bottom line is that moving from disbelief to belief or from belief to knowledge is a testable process of someone’s reason exploiting someone’s experiential input.

Essential Reading:

**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Considering that there have been many things that “everybody knew” *at one time* that later turned out to be wrong, can one ever legitimately appeal to “common knowledge” to prove a point?
2. Considering the fact that there are some things that people in different parts of the world claim to know (about medicine, for instance) that seem to contradict each other, what would it mean to say that perhaps all of them are right?
Lecture Eight
What Constitutes Good Evidence?

Scope: Even when we have identified what kinds of evidence are preferable (such as firsthand experience over hearsay, coherent inference over free association), we still need to figure out the characteristics of evidence of a given kind that enable it, in a context, to move us from disbelief to belief or from opinion to solid knowledge. In this lecture, we will explore a wide variety of criteria that are employed in everyday contexts to measure our cognitive achievements.

There is nothing startling here for everyday affairs. Further, there is no reason to lay any of these criteria aside when the affairs in question are “special” for one reason or another (perhaps because they are “religious”). Special contexts suggest a special necessity for holding fast to tried-and-true standards.

Outline

I. Good evidence is typified by the presence of a reasonable number (though not necessarily all) of such characteristics as relevance, non-equivocation, and non-circularity (matters of informal logic), plus replicability and testability, with controls for limiting conditions (matters of scientific method), all articulated in a cogent theoretical framework.
   A. Relevance is what is lost in “non sequiturs” (e.g., the old Rolaids ads).
   B. Non-equivocation is the refusal to exploit ambiguity (e.g., “Brute said I was good” and “The president is the authority on foreign policy”).
   C. Non-circularity is the avoidance of question-begging (e.g., “The soporific power of opium is due to its dormative potency”).
   D. Replicability and testability are why scientists publish their results (e.g., cold fusion and Krebiozin).
   E. Limiting conditions are disabilities in the apparatus or the observer that interfere with reliable results (e.g., color blindness, bias or vested interest, uncontrolled outside variables).
      1. They cannot be eliminated unless they are identified.
      2. Sometimes it is possible to “control for” ones that can’t be eliminated.
   F. The matter of articulation in a cogent theoretical/interpretive framework highlights the fact that it is usually possible to “explain” a set of data in more than one way.
      1. Any explanation is possible, given the appropriate theory.
      2. One explanation, however, is not “just as good as another” because one theory is not “just as good as another.”

II. How much good evidence does one need?
   A. One needs enough to get “beyond reasonable doubt.”
      1. This is required in criminal cases but not in civil ones.
      2. When the stakes are high, the “preponderance of the evidence” is just too weak a standard to gamble with.
      3. This does not guarantee anything but leaves the door open for corrections “in the light of further evidence.”
   B. One had best not need enough to secure “certainty.”
      1. Logical certainty is impossible about matters of fact.
      2. Psychological certainty is of no use.
      3. The quest for (impossible) certainty is the primary source of radical skepticism.
   C. Consensus is usually, but not always, a reliable mark of success.
      1. Fifty thousand Frenchmen can be wrong!
      2. This is why, on matters of substance, one must hedge one’s bets and be “ready to revise.”

Essential Reading:
Recommended Reading:
William James, “The Will to Believe,” reprinted in Klemke, Philosophy, pp. 71ff.

Questions to Consider:
1. Considering the difference between “I am certain that 1 + 1 = 3” and “It is certain that 1 + 1 = 3,” why is the former plausible and the latter not? Considering the two statements “I am certain that God exists” and “It is certain that God exists,” does this pair of statements have the same “plausibility disparity” that the first pair has?

2. Given that the conclusion of any valid deduction is “contained in its premises” (otherwise, it wouldn’t be valid), must we then allow that every deductive argument is “question-begging” or “circular” and that there are, consequently, no practical or important differences between the two following arguments?
   a. All philosophers are human and all humans are mortal.
      Socrates is a philosopher.
      Therefore, Socrates is mortal.
   b. Everything in the Bible is God’s word and everything God says is true.
      It says in the Bible that God exists.
      Therefore, God exists.
Lecture Nine

Why Argue for the Existence of God?

Scope: When rival accounts of what is observed are in conflict, argument may be used to show that this or that account is correct or, at least, better than the others. Some arguments for the existence of God arise this way—the world being the observed reality that calls for explanation, and God being the inference or construct that renders it intelligible. The cosmological and teleological arguments fall into this category. The ontological argument, on the other hand, purports to demonstrate divine existence solely on the basis of conceptual analysis. We will examine all three of these argument patterns in the next several lectures, but the immediate tasks are: (1) to illustrate the function of argument when one is trying explain everyday events and (2) to enumerate a few caveats to keep in mind when we start weighing the merits of the theists’ arguments.

Outline

I. Argument plays a crucial role in sorting out what is not transparent or self-explanatory, as can be seen in the following example situations.

A. Diagnosis, treatment, and cure in medicine require the close noting of detailed relevant data, both positive and negative; careful hypothesis construction and modeling; and extensive controlled experimentation.

B. Detection, arrest, and conviction in criminal law require the close noting of detailed relevant data, both positive and negative; careful hypothesis construction and modeling; and vigorous cross-examination of all witnesses.

C. Figuring out how to deal with everyday events requires using analogies to past experience, carefully constructing and modeling hypotheses, and trying strategies out on a small scale, especially in a high-stakes game, such as buying a car, choosing a spouse, or making a life commitment to a cause.

II. Any argument that purports to sort out whether or not there is a God must surely meet minimal standards of the same sort.

III. In the next several lectures, we will review, explain, and evaluate a wide variety of arguments that purport to sort out whether or not there is a God.

A. As we begin that process, remember:

1. The word “god” is a title, not a name.
2. This title means “that which deserves worship.”
3. Worship amounts to obedience, devotion, adoration, awe, and so on.

B. Further, given that the target of these arguments is the existence of the God of ethical monotheism, remember that in this context, deserving worship entails:

1. Omnipotence: There are no limits on any god’s powers.
2. Omniscience: There are no limits on any god’s knowledge.
3. Omnipotence: Any god must be totally without moral flaw.
4. Omnipresence: There are no limits of distance or separation that affect a god.
5. Aseity: No god is limited by anything external to itself, being itself the limit of everything else.

IV. These arguments take three broad forms.

A. Ontological argument (the word comes from the Latin term meaning “being”) posits that we may arrive at the conclusion of God’s existence rationally. The evidence with which the ontological argument begins is what we can reason out with the mind alone.

B. Cosmological argument begins with the full scope of human experience—what we know and understand about the world.

C. Teleological argument (the word comes from the Greek telos, meaning “end or purpose”) argues that the detailed structure of the world as a whole demands that there has to be behind it something of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness.
Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Considering the comparative weight of FDA approval for a disease therapy and a testimonial from a therapy user who got better after using it, why is it, exactly, that scientific physicians discount what they call “anecdotal” evidence?
2. Are the same standards appropriate for deciding (1) where to send your children to college, (2) whether to arrange a meeting in a secluded location with someone you’ve been hitting on in an on-line chat room, and (3) whether to give all that you have to the poor and follow Jesus?
Lecture Ten
How Ontological Argument Works

Scope: In this lecture, we shall sort out “ontological” argument for the existence of God, that is, argument that divine existence is entailed by the very concept of godhood. After a background summary of a parallel argument about the properties of triangles that are said to be entailed by the very concept of triangularity, we will examine two classical philosophers’ formulations of an ontological argument for divine existence (Anselm’s and Descartes’). In the next lecture, we will explore the reasons why this a priori approach has come to be seen as ineffective as a demonstration of what is, or is not, the case about “matters of fact.”

Outline

I. A priori arguments allegedly reach their conclusions without any appeal to experience, while a posteriori arguments rely on inferences that are experientially based.

A. The “ontological” argument for the existence of God is an a priori argument.

B. It will help us get a handle on this to start with an a priori argument about a simpler matter: Descartes’ argument about the characteristics of triangles.
   1. A triangle is defined as a three-sided geometrical figure in space, its sides being three distinct straight lines that intersect at three distinct points.
   2. There is no mention in that definition of the size of any of a triangle’s angles, nor of the size of its three angles combined.
   3. However, by careful reasoning (that is, by strict deduction from the axioms of geometry, which are allegedly self-evident), one may demonstrate that the three angles of any triangle always add up to 180°.
   4. Thus, there is a property of all triangles that can be discovered by deduction (without circularity and without looking at any triangles) from the mere definition of “triangle.”

II. Two classical philosophers formulated a priori arguments for the existence of God: St. Anselm and René Descartes.

A. St. Anselm argued as follows:
   1. A fool has said in his heart, “God does not exist.”
   2. The statement is intelligible; thus, the word “God” in it must refer to something—either to God or to something else.
   3. By definition, God is “that than which no greater can be conceived.”
   4. So if “god” refers to God, the statement is about “that than which…”
   5. Now consider two almost identical beings, one of which exists and one does not.
   6. The former is obviously more perfect than the latter, whatever their other characteristics are.
   7. So anything that is most perfect must, in fact, exist.
   8. So if the fool’s statement is about God, it is about that which is most perfect and, hence, is about that which does exist.
   9. The fool, then, is saying that that which exists does not exist.
   10. So the fool is contradicting himself.
   11. On the other hand, if the fool’s statement is not about God, it is misdirected and irrelevant.
   12. So the fool’s statement is either self-contradictory or irrelevant.
   13. So one cannot consistently and relevantly deny the existence of God.

B. Descartes argues that if one recapitulates the argument about triangles, but replaces “triangle” with “god,” the definition of triangle with the definition of god, and the inference of 180° with the inference of existence, one achieves an argument of the same form (hence, of the same validity), proving even as every triangle has 180°, every god exists.

C. Why does one have the feeling of the word “magic” here?

Essential Reading:

**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Does “perfection” really entail existence in concrete cases? Consider, for example, the status of the “perfect $1000 bill in Sam’s pocket.” Does the fact that Sam can envision such a note entail that there is one? Can Sam think his way to wealth? Can anyone?
2. “Some S are not P” contradicts “All S are P.” If any statement is false, then its contradictory is true. Thus, given that “Some unicorns do not have curly fur” is false, it follows that “All unicorns have curly fur” is true. Surely, however, the truth of the latter does *not* entail that there are any unicorns. Then why should the truth of the statement “Everything that deserves worship exists” entail that there are any gods?
Lecture Eleven

Why Ontological Argument Is Said to Fail

**Scope:** In this lecture, we will explore several classical lines of argument to the effect that *a priori* argument about matters of fact is generally sterile and that, consequently, ontological argument to prove that God exists (or *necessarily* exists, in one or another sense of “necessarily”) is sterile, too. After reviewing the negative verdicts from a variety of critics, we shall set it aside in preparation for turning our attention to possibly more profitable efforts to infer the existence of God from the occurrence and/or the nature of the world rather than from the meaning of a concept.

**Outline**

I. Two classical writers (Gaunilo and Kant) have claimed to refute the ontological argument.
   A. Gaunilo argued that one might as well say the following, which is absurd on its face.
      1. A fool has said in his heart, “The perfect island does not exist.”
      2. The statement is intelligible; thus, the phrase “perfect island” in it must refer to something—either to the perfect island or to something else.
      3. By definition, the perfect island is “that island than which no greater island can be conceived.”
      4. So if “the perfect island” refers to the perfect island, the statement is about “that island than which...”
      5. Now consider two almost identical islands, one of which exists and one does not.
      6. The former island is obviously more perfect than the latter, whatever their other characteristics are.
      7. So anything that is the *most* perfect island must, in fact, exist.
      8. So if the fool’s statement *is* about the perfect island, it is about that island which is most perfect and, hence, is about that which does exist.
      9. The fool, then, is saying that that which exists does not exist.
     10. So the fool is contradicting himself.
     11. On the other hand, if the fool’s statement is *not* about the perfect island, it is misdirected and irrelevant.
     12. So the fool’s statement is either self-contradictory or irrelevant.
     13. So one cannot consistently and relevantly deny the existence of the perfect island.
     14. So the perfect island exists.
     15. But this whole argument is absurd.
     16. So Anselm’s argument (which is the same argument) is absurd.
   B. Kant argued that even if Anselm’s argument works for properties, it does not work for “existence.”
      1. Existence is not a property, in the relevant sense.
      2. Alvin Plantinga replies that although the argument may not work for existence, it will work for necessary existence, because of the modality of “necessity.”
      3. Other modal logicians (such as Peter Geach), however, disagree.

II. A general twentieth-century reply is that *a priori* arguments, in general, yield only “analytic” conclusions, not “synthetic” ones.
   A. There is no such thing as an *a priori* argument to establish matters of fact.
   B. Descartes’ conclusions about triangles are limited to formal truths within Euclidean geometry, and their factual (or occurrent) truth is purely contingent (as can be seen by examining non-Euclidean systems).

III. A positivistic reply is that words *can* be used without naming or referring to any entity.
   A. If the word “god” is vacuous, then the fool’s claim is neither self-contradictory nor misdirected but “nonsensical,” and so is Anselm’s.
   B. If “god” is a vacuous term, then both “God exists” and “God does not exist” are neither true nor false, but pseudo propositions, and are unknowable.
IV. Your lecturer’s view is that the valid conclusion of the ontological argument is either “All gods exist” or “All
gods necessarily exist,” not “God exists” or “God necessarily exists.”

A. This is to say, on a Boolean reading of the Universal Affirmative, “The number of gods and the number of
(necessarily) existing gods is the same number,” which is true, even if the number in question is zero.

B. It is also to say, by obversion, “Nothing that does not (necessarily) exist is God,” which does not say that
there is (or must be) anything that deserves worship—only that no nonexistent (or contingently existent)
thing does.

C. The ontological argument is a valid, sound (and strong) argument against idolatry.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:

1. Consider a difference between the verdict options in U.S. trials and those in more flexible legal systems: In the
United States, a defendant who is not proven guilty is deemed innocent, but Scottish juries are famously able to
present the verdict “not proven,” so that a defendant there who has not been proven guilty is not automatically
deemed innocent. With that in mind, does the failure of the ontological argument to show that there is a god
shows that there is not?

2. What does the ontological proof that idolatry is silly show about the truth or falsity of the rest of the claims that
monotheists tend to make?
Lecture Twelve
How Cosmological Argument Works

Scope: Many writers hold that a compelling case can be made for divine existence by noting the existence of the world and appealing to a principle of explanation called “the principle of sufficient reason.” Such argument is called “cosmological.” In this lecture, we will first explore the use of “sufficient reason” arguments in everyday settings, paying close attention to their structure and their apparent limitations (articulated in terms of another historical principle of explanation usually called “Ockham’s razor”). We will then explicate the two main lines of “causal” arguments that have been made for divine existence in this style. In the next lecture, however, we will take note of the extent to which Ockham’s razor constrains such inferences from world to God.

Outline

I. A posteriori arguments for divine existence come in several forms but have some general characteristics in common.
A. Three important issues are in play in all of them.
   1. Does (or must) the world have a source at all?
   2. What specific characteristics typify the world’s source, if it has (or must have) one?
   3. Is the world’s source, if it has (or must have) one, worthy of worship?
B. All of them employ the “principle of sufficient reason,” a general principle of common sense and science, namely, “Nothing just happens,” but they employ it at different levels of specificity.
   1. That there is anything at all is said to call for an external source of some kind.
   2. That the world is the very way it is is said to call for an external source of a specific kind.
   3. That the world is flawless is said to call for an external source that is itself flawless and, hence, also calls for the adoration of its source.
C. However, all of them also call for the application of another general principle of common sense and science—Ockham’s razor (next lecture).

II. In the arguments from causation, or “cosmological” arguments for divine existence, the search for the world’s sufficient reason takes the form of a search for sufficient causation (that is, typically, an “unmoved mover” or “uncaused cause”). The argument is presented in one or the other of two forms: serial and aggregate.
A. The serial argument from causation goes as follows:
   1. Every event has a cause (nota bene: not every effect has a cause).
   2. So tracing back, cause behind cause, there must either have been:
      a. a first cause that was not itself an event,
      b. an infinite regression of events/causes, or
      c. some event that was not caused (had no cause).
   3. The second option simply denies the first principle from which the argument began and is, hence, inconsistent.
   4. The third option is said to be absurd, in some sense.
   5. That leaves the first option: a “first cause” or “uncaused cause.”
   6. That first cause or uncaused cause is said to be God.
B. The aggregate argument from first cause goes as follows:
   1. The world as a whole either is contingent or is not contingent.
   2. Since everything in the world is contingent, then the notion that the world as a whole is not contingent is, in some sense, absurd.
   3. So the world as a whole is contingent.
   4. Since the world as a whole is contingent, then it calls for an external “resting place” or “cause.”
   5. That external cause either is another event or set of events or is not.
   6. If it were another event or set of events, it would require its own resting place or cause (and the repetition of step 4), thus generating an infinite regress of events, which is absurd.
7. So the world as a whole must have an external cause that is not an event or set of events and does not call for its own resting place or cause.
8. That external uncaused non-event is said to be God.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Think about the difference between saying “every effect has a cause” and saying “every event has a cause.” Why is the first a tautology and the other merely a contingent generalization?
2. Compare the regress generated by “every act must be preceded by a decision to act, and every decision is an act” and the regresses dismissed in the causal arguments considered here. Are all of these regresses “absurd” in the same way and/or for the same reasons?
## Timeline

### Events and People with Implications for Philosophy of Ethical Monotheism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>People</th>
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| 1500 B.C.E.    | Job discusses theodicy  
Brahminism/Hinduism coalescing | Job                           |
| 1300 B.C.E.    | Moses said to receive Decalogue                                       | Moses                         |
| 800–700 B.C.E. | Major Hebrew prophets                                                 | Amos, Hosea, Isaiah          |
| 624–545 B.C.E. | Thales                                                                 |                               |
| 639–553 B.C.E. | Zoroastrian religion founded                                          | Zoroaster                     |
| 604–531 B.C.E. | Taoism begins                                                          | Lao Tzu                       |
| 599–527 B.C.E. | Jainism founded                                                       | Mahavira Jeni                 |
| 597–538 B.C.E. | Much Hebrew oral tradition inscribed during Babylonian exile          |                               |
| 590–500 B.C.E. | Delphic Oracle at zenith                                              |                               |
| 581–497 B.C.E. | Pythagoras                                                            |                               |
| 551–479 B.C.E. | Confucianism founded                                                  | Confucius                     |
| 550–480 B.C.E. | Buddhism founded                                                      | Siddhartha                    |
| 515–450 B.C.E. | Parminides of Elia                                                   |                               |
| 490–425 B.C.E. | Zeno of Elia                                                          |                               |
| 470–399 B.C.E. | Socrates                                                              |                               |
| 427–347 B.C.E. | Plato                                                                 |                               |
| 384–322 B.C.E. | Aristotle                                                             |                               |
| 375 B.C.E.     | Canon of Pentateuch settled                                           |                               |
| 341–271 B.C.E. | Epicurus                                                              |                               |
| 333–264 B.C.E. | Zeno the Stoic                                                        |                               |
| 4 B.C.E.       | Jesus of Nazareth                                                     |                               |
| to 30 C.E.     |                                                                        |                               |
| 3–65           | St. Paul                                                              |                               |
| 25             | Christianity founded                                                  |                               |
| 115–200        | St. Irenaeus                                                          |                               |
| 160–220        | Quintus Tertullian                                                    |                               |
| 215–276        | Manicheanism founded                                                  | Mani                          |
| 313            | Edit of Milan (toleration of Christians)                              |                               |
| 325            | First Shinto shrines in Japan  
Council of Nicea, Nicene Creed                                      |                               |
| 354–430        | St. Augustine                                                         |                               |
| 440            | Taoism established in China                                           |                               |
| 480–524        | Anicius Boethius                                                      |                               |
| 570–632        | Mohammed the Prophet                                                  |                               |
| 622            | Muslim calendar year 1                                                |                               |
| 697            | Arabs destroy Carthage                                                |                               |
| 711            | Spain an Arab state  
Spanish Jews freed by Arabs                                           |
<p>| 712            | Sind (India) an Arab state                                            |                               |
| 732            | Arab advance stopped at Tours                                         |                               |
| 810–877        | Johannes Scotus                                                       |                               |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
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<td>912–976</td>
<td>Omayyad rule in Spain at zenith</td>
<td>Erigena</td>
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<tr>
<td>1006</td>
<td>Islam reaches northwest India</td>
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<tr>
<td>1031</td>
<td>Caliphate of Cordoba abolished</td>
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<tr>
<td>1033–1109</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Anselm</td>
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<td>1066</td>
<td>Battle of Hastings</td>
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<td>1079–1144</td>
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<td>Peter Abelard</td>
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<td>1095</td>
<td>Crusades begin</td>
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<td>1100–1160</td>
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<td>Peter Lombard</td>
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<tr>
<td>1126–1198</td>
<td>Islam reaches northwest India</td>
<td>Ibn Rushd Averoes</td>
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<td>1214–1293</td>
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<td>Roger Bacon</td>
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<td>1215</td>
<td>Magna Carta</td>
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<td>1225–1274</td>
<td>Spanish Inquisition under Dominicans</td>
<td>St. Thomas Aquinas</td>
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<td>1265–1321</td>
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<td>Dante (Alighieri)</td>
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<td>John Duns Scotus</td>
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<td>1280–1349</td>
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<td>William of Ockham</td>
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<tr>
<td>1291</td>
<td>Crusades end</td>
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<td>1304–1374</td>
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<td>Francesco Petrarch</td>
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<td>1452–1519</td>
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<td>Leonardo Da Vinci</td>
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<td>1466–1536</td>
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<td>Desiderius Erasmus</td>
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<td>1469–1527</td>
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<td>Nicolo Machiavelli</td>
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<td>1473–1543</td>
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<td>Nicolas Copernicus</td>
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<td>1477–1535</td>
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<td>St. Thomas More</td>
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<td>1483–1546</td>
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<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>Columbus sailed the ocean blue</td>
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<td>Torquemada gives Spanish Jews three months to convert</td>
<td>Martin Luther</td>
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<tr>
<td>1499</td>
<td>Forced conversion of Spanish Moors</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Sikhism founded in India</td>
<td>Guru Nanak Dev</td>
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<td>1509–1564</td>
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<td>John Calvin</td>
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<td>1515–1582</td>
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<td>St. Teresa of Avila</td>
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<tr>
<td>1516</td>
<td>Erasmus publishes New Testament in Greek and Latin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1517</td>
<td>Luther posts 95 theses</td>
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<tr>
<td>1520</td>
<td>Luther excommunicated</td>
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<td>1530</td>
<td>Augsburg Confession</td>
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<tr>
<td>1531</td>
<td>Erasmus publishes first complete edition of Aristotle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Henry VIII head of the Church of England</td>
<td>Philipp Melanthon</td>
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<td>1534</td>
<td>Luther completes translation of the Bible into German</td>
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<tr>
<td>1536</td>
<td>Calvin’s <em>Institutes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1538</td>
<td>Calvin expelled from Geneva</td>
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<td>1542–1591</td>
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<td>St. John of the Cross</td>
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<td>1545–1564</td>
<td>Council of Trent</td>
<td>Jacobus Arminius</td>
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<td>1561</td>
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<tr>
<td>1561–1626</td>
<td>Calvin’s <em>Institutes</em> in English</td>
<td>Sir Francis Bacon</td>
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<td>1564–1642</td>
<td>Galilei Galileo</td>
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<td>1571–1630</td>
<td>Johannes Kepler</td>
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<td>1588–1679</td>
<td>Thomas Hobbes</td>
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<td>1596–1650</td>
<td>René Descartes</td>
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<td>1632–1677</td>
<td>Benedictus Spinoza</td>
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<td>1632–1704</td>
<td>John Locke</td>
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<td>1642–1727</td>
<td>Sir Isaac Newton</td>
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<tr>
<td>1642–1660</td>
<td>English Revolution, Civil War, and Protectorate</td>
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<td>Westminster Confession</td>
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<td>1646–1716</td>
<td>Gotfried Leibniz</td>
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<td>1685–1753</td>
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<td>1694–1778</td>
<td>Voltaire (François Marie Arouet)</td>
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<td>David Hume</td>
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<td>Immanuel Kant</td>
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<td>William Paley</td>
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<td>1810</td>
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<td>Karl Marx</td>
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<td>1834</td>
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<td>1839–1914</td>
<td>Charles Sanders Peirce</td>
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<td>1842–1910</td>
<td>William James</td>
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<td>1844–1900</td>
<td>Friedrich Nietzsche</td>
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<td>1856–1939</td>
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<td>American Civil War</td>
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<td>1869–1937</td>
<td>Rudolf Otto</td>
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<td>1872–1970</td>
<td>Lord Bertrand Russell</td>
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<td>Martin Buber</td>
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<td>1879–1955</td>
<td>Albert Einstein</td>
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<td>1884–1976</td>
<td>Rudolf Bultmann</td>
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<td>1886–1965</td>
<td>Paul Tillich</td>
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<td>Ludwig Wittgenstein</td>
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<td>1898–1963</td>
<td>C. S. Lewis</td>
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<td>1900–1976</td>
<td>Gilbert Ryle</td>
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<td>1910–1989</td>
<td>Sir Alfred Jules Ayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Theory of Atomic Structure</td>
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<td>1911–1960</td>
<td>J. L. Austin</td>
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<td>1914–1918</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>General Theory of Relativity</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1922–1996</td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
<td>Thomas Kuhn</td>
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<td>1922–</td>
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<td>John Hick</td>
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<td>Antony Flew</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Quantum Theory</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Market crash, Depression begins</td>
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<td>1929–</td>
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<td>Alasdair MacIntyre</td>
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<td>1931–</td>
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<td>1932–</td>
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<td>Alvin Plantinga</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>Concentration camps in Germany</td>
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<td>Japan invades China</td>
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<td>1936–1939</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>Germany annexes Austria and Czechoslovakia</td>
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<td>1939–1945</td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>Post-colonial era and Cold War begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Collapse of USSR</td>
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Glossary

*A posteriori*: Known or knowable on the basis of experience of some sort.

*A priori*: Known or knowable independent of experience of any sort.

*Agnostic*: One who claims not to know, or one who denies the possibility of knowing, whether or not something is the case; particularly one who takes such a position (agnosticism) on divine existence.

*Analytic*: Traditionally, the character of a statement that can be shown to be true or false by logical analysis, logically necessary. See *Synthetic*.

*Analytic falsehood*: Traditionally, a statement whose predicate denies what is contained in its subject, a self-contradiction or necessary falsehood.

*Analytic truth*: Traditionally, a statement whose predicate is contained in its subject, a tautology or necessary truth.

*Analytic/synthetic distinction*: An alleged “dogma” of empiricism in terms of which statements can be neatly sorted into necessary and contingent categories.

*Animism*: A form of religious belief that vests various natural objects (such as trees, hills, and so on) with indwelling spirits.

*Argument*: An arrangement of statements in which one or more (called the premises or assumptions) are presented as evidence or support for the truth of another (called the conclusion).

*Arguments for divine existence*:

  - **Ontological**: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a priori* because “God exists” is analytically true.
  - **Cosmological**: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a posteriori* because of what can be discovered about the nature of causation.
  - **Teleological**: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a posteriori* because of what can be discovered about the nature of causation and because the world is manifestly “designed.”

*Aseity*: Self-contained, self-dependent, self-explanatory; not contingent in any way on anything external.

*Atheist*: One who affirms atheism, claiming or claiming to know that no god exists.

*Behaviorism*: The theory that mental phenomena, states, and processes can be reduced to, or explained in terms of, observable behavior and/or dispositions to behave.

*Belief*: An experiential expectation, usually based on mental processing of experiences that have already occurred or are occurring.

*Bifurcate*: To radically divide, as Descartes divided mind and body, Plato divided ideas and appearances, and transcendentalists divide the divine and the mundane.

*Ceteris paribus*: All things held equal.

*Circumstantial*: Accidental, contingent.

*Common sense*: Whatever beliefs are held by consensus in a community, but usually focused on beliefs that are directly supported by everyday experience.

*Consensus*: Common agreement, considerably more than majority opinion but not necessarily unanimous.

*Contingent*: That which is circumstantial or accidental, depending on external factors.

*Cultural relativism*: The view that value (moral cultural relativism) and/or truth (epistemic cultural relativism) are local to a culture, being produced by the culture itself rather than found in the external world.

*Definition*: 

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Ostensive: Defining a term or phrase by pointing to its referent.

Paradigm case: Defining a term or phrase by reference to a stipulated model.

Essential: Defining a term or phrase in terms of the “essence” of its referents, that is, the universal necessary and sufficient conditions of its use.

Family resemblance: Defining a term or phrase in terms of overlapping similarities that may be observed in its referents.

Operational: Defining an abstract term or phrase in terms of observable phenomena or operations (for example, defining “gravity” as the acceleration of objects toward one another at a certain rate).

Deist: One affirming deism, the view (common in the eighteenth century) that the divine being that produced the natural world is detached from and disinterested in it.

Divine encounters: Occasions in which the divine becomes apparent to one or more humans, either by sight (visions), in sound or speech (locutions), or by general contact or indwelling (transports, raptures, unity experiences).

Dualist: One who affirms dualism, that is, in religious contexts, that there are two divine powers, usually separated in function as well as in identity. (Sometimes called bitheism, this view may include the notion that the two are in conflict with each other and/or vie for human allegiance and support.)

Dynamism: A form of religious belief that vests various natural objects (such as trees, hills, and so on) with innate but impersonal and unpredictable powers.

Empiricism: The view that experience (sometimes limited to sense experience) is the primary (or even the exclusive) source of human knowledge.

Enlightenment: An age of humanism and naturalism (and some deism), broadly associated with the eighteenth century.

Epistemology: Knowledge theory, one of the main traditional branches of philosophy.

Eschatological: Having to do with the eschaton, the end of the age, the last days.

Ethical monotheism: The position taken by ethical monotheists that there is exactly one God, a being notable for moral perfection in addition to unlimited power and wisdom.

Evils: Dysfunctional, harmful, and/or hurtful events that occur, whether because of the activities of people (human evils) or independent of them (natural evils).

Explanation: The rendering intelligible of a state of affairs by carefully noting how it came about and how it relates to other states of affairs (causal explanation), why or for what purpose it occurred (teleological explanation), or the use that it serves (functional explanation).

Faith: Trust or reliance on the truth of a set of propositions either largely or entirely independent of evidence and argumentation, or trust or dependence on the reliability of an individual (or group) in the same way.

Felicity conditions: The circumstances in which a locution is “happy,” (for example, a description is felicitous when it is true, a promise is felicitous when it is sincere, a joke is felicitous if it is funny).

Fideist: One who affirms fideism, the view that divine existence is a matter of faith rather than a matter of knowledge.

Foundationalism: A position in knowledge theory that certain states of affairs are directly or immediately known and that all other knowledge is derived (in one way or another) from that foundation. For phenomenalists, for example, sense data are foundational to all knowledge of matters of fact.

God: A title for that which deserves worship.
Henotheism: A form of religious belief in which the existence of numerous divine beings may be recognized, but allegiance to the particular one associated with one’s tribe or culture is demanded.

Holy: Set apart, wholly other, sacred.

Humanism: The view, whether religious or secular in tone, that human values and concerns should be defined in human terms.

Idealism: The metaphysical view that there is a non-physical reality “behind” or “above” the apparent reality of everyday events.

Illocutionary force: That which is done in a speech act, such as warn, describe, promise, and the like.

Imply, entail: To provide sufficient grounds for the truth of, as a premise implies a conclusion. If a logical implication statement is a tautology, it is called an entailment.

In principle: By definition, not accidental.

Incommensurable: Of two or more statements, theories, or paradigms, not measurable or assessable on a common standard.

Inference: The mental process of drawing a conclusion from one or more premises. People infer; statements imply.

Knowledge: Justified true belief, at least, but more than that according to skeptics who deny its occurrence.

Logic: A system of rules of inference to determine whether or not the premises of an argument validly imply its conclusion.

Logical empiricism: A philosophical position identified with the Vienna Circle that insisted that all cognitively meaningful language is, in principle, either empirically or formally verifiable; logical positivism.

Logical form: The syntactical structure of an argument, such as modus ponens (that is, If P, then Q; P, therefore Q) and modus tollens (that is, If P, then Q; Not-Q, therefore Not-P).

Logical positivism: See Logical empiricism.

Meaning: Either the sense or the reference (or both) of a word or phrase.

Meta---: Beyond, about, or parasitic on; for example, meta-ethics is an abstract area of inquiry that takes the discourse of ethics as its subject matter for examination.

Metaphilosophy: An abstract area of inquiry that takes the discourse of philosophy as its subject matter.

Metaphysics: In Aristotle’s collected works, what comes after Physics. To logical positivists, nonsense. To the ambitious, speculative “theories of everything.” More generally, abstract inquiry that takes all discourse about “the furniture of the world” as its subject matter. Ontology.

Mithraism: A mystery religion widely practiced at the beginning of the common era.

Modus ponens: See Logical form.

Modus tollens: See Logical form.

Monotheist: One affirming monotheism, the view that exactly one God exists and, typically, that the divine is interested and involved in human affairs (cf. Deist).

Moral relativism: The view that the moral value of an act varies as a function of things other than the nature of the act itself (such as the traditions of a culture, the perspective and interests of an individual, the precise circumstances in which an act occurs, and so on). This view looks very subjective but need not be, depending on what moral values are said to be relative to.

Mysticism: A form of religion that cultivates human interaction with the supernatural independent of reason or everyday experience; occultism.
Myth: Typically, an ancient tale that, though not to be taken literally, conveys some significant insight into the human condition; a vehicle (which may be utterly fantastic) for delivering home truths in a memorable way. (The vehicle should never be confused with its point.)

Naming theory of meaning: An ancient (and still common) view that words and phrases mean by naming something. It encounters difficulty with such words as “nothing” and such phrases as “the present king of France.”

Natural evils: Bad things that occur in the world independent of any human input.

Nominalism and realism: Metaphysical positions on the status of abstract nouns. Realism insists that they name actual entities (such as The Good), while nominalism allows that they express only notions.

Ockham’s razor: The primary tool of theoretical economy; hypothesizing no more than is necessary to save the appearances.

Operationalism: Metaphysical position that abstract nouns must be given operational definitions (see Definition).

Other: A negative descriptor for God, reminding one that God is different (without indicating in what way); usually intensified with “wholly;” holy, set apart, sacred.

Pantheism: A form of religious belief in which everything is held to be divine or held to be a manifestation of the divine.

Paradigm: Generally, a model, template, or pattern. In recent usage, the frame of reference or perspective in which one operates that determines how things appear and, hence, how one describes or explains them.

Parsees: Indian Zoroastrians.

Performatives: A variety of speech act in which something is transacted rather than described, such as “I baptize thee...”

Perlocutionary force: That which is achieved by a speech act; its results.

Philosophical analysis: Taking some system of thought apart to discover its inner logic, presuppositions, and implications; essentially, meta-inquiry.

Philosophical synthesis: Putting the results of various philosophical analyses together in an attempt to synthesize an inclusive account of how things are.

Polytheism: A form of religion that holds there are many gods, often (but not always) placed in a hierarchy and differentiated in terms of their interests or spheres of influence.

Positivism: The philosophical position of Auguste Comte, typified by the rejection of myth, magic, and metaphysics and the affirmation of “positive science.” A precursor of logical positivism.

Post hoc ergo propter hoc: “After, therefore because of”; a common fallacy.

Premise: An assumption or starting point, the basis from which an argument’s conclusion is inferred.

Principle of sufficient reason: The notion that “nothing just happens”; that in order for anything to occur, the adequate causes of its occurrence must have themselves already occurred.

Properly basic: Immediate, non-inferential or foundational, and properly so. For empiricists, experiential phenomena are said to constitute the proper basis of all discourse. Some recent theistic arguments make the same claim for elementary god talk.

Rationalism: The view that genuine knowledge (perhaps all of it) must be achieved through the exercise of the mind rather than through experience.

Reductionism: A philosophical enterprise that consists of translating accounts of one sort of phenomena into the vocabulary of an allegedly simpler and more inclusive sort of phenomena. Thus, for example, behaviorism is a reductionist theory of mind.

Reference: Denotation or extension; that which is referred to or picked out by the sense of a word or phrase.
Reform tradition: A tradition associated with Calvinism that emphasizes and prizes closely argued philosophical analyses of theological issues.

Revelation: That which is allegedly discovered by humans when the divine lifts the veil of transcendence sufficiently for them to have a glimpse of what could not be ordinarily known.

Scholasticism: High medieval thought.

Secular: Non-religious. Recently, a term of abuse, as in “secular humanism.”

Semantic: Having to do with the sense and reference of language, as opposed to its internal structure or logic. See Syntactic.

Sense: Connotation, intention; the set of properties or characteristics invoked by a word or phrase in terms of which one can pick out its reference.

Sociology of knowledge: The idea that what is known is always a function of the culture in which one operates. “Epistemic cultural relativism” is the more common label now.

Sound: The quality of an argument that is valid and has true premises as well.

Speech acts: Actual events or acts in which language is employed or used. Many philosophers of language now hold that they (rather than the words or phrases employed in them) are the locus of meaning.

Syntactic: Having to do with the internal structure or logic of language (as opposed to its meaning). See Semantic.

Synthetic: Traditionally, the character of a statement that cannot be shown to be true or false by logical analysis, logically contingent. See Analytic.

Tautology: A statement that is necessarily true, true by virtue of its form, or analytically true (for example, “In base-10 arithmetic, 2 + 2 = 4” and “All bachelors are unmarried.”)

Theodicy: An argument aimed at reconciling divine existence with apparent evils.

Thomism: The thought system of St. Thomas Aquinas, theological and philosophical.

Transcendent: “Beyond,” in some sense. In religious contexts, often “totally beyond” the level of human access. Other, holy, sacred; on the far side of a great gulf fixed.

Truth conditions: Circumstances in which a statement will be true or false. These may be experiential or logical, at least.

Truth criteria (tests): Ideas about how we can ascertain whether a statement is true or not, such as correspondence (seeing if it “matches” the way things really are), coherence (seeing if it is consistent with other statements that are held to be true), and pragmatic (seeing if it works, in use).

Truth theories: Ideas about what makes a statement true, such as correspondence (actually matching the ways things are), coherence (meshing with other statements that are true themselves), and pragmatic (being reliable in use).

Use theory of meaning: The theory, associated with Wittgenstein’s later work, that the meaning of a statement amounts to nothing more than the uses to which the statement can be put.

Valid: The quality of an argument with a logical form such that the truth of its premises assures the truth of its conclusion.

Verification: Testing a statement for truth.

Verificationism: The notion, associated with logical empiricism, that a statement can only be meaningful if it is testable by either experience or logic.

Weltanschauung: A worldview or “big picture”; possibly a “paradigm.”
Biographical Notes

The purpose of these sketches is to identify some of the interests and connections of the more influential philosophers who are referred to in the lectures, not to argue the merits of their positions. Further information can be found in: *The Directory of American Scholars* (U.S. and Canada), *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Britain), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and on such Web sites as:

http://www.biography.com/  [Biography.com]
http://www.philosophypages.com/  [Philosophy Pages from Garth Kemerling]
http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/  [The Catholic Encyclopedia]
http://www.xrefer.com/  [Xrefer, the Web’s Reference Engine]
http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/  [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy]

**Anselm, St. (1033–1109).** An Italian Scholastic theologian, philosopher, and difficult Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm was a rather Augustinean rationalist, most noted by modern philosophers for his articulation of the ontological argument for divine existence. Though most find that argument more intriguing than convincing, it still has its notable advocates (including, especially, Alvin Plantinga).

**Aquinas, St. Thomas (1225–1274).** An Italian Dominican Scholastic theologian, logician, and philosopher, Aquinas was markedly Aristotelian in temperament and method. Something of a mystic, and concerned with witchcraft and alchemy, he is most noted by modern philosophers for his monumental works: *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologica*. The definitive voice of Roman Catholic theology and philosophy of religion, Thomas is never an easy read but always a profitable one.

**Augustine, St. (354–430).** A convert in his twenties, Augustine has been called the most influential Christian writer after St. Paul. Directly, as well as by way of Calvin, he still influences Protestant as well as Catholic thinkers, his *Confessions* and *City of God* continuing to have wide audiences. Born and educated in North Africa, teaching in Rome and Milan, and (from 396) Bishop of Hippo, he was a critic of heresies while they were still being defined and much concerned with evil and theodicy.

**Austin, J. L. (1911–1960).** An English philosopher, Austin studied at Oxford and taught there from 1952. He delighted in ordinary language as a key to unlock philosophical puzzles, recommending reading the *Oxford English Dictionary* from cover to cover as a source book. In essays and lectures, Austin laid out the groundwork for “speech act” theory, distinguishing what we say, what we mean when we say it, and what is accomplished by the saying. His papers were collected and published after his untimely death as *Philosophical Papers* and *Sense and Sensibilia*. His Harvard lectures were also transcribed and published as *How to Do Things with Words*.

**Ayer, Sir Alfred Jules (1910–1989).** An English philosopher, Ayer studied at Oxford under Ryle and (after the war) taught there, at University College London, and again at Oxford as Wykeham Professor of Logic from 1959. His most influential book was *Language, Truth and Logic*, a forceful introduction of logical empiricism to the English-speaking world. Other works include *The Problem of Knowledge* and *The Central Questions of Philosophy*. Your lecturer was privileged to attend his lectures at Oxford in 1975 and found him as witty and astute at the lectern as he was at his writing desk.

**Buber, Martin (1878–1965).** A Viennese philosopher and theologian, Buber studied at Vienna, Berlin, and Zürich; founded and edited the journal *Der Jude*; and taught at the University of Frankfurt, as well as in an adult education program until, fleeing the Nazis, he moved to a post in Jerusalem. His outlook on religious, social, and ethical issues is still influential, chiefly by way of his book *I and Thou*.


**Comte, Auguste (1798–1857).** A French thinker, the inventor of sociology, and the founder of classical positivism, Comte argued that science has emerged from theological and metaphysical stages into its modern “positive” (operational or experiential) posture and that human reverence should be for humanity itself. His works include six
volumes on _Positive Philosophy_ and four on _Positive Polity_. He is said to have practiced what he called “mental hygiene” by avoiding reading the works of others.

**Descartes, René (1596–1650).** A French rationalist philosopher and mathematician, Descartes was Jesuit trained and strictly Catholic but no Scholastic. He was most notable for his reconstruction of rational knowledge by way of systematic doubt. Apart from the _cogito_ and everything built on it, he is also noted for the invention of analytic geometry and for providing a foil for all subsequent philosophers. His notable works include _Discourse on Method_ and _Meditations on First Philosophy_.

**Flew, Antony (1923–).** A British skeptical philosopher, Flew taught at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele, Reading, and York (Toronto), as well as holding many visiting posts throughout the English-speaking world. His books range from _A New Approach to Psychological Research and Hume’s Philosophy of Belief to Atheistic Humanism_ and _Setting Schools Back on Course_. His New Essays in Philosophical Theology (with Alasdair MacIntyre) helped make analytic philosophy of religion accessible at mid-century.

**Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939).** An essentially Viennese physician (though born in Moravia), Freud studied and taught at the University of Vienna before entering private practice. The founder of psychoanalysis and a thinker of sweeping influence, Freud is primarily of interest to philosophers of religion because of his theories about the pathological origins of religious consciousness ideas—most notably expressed in his works _Totem and Taboo_ (1913) and _Moses and Monotheism_ (1939).

**Geach, Peter Thomas (1919–).** A British philosopher and logician, Geach taught at Birmingham and was a frequent lecturer in North America. Orthodoxly Catholic in outlook, he gives a vigorous account of Christian morality and of his own theodicy in _The Virtues_ and _Providence and Evil_. A combative arguer, he questioned the use of modal logic to “prove” divine existence as early as 1975, showing that secularists are not alone in their uneasiness over Plantinga’s resurrection of Anselm.

**Hick, John (1922–).** A North Yorkshire theologian and philosopher of religion, Hick studied at Edinburgh, was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of England, and taught at Cambridge, Birmingham, and Claremont (California). In addition to his definitive textbooks and anthologies in philosophy of religion, he made major contributions to theodicy building (in _Evil and the God of Love_) and to the analysis of the common elements of world religions (in _God and the Universe of Faiths_ and _The Myth of God Incarnate_). No Augustinean, Hick bet the farm on free will and “soul making.”

**Hume, David (1711–1776).** A Scottish philosopher, historian, and lawyer, Hume studied at Edinburgh but was denied professorships at Edinburgh and Glasgow for religious reasons. His many important works include _A Treatise of Human Nature, Essays Moral and Political_, and the posthumously published _Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion_. He was the definitive British empiricist and is credited for awakening Kant from his “dogmatic slumbers.”

**James, William (1842–1910).** A definitively American philosopher and psychologist, in an era when those disciplines were not distinct, James pursued art, literature, philosophy, medicine, and science. He was strongly interested in the psychological examination of religion, in mysticism, and in various altered states of consciousness (drug induced and otherwise). His ideas were admired by Wittgenstein, and such works as his _Varieties of Religious Experience_ and _Pragmatism_ are still widely read.

**John of the Cross, St. (1542–1591).** Described by Thomas Merton as the greatest of all mystical theologians, this Spanish saint, mystic, and poet helped Teresa of Avila establish the Discalced Carmelites; became a Carmelite monk himself; was ordained and imprisoned; and escaped to became vicar-provincial of Andalusia. His works include _The Ascent of Mt. Carmel_ and many poems. Taken with Teresa, St. John provides a useful insight into a variety of religious belief and practice that is intuitive rather than rational and robustly empirical (though not in a way Hume would countenance).

**Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804).** A German philosopher, perhaps the first _professional_ philosopher, Kant was a career academic. His three _Critiques_ (of _Pure Reason, Practical Reason_, and _Judgment_) are landmarks in modern philosophical history, responding to Hume’s empiricism and permanently marking out the limits of reason in such as way as to exclude the ontological argument and any knowledge whatever of “things in themselves.” His _Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals_ was also a watershed in its rejection of ethical “consequentialism” in all its forms.

Kierkegaard, Søren (1813–1855). A Danish philosopher/theologian and, in a sense, an early existentialist. After his studies at Copenhagen, Kierkegaard inveighed against philosophical speculation and worldview constructions as poor rationalistic substitutes for the radical choices that underlie what would later be called “authentic” existence. Prefiguring Sartre (but in a distinctly religious frame of reference), he attempted to retrieve Will from the hegemony of Reason to which Plato had assigned it and where Descartes had left it to languish. His major works wereEither/Or (1843) and Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846).

Kuhn, Thomas (1922–1996). An American philosopher and historian of science, Kuhn taught at Harvard, Berkeley, Princeton, and MIT. His The Structure of Scientific Revolution was published at mid-century as a volume in the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science—a surprisingly positivistic venue for a non-positivistic treatise. If Kuhn did not invent paradigms and paradigm shifts, he certainly put them on the map for the rest of us. In his view, there is no rational basis for choosing one paradigm over another. Other works include The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change and The Road Since Structure: Philosophical Essays, 1970–1993.

Lewis, C. S. (1898–1963). An English litterateur, satirist, and lay apologist, Lewis lectured on medieval and renaissance English literature at Oxford from 1924. His scholarly writings include English Literature in the 16th Century and Experiment in Criticism. Other books, however, such as his Screwtape Letters and The Chronicles of Narnia, put him in the public arena as a primary apologist for faith and feeling in an increasingly skeptical and secular culture. A frequent debater, Lewis’ storyteller’s imagination and eloquence gave fire to his defense of the faith.

MacIntyre, Alasdair (1929– ). A Scottish philosopher who, after a number of university posts in Britain, came to the United States. Here, he has taught at Brandeis, Wellesley, Vanderbilt, and Notre Dame. His works include Marxism and Christianity, After Virtue, and other influential writings on ethics and philosophy of mind. His New Essays in Philosophical Theology (with Antony Flew) helped make analytic philosophy of religion accessible at mid-century.

Nielsen, Kai (?– ). A North American philosopher educated at Chapel Hill and Duke, Nielsen taught at New York, Calgary, and Concordia (Montreal) Universities. With interests in metaphilosophy, contemporary ethical and political theory, and Marxism, he is an outspoken critic of theism, noted for his critique of the relationships between religion and morality. His works include Ethics without God, On Transforming Philosophy, and Equality and Liberty.

Otto, Rudolf (1869–1937). A German philosopher, Protestant theologian, and professor at Göttingen, Wroclaw, and Marburg, Otto focused his research on non-Christian religions, producing such studies as India’s Religion of Grace and Christianity and Mysticism East and West. His treatment of “the other” in The Idea of the Holy (1917) had become a centerpiece in liberal Protestant thought and theological education by mid-century and remains essential reading for students of transcendentalism.

Paley, William (1743–1805). An Anglican theologian and cleric; fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge; archdeacon of Carlisle; and subdean of Lincoln, Paley argued that divine existence is evident. His works includeHorae Paulinae (on the improbability that the New Testament is a fable) and Natural Theology; or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity. He was a contemporary of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, and Thomas Jefferson, but of a less skeptical mind.

Peirce, Charles Sanders (1839–1914). An American philosopher, logician, and mathematician; a student at Harvard; and a long-time researcher with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Peirce lectured at Harvard and Johns Hopkins Universities before his lengthy “retirement,” which commenced in 1887. The author of many articles and essays on an extremely wide variety of topics, Peirce is best remembered for his work on Boolean logic and on the semantic and syntactical structure of language, and for his “invention” of pragmatism. He was an important precursor of William James and John Dewey and, hence, of Wittgenstein.
Plantinga, Alvin (1932– ). An American philosopher, metaphysician, and rock climber in the Reform tradition, and called the most important philosopher of religion now writing, Plantinga studied at Yale and has taught at Wayne State, Calvin College, and since 1982, Notre Dame. Noted for his application of modal logic to the ontological argument, for his treatments of the problem of evil, and for his analyses of the epistemology of religious belief, Plantinga is the author of numerous books and articles, including “A Valid Ontological Argument?” “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?” God and Other Minds, The Nature of Necessity, Faith and Rationality, and Warranted Christian Belief.

Russell, Lord Bertrand (1872–1970). An English philosopher, logician, mathematician, freethinker, and essayist, Russell was a student, fellow, and professor at Cambridge, where he influenced the shape of philosophy for generations (by way of “both” Wittgensteins, as well as the Vienna Circle) and set the course of all subsequent philosophy of logic and mathematics. His early works included Principles of Mathematics and Principia Mathematica. Mid-career books included An Enquiry into Meaning and Truth and Human Knowledge, plus myriad essays and polemics on topics ranging from education and marriage to nuclear disarmament. Social and political issues were his primary focus after 1949.

Ryle, Gilbert (1900–1976). An English philosopher, Ryle studied at Brighton and Oxford and taught (with a hiatus for the war) at Oxford until 1968. Although he devoted a quarter century to editing the distinguished journal Mind, he published several important essays and books in conceptual analysis, including “Systematically Misleading Expressions,” “Categories,” Dilemmas, Plato’s Progress and—of permanent importance—The Concept of Mind, his devastating refutation of Cartesian mind-body dualism as a “category mistake.”


Swinburne, Richard (?– ). An English philosopher, Swinburne is Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oriel College, Oxford. His interests include the relations of science and religion, the nature of God, and arguments for divine existence, with special attention to the issue of suffering. He is the author of many books, including The Christian God, Is There a God?, The Evolution of the Soul, and Providence and the Problem of Evil.

Teresa of Avila, St. (1515–1582). A Spanish saint, ascetic, mystic, and organizer, Teresa entered a Carmelite convent in 1535 and, amidst considerable adversities, founded the convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Primitive Rule of St. Joseph at Avila in 1562. Among her many works, her autobiographical The Way of Perfection and The Interior Castle are still widely read. She is notable for her critical response to her own mystical encounters—a person of faith with a very practical mind.

Tillich, Paul (1886–1965). A German/American cleric, theologian, and philosopher, Tillich taught at Frankfurt until suspended (1933) and, thereafter, in the United States, at Union Theological Seminary, Harvard, and Chicago. Possessed of a distinctly liberal and existential outlook, he is popularly noted for The Courage to Be and professionally for his Systematic Theology. Not particularly appreciated by analytic philosophers, his notion of God as “ultimate concern” was the target of many critical pieces, such as Paul Edward’s “Professor Tillich’s Confusions” (frequently reprinted).

Voltaire (François Marie Arouet) (1694–1778). A wicked French philosophe, educated by Jesuits, a student of law, a prisoner in the Bastille, and an exile in England for a time, Voltaire wrote in Paris, Berlin, and Geneva. An intractable foe of injustice, his ideas helped set the stage for the French Revolution. Convinced that this ought to be the “best of all possible worlds,” he set out the problem of evil with panache in Candide. Other notable works include Lettres philosophiques and Dictionnaire philosophique.

William of Ockham (c. 1280–c. 1349). An English Scholastic, Franciscan, and philosophical nominalist, Ockham studied theology at Oxford (perhaps under Duns Scotus) and Paris, where he taught. Charged with heresy and, subsequently, a refugee in Bavaria, he denied papal authority over temporal matters. A dogged opponent of metaphysical largess, more remembered today for his “razor” than for any particular treatise, this “doctor invincibilis” reminds us of the importance of philosophical method.
Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1889–1951). A Viennese/English philosopher, inventor, and sometime schoolteacher, Wittgenstein studied engineering at Berlin and Manchester and mathematical logic at Cambridge, where he taught (with lengthy interruptions) between 1929 and 1947. The most influential Western philosopher of the twentieth century, Wittgenstein’s two major works, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, laid the foundations for logical atomism and logical positivism, on the one hand, and for “ordinary language analysis,” on the other. Neither an easy person nor an easy philosopher, this brilliant and quirky thinker stirs interest even among non-philosophers, as evidenced by the current reception of David Edmonds’ and John Eidinow’s *Wittgenstein’s Poker*. 
Bibliography

Notes:

1. New copies of these books are generally available from online book dealers, such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble at: http://www.amazon.com/ and http://www.barnesandnoble.com/.

2. Where noted, they are only available from the source indicated in the listing.

3. In most cases, used copies are also available from online book dealers, such as the Advanced Book Exchange at: http://www.abebooks.com/.

4. In each case, the date given is the year of the edition with the ISBN listed. The original edition may have appeared in an earlier year.

Essential Readings


Recommended Readings


Rosenberg, Jay F. *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1996. ISBN: 0132308487 (paperback). (Cited as: Rosenberg, *Handbook*.) This little book is exactly what its title says it is, and as handbooks go, it is a dandy. Philosophical practices do not come entirely naturally to most of us. This is a good place to become familiar with them.

Supplementary Readings

A. Monographs dealing with philosophical issues in religion


Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998. ISBN: 0872204200 (paperback). This is a fortissimo demonstration of where reason can lead, including astray. Descartes’ notion of God, with only a little fudging, grounds his notions of mind, body, and rational certainty.


God Has Many Names. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1986. ISBN: 066424419X (paperback). This book further exhibits Hick’s concern to find common ground for all the players in a religiously plural world. It is likely to rankle those who think that Christianity is uniquely correct.


James, William. Varieties of Religious Experience. New York: Scribner, 1997. ISBN: 0684842971 (paperback). This exercise in descriptive psychology shows that religious phenomena are not all the same (or even similar) and stimulates philosophical reflection on the diversity of their sources and uses.


Ockham, William. Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983. ISBN: 0915144131 (paperback). Predestination, per se, is not our issue, but omniscience is a critical card in the theodicy game, and having talked about (and used) Ockham’s razor, it is useful to see it at work in the barber’s hand.

Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958. ISBN: 0195002105 (paperback). This extraordinarily influential little book is an attempt to parse out the notion of the “other” that is as essential to much of twentieth-century existentialism as it is to transcendental theism. Read it with Buber (q.v.).

for down-to-earth argument from design. Paley is deliciously Victorian in style and unabashedly committed in faith. He should be read side-by-side with Hume (q.v.).


St. Anselm. Proslogian. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. ISBN: 0268016976 (paperback). Here is the original ontological argument, in full and in context. Widely dismissed by Anselm’s contemporaries and still controversial today, is it word magic or an illumination of natural necessity?


———. The Free Choice of the Will. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993. ISBN: 0872201899 (paperback). The presence (or absence) of free will is, of course, crucial to whether the “free will theodicy” works. One expects something a little different from a predestinarian, and one gets it.

St. John of the Cross. The Collected Works. Washington: ICS Publications, 1991. ISBN: 0935216146 (clothbound). Mysticism is alien to most these days, and even reading about it is difficult. This is a good place to start, given that St. Teresa trusted the writer to reliably assess the authenticity of her own encounters.

St. Teresa of Avila. The Interior Castle. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988. ISBN: 0809122545 (paperback). St. Teresa is a challenge to the modern reader but also a reminder that honest empiricists should not prejudge the data. The bottom line, as she saw, is how to interpret the experiences one has.

St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas’s Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas’s Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2001. ISBN: 1928832431 (paperback). St. Thomas said it all. This widely acclaimed condensation of it all is far less intimidating than the Summa proper, and reading it is a good way to put his views on “the arguments” in context.


Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. ISBN: 0520013549 (paperback). Wittgenstein did not have much to say directly about religious belief, although his main writings certainly have influenced how we interpret it. Here is what he does have to say. Some call him a mystic.

B. Monographs dealing with related philosophical issues

Austin, J. L. Philosophical Papers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. ISBN: 019283021X (paperback). Here, Austin developed Wittgenstein’s notion of language games and explored the rules under which some of them work. The exploration of performatives nicely displays the analyst at work.


Ayer, A. J. Language, Truth and Logic. New York: Dover, 1946. ISBN: 0486200108 (paperback). This introduced logical positivism to most English readers. “A young man’s book,” as Russell called it, it still crackles, but its conception of language is far too narrow, as we have come to see.


Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge, 2001. ISBN: 0415254086 (paperback). This is the “early” Wittgenstein at his reductivist and enigmatic best. It was a primary tributary to logical positivism, but Wittgenstein’s own *bête noire* by the time he wrote *Philosophical Investigations*. It is very hard going.


C. Textbooks and anthologies of readings in philosophy of religion


Geivett, R. Douglas, and Brendan Sweetman. *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. ISBN: 019507324X (paperback). This stellar and demanding collection has a tighter focus than the other anthologies listed here. If philosophy starts with epistemology, then so does philosophy of religion, and so should you.

Plantinga, Alvin, and Nicholas Wolterstorf, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press. 1984. ISBN: 0268009651 (paperback). This is a collection of pieces on theistic epistemology in the Reform tradition, including several selections from the editors and from George Mavrodes. It provides an effective counterbalance to Geivett’s collection.


———. *Philosophy of Religion*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000. ISBN: 0767408195 (paperback). This is a fairly inclusive textbook introduction to philosophy of religion (both analytic and non-analytic). It is as good as any current textbook in print (except Hick’s original jewel) and better than most.

Quinn, Philip, and Kevin Meeker. *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0195121554 (paperback). The editors of this tightly focused collection must have had Hick’s “unity” project in mind when they put it together. Some of it is hard going, especially Plantinga’s defense of religious exclusivism, but the issue is important enough to deserve some mind sweat.

D. General philosophy and reference


Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN 0872200981 (paperback). This classic is short, clear, and useful, even though it is quite dated for anyone who works at philosophy professionally. The basics are there for the layman, all presented with Russell’s customary élan.

Useful, Out-of-Print Books (Note: These books can all be obtained from online used book dealers, such as the Advanced Book Exchange at: http://www.abebooks.com/.)

A. Monographs dealing with philosophical issues in religion


Stace, W. T. *Man against Darkness*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967. ISBN: 0822951347 (paperback). Everything Stace wrote was lucid, informative, and accessible. This collection of his essays deals with such topics as the nature of our response to the unknown, without icing or wishful thinking.


B. Textbooks and anthologies on philosophy of religion

Logic, Language and God. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961. ISBN: None (paperback). This concise explication and critique of linguistically focused philosophy of religion was the second twentieth-century work in the field that your lecturer read and one he still rereads from time to time.


C. General philosophy

Gray, William D. Thinking Critically about New Age Ideas. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN: 0534143946 (paperback). A little bit “pop,” but an effective presentation of how to get a handle on strange beliefs. Because even our own beliefs may be strange to others, it is a useful study. Light and an easy read but solid.

Pap, Arthur. Elements of Analytical Philosophy. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1972. ISBN: 0028500407 (clothbound). This is possibly the best introduction to analytic philosophy ever written. It is not easy. It is not entertaining. But it is powerfully illuminating. Also, alas, it is hard to find.

Radner, Daisie, and Michael Radner. Science and Unreason. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982. ISBN: 0534011535 (paperback). Every bit as useful as Gray’s New Age book (q.v.), this is also an easily read volume on a crucially important topic. We live in an age of poor thinking. Here are ways to get that under control.
James H. Hall, Ph.D.
Thomas Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy,
University of Richmond

Born in Weimar, Texas, in 1933, I spent my early childhood there and in New Orleans, Louisiana. Just before World War II, my family moved to Washington, D.C. I lived in that city and received my education from its public schools, museums, and newspapers, until I went off to college in Baltimore, Maryland, in the fall of 1951.

I knew that I wanted to teach by the time I graduated from high school, but I didn’t know what I wanted to teach until much later. So I made a career of being a student for twelve more years (at Johns Hopkins University, Southeastern Theological Seminary, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), before trying to earn a living full time.

I had discovered my discipline by 1959, but it was 1965 before I found my school and my city. Each of the thirty-seven years since then has confirmed my good fortune in joining the University of Richmond community and putting my roots down.

Teaching remains my calling and first professional priority. With more than forty years in the classroom, I have taught most of the standard undergraduate philosophy curriculum, including courses in Symbolic Logic, Moral Issues, and Philosophical Problems, to thousands of beginners, and advanced courses and seminars on Analytic Philosophy (especially the works of Russell, Ayer, Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin), Philosophy of Religion, and Epistemology, to hundreds of majors and minors. I have also pursued a number of issues beyond the boundaries of philosophy per se, in interdisciplinary courses as varied as Science and Values, Ideological Roots of the American Revolution, and Science, Pseudoscience, and the Paranormal. My research has produced two published books, Knowledge, Belief and Transcendence and Logic Problems, with two more in progress—Practically Profound and Taking the Dark Side Seriously.

A life totally confined to the ivied tower would be truncated and precarious. My own is constantly expanded and kept in balance by ongoing involvements in church (Episcopal), politics (Democratic), and music (from Bach to Durafle); by travel (Wales or the Pacific Northwest for preference); and by a daily bout with the New York Times crossword. Many people outside of the academy have enriched my life by their work—Herblock and Harry Truman, John D. MacDonald and David Lodge, to name four, and others by their friendship and character—chief among them my wife, Myfanwy, and my sons, Christopher, Jonathan, and Trevor.

My complete track record, academic and otherwise, can be seen on the Web at: http://www.richmond.edu/~jhall/. E-mail will always reach me at: jhall@richmond.edu.
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#### Section III: Can We Know That There Is No God?

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Philosophy of Religion

Scope:

Philosophically examining religion is a tricky enterprise. Teaching a series of lessons on it is trickier still. The problems begin with the fact that there are not only many different religions but many different concepts of what religion itself amounts to. They are further compounded by the fact that people have many different conceptions of what philosophy amounts to as well.

This series of lectures begins, consequently, with some careful attention to what philosophy is and a careful demarcation of the sort of religion that we will scrutinize philosophically. Working from a philosophical perspective generally called “British analytic,” attention is focused entirely on a religious tradition generally called “ethical monotheism.” Within the many concepts and practices of that religious tradition, particular attention is focused on the notion of divine existence as an issue for what philosophers call “epistemology” or “knowledge theory.”

Thus, our central questions are:

1. Can humans know whether the claim “God exists” is true or not?
2. If so, how?
3. If not, why not?

As a person, one may be more interested in the direct question “Does God exist?” But that is a question in religion; and, as a philosopher of religion, one gives priority to questions about its concepts and how they work, rather than to practicing the enterprise oneself. (This is not to say that no philosophers practice it. It is only to say that when they practice it, they do not do so as philosophers.)

After clearing a considerable amount of such methodological underbrush in Section I (Lectures One through Eight), we will begin to explore the positive side of our central question (“Can humans know that God exists?”) in the ten lectures of Section II. These map various alleged bases for answering in the affirmative, including reason, experience, and divine encounters. Throughout, the discussion traces the give and take of two basic principles of explanation: the “principle of sufficient reason” and “Ockham’s razor.” The bottom line, as might be expected, is essentially a “Scottish verdict,” that is, “not proved.”

Consequently, in the five units of Section III, we will raise the reverse side of the question, “Can humans know that God does not exist?” Tracing out a complex exchange of arguments and counter-arguments that focus on what is called the “problem of evil” and on various replies to it (called “theodicies”), Section III also invites a hung jury. Atheism is no more an obvious candidate for knowledge than theism is.

This leaves agnosticism, but that is a more complex posture than it is often taken to be. It includes not only the skepticism of the irreligious who recognize the virtue of epistemological modesty but also the “fideism” of the devoutly religious who are equally epistemologically modest. Because the latter stance seems to be unfairly shortchanged by many commentators, Section IV begins with an exploration of religious agnosticism: Lectures Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six on the pros and cons of faith without (or against) evidence, and Lectures Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight on the pros and cons of theological transcendentalism.

The problem with faith without (or against) evidence is its irrelevance to life, and the same problem is attached to theological transcendentalism with a vengeance. Fideists have trouble enough maintaining that the world’s harsh events don’t count against their conviction that God exists. The transcendentalists’ affirmations have so little grit (factually relevant content) that it is close to impossible for them to make any difference at all to life-in-the-world.

As a result of all this, one wonders if all these attempts to determine whether “God exists” is a true assertion or a false assertion are off on the wrong foot (either by assuming that it operates in the same paradigm and follows the same rules as ordinary assertions of fact or by assuming that it is an assertion at all). Thus, Section IV continues with two examinations of the utterances of ethical monotheism from radically different perspectives. Lectures Twenty-Nine through Thirty-One examine and assess them as part of a “form of life” operating under an alternative “paradigm” that includes intentionality as one of its basic categories of description and explanation. Lectures Thirty-Two through Thirty-Five examine and assess them as moves in one or another, possibly nondescriptive, “language game,” especially one that consists of stories-told-for-a-purpose (no more to be believed or disbelieved than any...
such set of stories) that shape and illumine the lives of those who tell and retell them—stories that are not to be assessed as true or false, but as functional or dysfunctional, in terms of their life impact.

Then, in the last lecture, we will retrace the conceptual problems in ethical monotheism that urged its philosophical examination in the first place and the discoveries along the way that have led to characterizing it the way that we have. But, given that philosophy, in all of its applications, is an ongoing reflective enterprise, the very last point is an invitation to all who have worked through this series to carry the reflection on themselves.
Lecture Thirteen

Why Cosmological Argument Is Said to Fail

Scope: In this lecture, we will explore the interplay of Ockham’s razor and the principle of sufficient reason, as they determine the pros and cons of cosmological argument for divine existence. With Hume and others who respect Ockham’s principle, we shall see that these arguments for divine existence may not demonstrate the existence of any external source at all and produce, at best, the conclusion that the world has an external source of considerable complexity, not one of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness that are of interest to ethical monotheists. This will lay the groundwork for the consideration of a more sophisticated “sufficient reasons” argument in the next lecture: the teleological argument or “argument from design.”

Outline

I. In order that the principle of sufficient reason not lead to a more-than-sufficient reason, the search for explanations should be constrained by “Ockham’s razor.”
   A. Ockham’s razor is the notion that a theory, explanation, or account of X should infer or assume no more than absolutely necessary to cover.
   B. This is close to the modern principle of theoretical “economy” or “parsimony.”
   C. Absent such constraint, an explanatory argument could offer superfluous reasons, that is, engage in explanatory overkill (as is exemplified in the works of Erich Von Daniken).

II. There are several reasons why a causal argument aimed at explaining the origin(s) of the world need not lead to an external source at all, much less to one of any certain kind.
   A. There is no reason to suppose that an external sufficient reason is required for every state of affairs, and if there are some states where one is not required, then there is no particular reason to suppose that one is required here.
      For example: An account of human activity in terms of external causal connections is sometimes less intelligible and/or convincing than one in terms of internal free will and choice.
   B. There is no reason to suppose that the natural order itself couldn’t be as self-contingent or non-contingent as some putative supernatural order.
      For example: An external account of “what holds the world up” in terms of gigantic supernatural elephants, turtles, and an infinite sea of mud is certainly no more intelligible or convincing than an internal one in terms of gravity, mass, and the laws of motion.
   C. There is no reason to suppose that all of the characteristics of the cause of an event or system of events can accurately be inferred from the characteristics of the event or system of events that it causes.
      For example: Can one infer the taste and nutritional value of sodium and chlorine from the taste and nutritional value of table salt?
   D. The external cause of a finite event or system of events, where one can be inferred or reasonably hypothesized at all, need not be infinite.
      For example: Even if the external cause of the physical universe (if one can be inferred or reasonably hypothesized) needs to be rather tremendous, it could be very powerful but less than omnipotent, very good but less than perfectly benevolent, and very smart but less than all-wise.

III. There are several reasons why a causal argument aimed at explaining the origin of the world need not lead inexorably to a single source, much less to one that is worthy of worship.
   A. Even if the argument showed (contra point II) that there is (or must be) some “external” or “non-contingent” causation behind the world, there is no reason to think that it compels monotheism, because there could be multiple independent originators that, lacking aseity, don’t meet monotheistic god-standards.
B. Even if the argument showed (contra the point just made) that there is (or must be) one “external” or “non-contingent” cause behind the world, it is not at all clear that this adequate cause of the world, as it (the world) is, can reasonably be held to deserve adoration and obedience.

C. An explanation should cover all the data that need explaining. Biased data selection leads to explanatory underkill, which is no better than explanatory overkill, if an explanation should precisely fit the data to be explained. A good explanation shouldn’t take the skin with the whiskers, but it shouldn’t miss any whiskers, either.

For example: Given that the world to be explained includes screw fly worms, mental retardation, and torturers, there is no reason to suppose that its “source” is not occasionally cruel, unfeeling, or inept.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider the stories of “alien abductions” and “past lives” that are sometimes offered to explain someone’s remarkable ability to, say, speak Grok or French (without ever having studied language) or to describe some ancient culture’s daily life (without ever having studied history). Why are such stories not strongly convincing?

2. How many different explanations can you think of (besides help from extraterrestrial mathematicians) for the fact that the dimensions of the Egyptian pyramids are all factors of $\pi$?
Lecture Fourteen
How Teleological Argument Works

Scope: The teleological argument for the existence of God has roots and resonances in the notion that design is apparent in nature itself, articulated variously by the psalmist, St. Paul, and William Paley. This use of the principle of sufficient reason pays less attention to the fact that there is something rather than nothing and more to the fact that what occurs is the way it is. In this lecture, we will examine the use of “sufficient reasons” arguments to claim that the detailed characteristics of the world, and of the commonplace events that occur in it, demand the inference of an external cause with such characteristics as to be obviously divine. In the next lecture, we will look at the argument when it is focused on events that are anything but commonplace.

Outline

I. The teleological argument for divine existence, like all sufficient reasons arguments for divine existence, is a search for an adequate cause for the universe, but it emphasizes two alleged characteristics of the universe in that search: the element of recognizable design and the corollary element of recognizable intention.

II. There are two caveats that must be kept in mind when examining the teleological argument.
   A. If the cosmological argument systematically fails (that is, does not lead anywhere), then the teleological argument never gets off the ground.
   B. Because the teleological argument is less an exercise in inference than an exercise in hypothesis construction, it is just as open to experimental output testing as any explanatory hypothesis. (This will be dealt with in Lecture Sixteen.)

III. The teleological argument is widely appreciated and has been articulated, at varying levels of sophistication, by many different writers, but it is most clearly set out by William Paley.
   A. The argument is appreciated and used by non-philosophers.
      1. Psalm 19 (echoed by Beethoven and others) asserts, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”
      2. Contemporary “creation science” advocates insist that no adequate explanation of the world excludes “intelligent design.”
      3. The argument is plausibly extrapolated from the sense of wonder people commonly feel when contemplating natural phenomena, such as chambered nautilus shells, rock crystal structures, and spiral nebulae—the sorts of things we collect in museums or look at through telescopes and marvel at.
   B. The argument is articulated with care and detail in William Paley’s Natural Theology: Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature.
      1. Paley’s basic story starts with the notion that we have the ability to recognize design when we see it, as exemplified by what we would infer if we found a clock among the general detritus on the ground, as opposed to what we would infer if we found a rock there.
      2. Paley enumerates and describes a vast array of natural phenomena that he held to be more like clocks than rocks, such as human noses, thumbs, and eyes.
      3. Paley argued that just as we are compelled to infer the existence of an adequate clock maker from the occurrence of clocks, we are compelled to infer the existence of an adequate eye maker from the occurrence of eyes. While an adequate clockmaker need only be finitely clever and powerful, however, an adequate maker of eyes (and of all the other wonders of nature) must be infinitely wise and powerful.
      4. Paley concluded, then, that the only adequate source of such phenomena as human noses arranged to shield the nostrils from rainfall is God.

Essential Reading:
**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Consider the synergy displayed in the conjunction in a single species of neurological capacity, thumb arrangement, and precise sound-modulating equipment, so as to underwrite spoken and written languages and the splendid cultural artifacts that derive from them. On its face, is it more probable that this is (1) random serendipity or (2) the fulfillment of precise intention and design?

2. But also consider the other, anything-but-splendid cultural artifacts that also derive from the same conjunction. Do they elicit the same verdict about how they “must have” came about as the more agreeable ones?
Lecture Fifteen
How Teleological Argument Works (continued)

Scope: Some teleological arguments offer God as the best account, not for the mere occurrence of the world, nor for the general shape of the events that occur in it, but for the occurrence in it of events of special or even miraculous sorts. In these cases, a warning is in order: We must ask not only whether divine causation is the best account for the events cited, but also whether those remarkable events actually occurred. (In more mundane applications of the teleological argument, there is no question about the occurrence of the events being explained. Our noses do point down, after all!) With that caveat, but assuming that the events in question do occur, we will trace out the inference of divine existence from them. In the next lecture, of course, we will apply Ockham’s razor once again.

Outline

I. Sometimes the teleological argument amounts to inferences from (or hypotheses to cover) special events and/or miracles, presuming that they do, in fact, occur.

II. The events come in a wide variety of types.
   A. Answered prayers, varying from solicited cures of disease and diversion of hurricanes to victories in sporting contests.
      Examples: Pat Robertson and the hurricane coming at Virginia Beach; blessed handkerchiefs from Del Rio, Texas.
   B. Fortuitous beneficent events, varying from unsolicited cures and disaster avoidance to found pennies.
      Examples: People who missed their commuter bus on September 11; people who allegedly send the chain letter to twenty friends and receive $1,000,000 cash within three weeks.
   C. Ancient and modern mysteries, varying from the day the sun stood still to spectacular healings by Philippine psychic surgeons.
      Examples: The healings filmed in the movie Marjoe; episodes of the old television series with Oral Roberts.
   D. Prophecies ancient and modern, varying from those of Jonah to those of Herbert W. Armstrong in his heyday.
      Examples: Nostradamus and Hitler; The Plain Truth and the impending Armageddon.
   E. Ecstasies and transports, varying from glossolalia to unity experiences.
      Examples: Treeing the devil; self-observation on the operating table.
   F. Communications with and the reincarnation and/or resurrection of the dead, varying from Lazarus to the Rapture Yet to Come.
      Example: Leslie Weatherhead’s golden-haired girl.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
I. Considering the many ways in which a prophecy might be taken to be accurate, whether it was accurate, in fact, how would you appraise the way the prophecies of Isaiah are handled in Matthew’s gospel, the way the prophecies of Nostradamus are handled in New Age books, and the way post-Copernican theists are obliged to reinterpret the day the sun stood still?
2. How far should one be willing to go in assuming that this or that alleged “miraculous demonstration of design” actually happened?
Lecture Sixteen

Why Teleological Argument Is Said to Fail

Scope: There are a number of reasons why skeptics have thought that the teleological argument is too weak to achieve its ostensible target. Most of these reasons boil down either to (1) the charge that the argument infers (or hypothesizes) far more than is called for by the data cited or (2) the charge that the argument ignores vast stretches of data that, taken seriously, would call for a radically different inference (or hypothesis). In this lecture, we will explore both of these lines of rebuttal. The first indictment is for what might be called “explanatory overkill.” The second is for the exercise of selective bias in the identification of data to be “explained.” We will see that the teleological argument is guilty on both counts and, consequently, does not make its case.

Outline

I. The first thing wrong with the teleological argument is an internal problem. It pulls the rug out from under its own first premise: If everything is designed, then how is it that we can distinguish clocks and rocks in terms of what is designed and what is not?

II. The second thing wrong with the teleological argument is that it is highly doubtful that one can reliably infer the precise nature of a cause from the nature of its effects in any case.
   A. Salt again.
   B. There is, however, a difference between the alleged deductive inference of causes from effects, on the one hand, and the process of hypothesizing causes, inferring their probable effects, and trying for experimental confirmation/disconfirmation, on the other. This amounts to a shift from Cartesian deduction to the hypothetical/deductive/nomological method of modern science. The latter works because it is experimental and self-corrective. The former fails because it is a priori.

III. The third thing wrong with the teleological argument is that it does not exercise the restraint called for by Ockahm’s razor. It infers far more than is required to explain the data in question. This is explanatory overkill.
   A. With Ockam’s razor in hand, there are not enough data to require not only a world maker but one that is infinitely wise, powerful, and good. The occurrence of Model Ts calls for a Ford. The occurrence of Vegomatics call for a Popiel. How little does the occurrence of the world call for? Would a Klingon engineer be enough?
   B. One or more of the following alternatives would be adequate, although only a few of them suit monotheism and none of them suits ethical monotheism.
      1. Perhaps the world was designed and made by a committee.
      2. Perhaps various parts of it were designed and made by several independent makers.
      3. Perhaps it was designed and made by a single party but a strictly disinterested one, as in the deistic worldview.
      4. Perhaps it was designed and made by a single party who was not disinterested but was limited in its power, wisdom, goodness, or all three (as in the Klingon engineer theory).
   C. The most important issue, however, is that if one replaces the explanatory principles of design and intention that are at work in the teleological argument with concepts of random change over time and feedback loops in a “competitive” arena, no external designer at all (whether monotheistic or otherwise) may be necessary to explain functionality.
      1. Note that when one, thus, “explains the world in its own terms,” one is also denying the “which is absurd” clauses of the various formulations of the cosmological argument.
      2. The point is that “design” begs the question: Design presupposes intention, so of course, “design” calls for “designer.”
      3. Function has no such hooks, however. This is why Darwin, though not disproving God, renders the design account unnecessary.
IV. The fourth thing wrong with the teleological argument is that it ignores data, offering an explanation only for those items that fit its desired inference. This is explanatory underkill, or biased data sampling.

A. The serious problems here are the omission of “dysteleological surds” (glitches) from the data that are being explained and the consequent failure to explain substantial parts of the universe and what happens in it.
   1. The universe contains screw flies, rotten people, and large things in space that collide with the earth from time to time.
   2. What sort of designer would it take to design them?

B. This introduces what is called the problem of evil, which will be explored in Lectures Nineteen and Twenty. Up to this point, however, we can say only that the existence of God has not been shown, not that the non-existence of God has been shown.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What might the world be like if it had been designed by a committee? Is the resultant picture at all like the way the world actually is, taking all that we know about the way it is into account?
2. If, in order to hold on to the teleological argument for the existence of a world designer, it was necessary to hedge a little on one or more of that designer’s traditional “omnitraits,” which of them seems least essential, as usually formulated: omni-power, omni-presence, omni-wisdom, or omni-virtue?
Lecture Seventeen

Divine Encounters Make Argument Unnecessary

Scope: Even if ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments fail to make their case, we have not shown that there is no God. At most, we have shown that these arguments lead to Scottish verdicts. This is of little concern to many ethical monotheists, for they do not predicate their claim to know that God exists on the basis of such inferential argumentation. Rather, they cite numerous occasions in history in which people from various walks of life have claimed to be “directly aware” of the existence of God through one or another kind of “encounter.” In this lecture, we will flesh out this notion in terms of some experiences of contemporary ordinary folk and of a few historical extraordinary ones. In the next lecture, Ockham’s razor will come into play yet again.

Outline

I. Sometimes, knowledge of divine existence is said to be the result of direct encounters (such as visions or auditions) with the divine.
   A. There are many historical instances of this, involving people of note.
      1. Moses is said to have heard the voice of God out of the burning bush.
      2. Saul (later Paul) is said to have heard the voice of Jesus on the road to Damascus.
      3. St. Theresa of Avila is said to have seen the holiness of God.
   B. There are some contemporary instances of this, involving ordinary folk.
      1. According to Max Morris, God told him that hell is literal fire.
      2. According to W. T. Stace, many people have claimed to experience union with God.

II. One can take the position that such reports relate instances of direct or immediate contact with the divine that call for no inference, argument, or interpretation.
   A. This is to claim that such contacts are “transparent,” that is, unambiguous, reliable on their face, and self-guaranteeing—constituting a kind of immediate experiential knowledge or awareness that is not confined to religious or “sacred” settings, though it is most common there.
      1. A parent might say to a teen: “You will recognize being in love when it happens to you; if you have to ask, this isn’t it.”
      2. A critic might say to a poseur: “I know art when I see it, and believe me, that is not art.”
      3. A visitor to Stonehenge might say: “There was a palpable and frightening aura surrounding the stones that struck me dumb.”
   B. It is also to claim that the knowledge that is said to occur in these contexts is properly basic, that is, neither derived nor needing to be derived from any more basic knowledge.

III. Two caveats, however, are in order when one takes that position.
   A. An encounter may not be transparent.
      1. Most, if not all, encounters can be interpreted or construed in more than one way.
      2. To the extent that an encounter calls for interpretation, it is inferential and argumentative—the very opposite of “transparent.”
   B. A conservative posture here would suggest that taking a contact as transparent should be a hypothesis of last resort—the surviving piece of an extended disjunctive syllogism from which all alternative possibilities have been eliminated.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Looking at the similarities and dissimilarities between St. Theresa’s reactions to her encounters and those of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who do you think comes closer to taking their encounters as transparent?

2. Consider the typical response of a therapist to a client who claims to have encountered someone who is not normally considered available for contact (a dead president, say). Are modern therapists too narrow-minded about their clients’ reports, or are modern religionists too credulous about their saints’ reports, or is there a good reason for having different standards for these two kinds of cases?
Lecture Eighteen
Divine Encounters Require Interpretation

Scope: While maintaining the caveat that one must entertain the possibility that various alleged experiences are bogus, but continuing to assume the good faith of those who claim to have them, one still must ask how they can best be explained. In this lecture, we will focus on a two-step line of rebuttal to the notion that direct, non-inferential knowledge of divine existence occurs in “special encounters.” The first step is to show that such knowledge, if it occurs, would depend not only on the “encounter” itself but also on the specific interpretation or spin that is put on it. The second step, recognizing that such accounts are interpretive, if not inferential, is to apply Ockham’s razor yet again. Divine existence is not necessarily the simplest available interpretation and/or explanation of the events under discussion. Thus, again, the case is not made.

Outline

I. The only problem with taking “encounter” events to be transparent is that, like all events, they require interpretation.
   A. Given that every event can be explicated in more than one way (as can be seen in examples ranging from Van Daniken’s construals of artifacts in the jungle to a group of soccer fans’ different construals of an off-side call), one has to decide which way to interpret any particular event.
   B. St. Theresa of Avila and others have seen this clearly.
      1. Theresa feared that her visions and auditions might be from Satan rather than Yahweh.
      2. The Roman Catholic Church always seeks alternative explanations and interpretations for an alleged miracle or vision before certifying it.

II. The proper response to an encounter report is to ask, “What is the best way to take this report?” rather than to buy any particular interpretation of it uncritically.
   A. This question can be answered in more than one way, however.
      1. Some will always choose a “natural” account over a “supernatural” one, holding out for a natural account even when none comes immediately to mind, while others may go straight for the “supernatural.”
      2. This choice may be a matter of the temperament and/or the background of the chooser (as reflected in the fact that the options Max Morris or Theresa considered did not include Cloven Bull Foot or Krishna, only Satan and Yahweh).
      3. But if the choice is even partly a matter of temperament and background, then no particular choice has any compelling priority or status.
      4. It would be more convincing if one could say, with grounds, “This interpretation is better than that one,” rather than merely, “This interpretation is the one my temperament and background incline me to.”
   B. This raises the issue of whether rival interpretations and perspectives can be evaluated on any kind of objective grounds.
      1. Such grounds as consistency, scope, mesh, fertility, “non ad hocness,” parsimony, and elegance, which are traditional for assessing rival scientific theories or explanations, might work for interpretive perspectives too.
      2. This is a highly complicated matter, however, especially when the interpretive stance in question is very broad in scope (in which case it may be called a “paradigm”). (We shall examine this in Lectures Twenty-Nine and following.)
   C. Note, however, that any interpretation or belief can be maintained if one is willing to alter (sometimes radically) the rest of one’s beliefs in order to accommodate it.
      1. The truly remarkable posture of contemporary members of the Flat Earth Society illustrates this nicely in a non-religious setting.
      2. The typical treatment of fossils by the creationist community illustrates it equally nicely in a religious one.
Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider the different ways one can interpret the nuances of a public statement by a presidential candidate and how different commentators spin the character of what is in play there. What are the similarities and differences of this to the interpretation of an alleged message from a departed loved one or from God?
2. Consider how one goes about identifying a stranger that one meets briefly at a conference; for example, “Was that really Elvis or was it only a look-alike?” How does this compare to what would be appropriate for deciding whether a stranger (met in whatever venue) was God?
Lecture Nineteen
Why Is Evil a Problem?

Scope: The occurrence of evils in the world has been a basis for saying that teleological arguments for divine existence are inconclusive. One can also, however, look at the occurrence of evils—not as grounds for rebutting teleological arguments for theism but as grounds for affirming dysteleological arguments for atheism. In this lecture and the next, we will examine, with examples, why evil constitutes such a problem for ethical monotheists.

Outline

I. Not everyone has a “problem of evil.”
   A. Those who take a “naturalistic” view of the world do not have a problem because they do not take the world as the expression of intention or design.
   B. Ethical monotheists who use the teleological argument do have a problem because:
      1. They insist that it is immediately apparent that the world is designed.
      2. They claim that it is possible to infer the nature of the designer from the character of the designed.
      3. Fairness and good practice demand that one take all of the features of the designed into account, not just those that favor a particular desire about the designer’s character.
      4. Any number of features of the designed (the world) are distinctly bad, and none of the features of the designer (allegedly God) can reflect that without jeopardizing the appropriateness of worship.

II. If one grants that the world is designed and that its character reveals its designer’s character, then one must ask: “Given the way the world is, what must its designer be like?”
   A. The world’s designer must be of a sort to fashion such world inhabitants as Hitler and Pol Pot, Charles Manson and Jeffrey Dahmer, and (at a milder, but significant, level) Landslide Lyndon and Tricky Dick.
   B. The world’s designer must be of a sort to fashion such world features as earthquakes, tidal waves, floods, volcano eruptions, droughts, avalanches, radon leaks, lightning bolts, wind storms, and rocks that fall out of the sky; screw flies, hookworms, piranha fish, and cane toads; kudzu, bindweed, and bracken; polio and HIV; Alzheimer’s and Down’s syndromes and sickle cell anemia.

Essential Reading:
David Hume, “Evil and a Finite God,” reprinted in Robinson, God, pp. 91–96.

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider what one can infer about the quality of Yugo engineers, technicians, and supplies from the characteristics of Yugo cars. How does that compare to what one can infer from the characteristics of Lexus cars about Lexus engineers, technicians, and supplies?
2. Is the world, as it is, more like a Yugo or a Lexus?
Lecture Twenty
Taking Evil Seriously

Scope: In the previous lecture, we enumerated several examples of the sorts of evils that are said to pose a problem for ethical monotheism. In this lecture, we will classify such dysfunctions and anomalies into a few basic categories and examine the structure of the arguments that are said to lead from their occurrence to the conclusion that no God exists. There are rebuttals to such arguments, of course, and this lecture will end with a brief sketch of how they are set up. Then, in the next four lectures, we will examine and assess a variety of them.

Outline

I. The many things said to be wrong with the world fall into three basic types.
   A. There are bad individuals who do bad things.
      1. Some of them are public figures.
         *Examples*: Osama Bin Laden and the Twin Towers attack.
      2. Some of them are private figures.
         *Examples*: Theodore Kaczynski and his Unabomber campaign.
   B. There are bad social phenomena (that is, group actions that have bad results).
      1. Some of them are intended.
         *Examples*: The Virginia “eugenics” campaign to sterilize retarded women; the systematic destruction of Mayan culture and artifacts by Christian invaders.
      2. Some of them are unintended.
         *Examples*: Thalidomide babies and the impact on eagles and the ozone layer of the aerosol DDT used to suppress malaria and yellow fever.
   C. There are also bad “natural” phenomena (that is, things that happen without human input).
      *Examples*: Meteor impacts, such as those at Chicxulub and the Chesapeake Bay.

II. If we take these phenomena seriously, we must also take the following arguments seriously.
   A. Anything that deserves worship is non-contingent and flawless.
      1. So: If the world designer deserves worship, it is non-contingent and flawless.
      2. But any non-contingent and flawless designer fashions only flawless designs.
      3. So: If the world designer deserves worship, all its designs are flawless.
      4. The world design was fashioned by the world designer.
      5. So: If the world designer deserves worship, the world design is flawless.
      6. The world design is not flawless.
      7. Therefore: The world’s designer is not worthy of worship.
      8. Therefore: The world designer is not God.
   B. The world is either designed or it is not.
      1. If the world is designed and flawed, then its designer is flawed and, consequently, does not deserve worship, and nothing else (the designer’s designer?) deserves worship either.
      2. If, on the other hand, the world is not designed, then, there being no designer at all, nothing deserves worship.
      3. But if the world’s being designed and flawed implies that nothing deserves worship, and the world’s not being designed implies the same, then either nothing deserves worship or the world (against all appearances) is flawless.
   C. In sum, if there is a flawless designer, then there is a flawless world.
      1. The world is not flawless.
      2. There is no flawless designer.

III. There are only four reasonable ways to respond to this argument.
   A. One could deny that it is valid by attacking the validity of *modus tollens.*
1. This is not consistently possible without giving up *modus tollens* altogether.
2. Further, since all of the basic argument forms stand or fall together, one would also have to abandon *modus ponens*, *disjunctive syllogism*, *hypothetical syllogism*, etc.
3. This effectively rules out all attempts at inference.

**B.** One could deny that it is sound by denying the truth of the first premise.
1. This may amount to admitting that the teleological argument for divine existence fails, in that one cannot infer the nature of a cause from the nature of its effects.
2. This would compel a “not proved” verdict on all such reasoning, ruling out most, if not all, attempts to explain what one observes.
3. On the other hand, it may be the first move in a complex argument claiming that the world is flawed *for good reasons*, claiming that it is perfectly intelligible for a creator to create a world populated with entities that are free to choose good (free will theodicy).
4. Such arguments, called “theodicies,” will occupy us for the next four lectures.

**C.** One could deny that it is sound by denying the truth of the second premise.
1. This amounts to another line of theodicy building.
2. This line of theodicies will also be covered in the lectures ahead.

**D.** One could accept it as valid and sound.
1. If one does, then one must accept its conclusion as established truth.
2. This is how many philosophers have argued their way to atheism.

**Essential Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Bearing in mind the ideas and values that lie behind the concept of product liability, have U.S. juries gone far enough, or have they gone too far, in holding manufacturers liable in cases where harms have been associated with such things as Ford Explorers equipped with Firestone tires; baby toys with small, easily detachable parts; asbestos roofing shingles; and the like?
2. If it is reasonable to hold human designers and manufacturers liable for the damage caused by hazardous products they fashion, is it not reasonable to do the same for any world designers and makers there may be?
Lecture Twenty-One
Non-Justificatory Theodicies

Scope: One way to rebut the atheistic argument from evil is to claim that the world’s evils are justified and, consequently, not incompatible with ethical monotheism’s concept of God. We will try that after this lecture’s exploration of rebuttals that insist that evils don’t bar ethical monotheism, without attempting to justify them.

This can take three distinct forms. The first amounts to denying that there is anything about the world that is in any way imperfect. The second alleges that the evils that occur in the world simply do not come from God (who is, consequently, excused from any blame for them). The last insists that these evils are a matter of logical necessity (which rules out questions of blame altogether).

Outline

I. One could attempt to rebut the atheists’ argument from evil by denying that the world is less than perfect in any way—insisting that this is “the best of all possible worlds” and that its apparent flaws are simply our own misconstruals of what is really the case.
   A. We might misconstrue by putting a phenomenon into the wrong category. It must be noted, however, that any pronounced human inclination to miscategorize things could be considered to be a design flaw in its own right.
      Examples: The phenomenon we call death may be a miscategorization of what really amounts to “translation to a new plane of being”; the phenomenon we call disease may be a miscategorization of what really amounts to “alienation from the divine spirit.”
   B. We might misconstrue by not seeing a phenomenon in relationship to the others that immediately surround it or in relationship to the “big picture.” It must be noted, however, that any pronounced human inclination to see things out of context or pronounced human inability to see big pictures could be construed to be a design flaw in its own right.
      Examples: Grace notes and contrapuntal lines sound disjointed and unpleasant when not heard in the context of the melodic lines that they ornament. Similarly, an oboe really needs the rest of the orchestra to sound right. Perhaps this or that world “flaw” is, in fact, a grace note on the divine symphony. Perhaps our preoccupation with war and famine amounts to paying too much attention to the oboe.
   C. Each of us will have to make up his or her own mind about whether any of these moves are even remotely plausible.

II. One could attempt to rebut the atheists’ argument from evil by insisting that any imperfections that occur in the world are not God’s doing—evils may be real (and may even be unjustified), but insofar as they are not from God, God is excused.
   A. Some (or all) evils may amount to humans’ misdeeds and their results.
      1. Saying that God is excused when evil things come from human acts denies that humans are subject to divine control.
      2. This is an option, but if it is true, omnipotence seems to be in some jeopardy.
   B. Some (or all) evils may amount to fallen angels’ misdeeds and their results.
      1. This amounts to a quasi-dualism that denies that angels are subject to divine control.
      2. This is an option, but if it is true, omnipotence seems to be in serious jeopardy.
   C. Some (or all) evils may amount to the working of the dark side itself.
      1. This amounts to flat-out dualism.
      2. This is an option, but if it is true, omnipotence is dead as a doornail, and goodbye to monotheism altogether. (Without aseity, the force seems less “worthy of worship” than “in need of help.”)
III. One could attempt to rebut the atheists’ argument from evil by insisting that evils are logically necessary and, hence, not anyone’s fault.

A. The notion that, as a matter of logical necessity, there is no good without evil works only if the concepts of good and evil are truly polar (as in, “There are no mountains without valleys”).

B. Good and evil are no more polar than sweet and sour or red and green; the existence of one does not presuppose the existence of the other (even though it is possible that one would not notice good if there were no evil around for contrast).

C. If evils are not God’s fault because of logical necessity, then they are not our fault, either, for the same reason. So much, then, for moral responsibility—divine or human.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider a young child who fears creatures that he thinks live under his bed and down in the bathtub drain. Given the fact that there are no such creatures, does this mean that he doesn’t really have any problems that need to be addressed?

2. Consider a teenage boy who lives by his wits, scavenging for himself and his mentally handicapped sister in a Brazilian favela, with one parent dead and the other permanently incarcerated. Does the fact that, by the nature of things, the parents cannot contribute to their care make their lot acceptable?
Lecture Twenty-Two

Justifying Evil

Scope: Most alleged refutations of the atheists’ dysteleological argument claim to justify the evils that occur, usually by insisting that they are, in some practical sense, necessary for the fulfillment of God’s purposes in the world—often summed up in the claim that they are necessary for the achievement of greater goods. In this lecture, we will lay out the foundation for that line of argument. In the next, we will continue the assessment of this move, with special attention to what are called “natural” evils. Finally, in Lecture Twenty-Four, we will examine attempts to justify so-called “human” evils in this way.

Outline

I. If evils are “necessary,” in any sense, some redefinition of “omnipotent” is necessary, but “omnipotent” probably needs to be redefined anyway.
   A. “Omnipotent” cannot usefully mean “able to do anything describable” or “able to do anything at all.”
   B. “Omnipotent” must mean “able to do anything consistently describable” or “able to do anything that can be done.”

II. One could attempt to rebut the atheists’ argument from evil by insisting that evils are practically necessary means to greater goods. Here are several of the forms that this argument takes. We will carefully appraise the most important of them in the next two lectures.
   A. Evils might be practically necessary in order that God might be glorified. For example, one might whip the children to enhance one’s parental status and impress it on them, or cossacks might exploit and oppress serfs to enhance the status of the gentry and impress it on them.
   B. Evils might be practically necessary as “object lessons” (as a means for social control). For example, one might (publicly) hang a pickpocket, flog a wife beater, or draw and quarter a traitor so as to deter pickpockets, wife beaters, and traitors.
   C. Evils might be practically necessary as punishments to make things right again. For example, given a particular evil event in the world (a murder, say), one might hang the evildoer(s) to “restore the balance.” Indeed, in every case, one might demand, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Even God has been reported (Rom. 12:19) to say, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.”
   D. Evils might be practically necessary in order that purification might occur. For example, refined metals and cured vases are better than any that would be available without using the fire and the kiln; upright and obedient children are better than any that would be available without an occasional sound thrashing.
   E. Evils might be practically necessary in order for certain virtues to occur. For example, the world could not be the best possible, nor could a soul be fully developed, unless every virtue that is appropriate to it is realized in it. But certain virtues (called second order virtues) cannot occur absent the troubles required to occasion them. This includes such virtues as bravery (in response to danger), fortitude (in response to hardship), generosity (in response to need), long-suffering (in response to lengthy suffering), and the like.
   F. Evils might be practically necessary in order for freedom to be possible. For example, the world could not be the best possible unless those who inhabit it do good freely. But one cannot do good freely unless one is free, and one cannot be free unless one has the genuine opportunity to do evil.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider the notion of natural disasters as divine punishments (perhaps a hurricane for Orlando as punishment for a Gay Pride day at Disney World). What would such an event say to (1) the traditional belief that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb and (2) Jesus’ observation (in John 3: 1–15) about where the wind blows?

2. How does the maxim “spare the rod and spoil the child” stand up against the view that corporal punishment of children is, at best, primitive and, at worst, destructive? Does this say anything useful about the “just punishment” theodicy?
Lecture Twenty-Three
Justifying Natural Evil

Scope: Many bad things that happen in the world are not, in any obvious way, the result of human action or inaction, intention, or negligence. Such things are called “natural evils” and provide ammunition for those who say that the world’s designer (if it has one) cannot deserve worship. There are many theodicies on offer for such phenomena. We shall explore four in this lecture. The first sees them (against appearances) as the causal results of human evildoing. The second sees them as punishment for actual and dispositional human evildoing. The third sees them as warnings and object lessons for humans contemplating evildoing. The last sees them as part of the environment that is necessary for human flourishing. None of them is particularly plausible, and at least two of them (if true) entail a radical redefinition of “God.”

Outline

I. One could attempt to rebut the atheists’ argument from natural evils by insisting that all of them are ultimately the result of human wrongdoing—the direct consequences of particular human acts, the indirect consequences of human dispositions corrupted in “the fall,” or the side effects of a natural order gone awry because of that.
   A. The causal connections here, however, are anything but plausible. To say “All events are responses, or are causally connected, to human behavior” ignores the eons of events that took place before any human existed and vast numbers of more recent events that arise from causes outside the human neighborhood. Blaming everything on “the fall” requires far too much ad hoc tinkering at the abstract level, and at a more mundane level, it requires far too much dental work replacing all the molars in the grass-eating tigers of yore.
   B. But if we assume the causal connections anyway, plausible or not, then everything depends on justifying human evil itself (Lecture Twenty-Four).

II. One could attempt to rebut the atheistic argument from natural evils by insisting that all such are either deserved by those who suffer them, as punishment for their bad acts and “depraved” dispositions, or useful to those who observe or undergo them, as warnings.
   A. But natural evils do not compute as punishment, whether for acts or dispositions.
      1. As to adult humans, the Book of Job testifies that natural catastrophes are no indication of the depravity or wrongdoing of the bedeviled.
      2. It is especially implausible that infant humans, who don’t act in any intelligible sense of the term but often suffer at nature’s hand, are of sufficiently depraved dispositions to deserve their frequent lot. Nor is it made more plausible by the catechismal dictum that the natural destiny of humans of any age is “to burn in Hell forever” (one interpretation of the doctrine of original sin).
      3. Non-humans suffer, too, though surely they neither sin nor are disposed to sin.
   B. Even assuming that natural evils are punishment for bad acts and dispositions, they are dreadfully heavy-handed.
      1. Even Texas juvenile law is more forgiving than tsunamis and wildfires.
      2. Recalling that God is said to love us as a father loves his children, it is worth contemplating the likely fate of a human father who executed his daughter for missing curfew or the desirable fate of a community that executes a woman for being raped.
   C. Finally, warnings don’t compute any better than punishments.
      1. An infinitely wise warner would hardly invest so heavily in warning those (such as the simple-minded, the child-like, and the virtuous) who don’t need it,
      2. Nor would an infinitely wise warner invest so heavily in a method that is psychologically inferior to positive reinforcement.
      3. Nor would an infinitely just warner exploit one person to warn another person, in violation of the categorical imperative and the golden rule.
III. One could attempt to rebut the atheists’ argument from natural evils by insisting that all of them are necessary to provide the occasion for certain important virtues, as well as for other necessary features of a best possible world (such as inhabitants with fully developed souls) that could not occur without them.

A. There can be no second-order virtues without first-order grit.
   1. But absent lengthy suffering and other evils, long-suffering and other virtues are superfluous.
   2. There are major questions of overkill in this context, too.

B. There can be no soul making without struggle.
   1. But are there souls to develop, other than the characteristics, behaviors, capacities, and dispositions of the living organisms that occur?
   2. If not, then we are back to superfluous virtues and heavy-handedness.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider the way abused women are said to internalize the values of their abusers and blame themselves for their abuse. How does this relate to:
   a. Holding a sickly child responsible for its own suffering,
   b. Holding some nineteenth-century Missouri farmer responsible for the ravages of the New Madrid earthquake, and
   c. What Job’s wife must have had in mind when she encouraged him (Job 2:9) to “curse God and die”?

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Lecture Twenty-Four
Justifying Human Evil

Scope: Many who attempt to justify natural evil claim that it is a result of human evil. If so, there are extrinsic reasons for seeking a justification for human evil, over and above the intrinsic ones that lie in the sorry spectacle of what people do. The most widely cited theodicy for human evil (and the most effective, according to many) relies on the notion that the possibility of such evil is a necessary condition for the occurrence of human freedom and autonomy and that human freedom and autonomy are of such great value that they balance out whatever evils their occurrence requires. Explaining and appraising this theodicy is the primary target of this lecture. In addition, we will briefly examine a parallel theodicy that says that natural evil is the result of the corruption of the natural order by demonic beings whose freedom is as important as our own.

Outline

I. The free will theodicy, as applied to human beings and their conduct, is very simple.
   A. If this is the best of all possible worlds, it must be one in which people freely choose to do good, rather than one in which they function as amoral automata.
      1. Because people could not freely choose to do good absent the opportunity freely to choose otherwise, the potential for evil is necessary in a maximally good world.
      2. The opportunity to choose otherwise is real only if, from time to time, it is taken.
      3. There can be no highest good without freedom, and there can be no freedom without the genuine potential for, and occurrence of, evil.
      4. Thus, the atheistic argument from evil to the nonexistence of God fails.
   B. Note that this does not prove that there is a God. It shows only that the argument that the occurrence of evil demonstrates the nonexistence of God has failed.
   C. Note also that it will not work for anyone who does not think that people have free will in the first place, including B. F. Skinner and his followers in behavioral psychology (who wouldn’t want it anyway) and the truly strict Calvinists (who might).

II. This free will theodicy raises a number of difficult questions, however.
   A. Why, exactly, does freedom require the possibility of evil, and why does the possibility of evil require the actuality of evil from time to time?
      Could God not create beings who always freely choose the good, or does “omnipotent” not mean what it has traditionally been taken to mean?
   B. Why, exactly, does freedom require so much evil?
      How much freedom does a wise parent give a child, or does “benevolent” not mean what it has traditionally been taken to mean?
   C. Why should one think that all of the evils in the world have been freely chosen by people or are the result of what people have freely chosen?
      If all evil is not the result of human activity, then another move is needed.

III. A free will theodicy, exactly parallel to the one above, can be applied to Lucifer and his minions (and their conduct) rather than to people (and theirs) to cover the balance.
   A. The target of the theodicy in this case are evils, flaws, and dysfunctions that cannot easily be attributed to human actions or dispositions, and this theodicy:
      1. Provides a destroyer/corrupter that puts muscle in the “fall” of nature;
      2. Provides a tempter/seducer that puts muscle in the “fall” of man; and
      3. Provides an enduring divine antagonist that puts legs on the cosmic struggle between good and evil.
      4. It does not, however, prove that an evil one exists, but only that there is as much ground for thinking that an evil one exists as there is for thinking that a divine one exists.
B. This comes close to abandoning monotheism, however. It is functionally indistinguishable from Zoroastrian dualism at every point except the tempter’s origin.

1. However heretical this kind of quasi-dualism may appear to be on the surface, however, it is actually consistent with most evangelical Christian belief and would not be unfamiliar to serious Jews and Muslims.

2. Some recognition of the dark side—whether defensive (in the context of building a theodicy to spare God from responsibility for assorted evils) or proactive (in the context of a dysteleological argument for the existence of the demonic)—seems inevitable for anyone who (1) sees the way the world is and takes it seriously and (2) thinks it is proper to infer the nature of the world’s source(s) by means of an argument from design.

IV. The free will theodicy, then, is strong enough to defeat the claim that divine existence is incompatible with the existence of evil, given appropriate auxiliary hypotheses about the nature and importance of autonomy and freedom. The world might be this way. One must recall, however, that it just as easily might not. As a result, neither side having achieved closure, theism, atheism, and agnosticism all survive as options, and the third option has a lot to be said for it, given the Scottish verdicts that are so obviously appropriate to all the various arguments, pro and con.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Would it be logically possible for an omnipotent creator to create an order of beings that always freely chooses the good?
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<th>People</th>
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<td>Job</td>
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<td>1300 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Moses said to receive Decalogue</td>
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<td>Major Hebrew prophets</td>
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<td>Much Hebrew oral tradition inscribed during Babylonian exile</td>
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<td>590–500 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Delphic Oracle at zenith</td>
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<td>Canon of Pentateuch settled</td>
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<td>4 B.C.E.</td>
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<td>to 30 C.E.</td>
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<td>3–65</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>1095</td>
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<td>1215</td>
<td>Magna Carta</td>
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<td>1225–1274</td>
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<td>St. Thomas Aquinas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1233</td>
<td>Spanish Inquisition under Dominicans</td>
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<td>1265–1321</td>
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<td>Dante (Alighieri)</td>
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<td>1266–1308</td>
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<td>John Duns Scotus</td>
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<td>1280–1349</td>
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<td>William of Ockham</td>
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<td>1291</td>
<td>Crusades end</td>
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<td>1304–1374</td>
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<td>Francesco Petrarch</td>
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<td>1452–1519</td>
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<td>Leonardo Da Vinci</td>
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<td>1466–1536</td>
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<td>Desiderius Erasmus</td>
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<td>1469–1527</td>
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<td>Nicolo Machiavelli</td>
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<td>1473–1543</td>
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<td>Nicolas Copernicus</td>
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<td>1477–1535</td>
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<td>St. Thomas More</td>
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<tr>
<td>1483–1546</td>
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<td>Martin Luther</td>
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<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>Columbus sailed the ocean blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>1499</td>
<td>Torquemada gives Spanish Jews three months to convert</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500</td>
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<td>Guru Nanak Dev</td>
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<tr>
<td>1509–1564</td>
<td>Sikhhism founded in India</td>
<td>John Calvin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1515–1582</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Teresa of Avila</td>
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<tr>
<td>1516</td>
<td>Erasmus publishes New Testament in Greek and Latin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1517</td>
<td>Luther posts 95 theses</td>
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<tr>
<td>1520</td>
<td>Luther excommunicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>1530</td>
<td>Augsburg Confession</td>
<td>Philipp Melanthon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1531</td>
<td>Erasmus publishes first complete edition of Aristotle</td>
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<tr>
<td>1534</td>
<td>Luther completes translation of the Bible into German</td>
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<tr>
<td>1536</td>
<td>Calvin’s <em>Institutes</em></td>
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<td>1538</td>
<td>Calvin expelled from Geneva</td>
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<td>1542–1591</td>
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<td>St. John of the Cross</td>
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<td>1545–1564</td>
<td>Council of Trent</td>
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<td>1559–1609</td>
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<td>Jacobus Arminius</td>
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<tr>
<td>1561</td>
<td>Scottish Confessions of Faith</td>
<td>John Knox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>1561–1626</td>
<td>Calvin’s <em>Institutes</em> in English</td>
<td>Sir Francis Bacon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1564–1642</td>
<td>Galilei Galileo</td>
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<tr>
<td>1571–1630</td>
<td>Johannes Kepler</td>
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<td>1588–1679</td>
<td>Thomas Hobbes</td>
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<td>1596–1650</td>
<td>René Descartes</td>
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<td>1632–1704</td>
<td>Benedictus Spinoza</td>
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<td>1632–1727</td>
<td>John Locke</td>
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<tr>
<td>1642–1660</td>
<td>English Revolution, Civil War, and Protectorate</td>
<td>Sir Isaac Newton</td>
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<td>1646</td>
<td>Westminster Confession</td>
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<td>1646–1716</td>
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<td>Gottfried Leibniz</td>
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<td>1685–1753</td>
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<td>George Berkeley</td>
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<td>1694–1778</td>
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<td>Voltaire (François Marie Arouet)</td>
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<td>1711–1776</td>
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<td>David Hume</td>
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<td>1724–1804</td>
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<td>1743–1805</td>
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<td>1748–1832</td>
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<td>Jeremy Bentham</td>
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<tr>
<td>1776–1783</td>
<td>American Revolution</td>
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<td>1789–1795</td>
<td>French Revolution</td>
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<td>1798–1857</td>
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<td>Auguste Comte</td>
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<td>1806–1873</td>
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<td>John Stuart Mill</td>
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<td>1809–1882</td>
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<td>Charles Darwin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Napoleon at zenith of power</td>
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<td>1811</td>
<td>Luddite uprising</td>
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<td>1812–1814</td>
<td>War of 1812</td>
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<td>1813–1855</td>
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<td>Søren Kierkegaard</td>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
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<td>1818–1883</td>
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<td>Karl Marx</td>
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<td>1834</td>
<td>Spanish Inquisition suppressed</td>
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<td>1839–1914</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Sanders Peirce</td>
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<td>1842–1910</td>
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<td>William James</td>
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<td>1844–1900</td>
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<td>Friedrich Nietzsche</td>
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<td>1856–1939</td>
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<td>Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>1861–1865</td>
<td>American Civil War</td>
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<td>1869–1937</td>
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<td>Rudolf Otto</td>
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<td>1872–1970</td>
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<td>Lord Bertrand Russell</td>
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<td>1878–1965</td>
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<td>Martin Buber</td>
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<td>1879–1955</td>
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<td>Albert Einstein</td>
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<td>1884–1976</td>
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<td>Rudolf Bultmann</td>
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<td>1886–1965</td>
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<td>1889–1951</td>
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<td>1898–1963</td>
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<td>C. S. Lewis</td>
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<td>1900–1976</td>
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<td>Gilbert Ryle</td>
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<td>1910–1989</td>
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<td>Sir Alfred Jules Ayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Theory of Atomic Structure</td>
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<td>1911–1960</td>
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<td>J. L. Austin</td>
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<td>1914–1918</td>
<td>World War I</td>
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<td>Dates</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>General Theory of Relativity</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1922–1996</td>
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<td>Thomas Kuhn</td>
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<td>1922–</td>
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<td>John Hick</td>
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<td>1923–</td>
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<td>Antony Flew</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Quantum Theory</td>
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<td>1929–</td>
<td>Market crash, Depression begins</td>
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<td>1933</td>
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<td>1933–1939</td>
<td>Concentration camps in Germany</td>
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<td>Japan invades China</td>
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<td>1936–1939</td>
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<td>1939–1945</td>
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<td>1939–1945</td>
<td>Spanish Civil War</td>
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<td>1939–1945</td>
<td>Germany annexes Austria and Czechoslovakia</td>
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<td>1945</td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>Post-colonial era and Cold War begin</td>
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<td>1991</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Collapse of USSR</td>
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Glossary

*A posteriori*: Known or knowable on the basis of experience of some sort.

*A priori*: Known or knowable independent of experience of any sort.

*Agnostic*: One who claims not to know, or one who denies the possibility of knowing, whether or not something is the case; particularly one who takes such a position (agnosticism) on divine existence.

*Analytic*: Traditionally, the character of a statement that can be shown to be true or false by logical analysis, logically necessary. See *Synthetic*.

*Analytic falsehood*: Traditionally, a statement whose predicate denies what is contained in its subject, a self-contradiction or necessary falsehood.

*Analytic truth*: Traditionally, a statement whose predicate is contained in its subject, a tautology or necessary truth.

*Analytic/synthetic distinction*: An alleged “dogma” of empiricism in terms of which statements can be neatly sorted into necessary and contingent categories.

*Animism*: A form of religious belief that vests various natural objects (such as trees, hills, and so on) with indwelling spirits.

*Argument*: An arrangement of statements in which one or more (called the premises or assumptions) are presented as evidence or support for the truth of another (called the conclusion).

*Arguments for divine existence:*

  *Ontological*: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a priori* because “God exists” is analytically true.

  *Cosmological*: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a posteriori* because of what can be discovered about the nature of causation.

  *Teleological*: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a posteriori* because of what can be discovered about the nature of causation and because the world is manifestly “designed.”

*Aseity*: Self-contained, self-dependent, self-explanatory; not contingent in any way on anything external.

*Atheist*: One who affirms atheism, claiming or claiming to know that no God exists.

*Behaviorism*: The theory that mental phenomena, states, and processes can be reduced to, or explained in terms of, observable behavior and/or dispositions to behave.

*Belief*: An experiential expectation, usually based on mental processing of experiences that have already occurred or are occurring.

*Bifurcate*: To radically divide, as Descartes divided mind and body, Plato divided ideas and appearances, and transcendentalists divide the divine and the mundane.

*Ceteris paribus*: All things held equal.

*Cultural relativism*: The view that value (moral cultural relativism) and/or truth (epistemic cultural relativism) are local to a culture, being produced by the culture itself rather than found in the external world.

*Definition*: 

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[280x708]Glossary
[72x682]A posteriori: Known or knowable on the basis of experience of some sort.
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*Definition*:


Ostensive: Defining a term or phrase by pointing to its referent.

Paradigm case: Defining a term or phrase by reference to a stipulated model.

Essential: Defining a term or phrase in terms of the “essence” of its referents, that is, the universal necessary and sufficient conditions of its use.

Family resemblance: Defining a term or phrase in terms of overlapping similarities that may be observed in its referents.

Operational: Defining an abstract term or phrase in terms of observable phenomena or operations (for example, defining “gravity” as the acceleration of objects toward one another at a certain rate).

Deist: One affirming deism, the view (common in the eighteenth century) that the divine being that produced the natural world is detached from and disinterested in it.

Divine encounters: Occasions in which the divine becomes apparent to one or more humans, either by sight (visions), in sound or speech (locutions), or by general contact or indwelling (transports, raptures, unity experiences).

Dualist: One who affirms dualism, that is, in religious contexts, that there are two divine powers, usually separated in function as well as in identity. (Sometimes called bitheism, this view may include the notion that the two are in conflict with each other and/or vie for human allegiance and support.)

Dynamism: A form of religious belief that vests various natural objects (such as trees, hills, and so on) with innate but impersonal and unpredictable powers.

Empiricism: The view that experience (sometimes limited to sense experience) is the primary (or even the exclusive) source of human knowledge.

Enlightenment: An age of humanism and naturalism (and some deism), broadly associated with the eighteenth century.

Epistemic relativism: The view that the knowable and known vary independently of what is the case, as a function of one’s culture, paradigm, mind set, or circumstances; a variety of collective subjectivism.

Epistemology: Knowledge theory, one of the main traditional branches of philosophy.

Eschatological: Having to do with the eschaton, the end of the age, the last days.

Ethical monotheism: The position taken by ethical monotheists that there is exactly one God, a being notable for moral perfection in addition to unlimited power and wisdom.

Evils: Dysfunctional, harmful, and/or hurtful events that occur, whether because of the activities of people (human evils) or independent of them (natural evils).

Explanation: The rendering intelligible of a state of affairs by carefully noting how it came about and how it relates to other states of affairs (causal explanation), why or for what purpose it occurred (teleological explanation), or the use that it serves (functional explanation).

Faith: Trust or reliance on the truth of a set of propositions either largely or entirely independent of evidence and argumentation, or trust or dependence on the reliability of an individual (or group) in the same way.

Felicity conditions: The circumstances in which a locution is “happy,” (for example, a description is felicitous when it is true, a promise is felicitous when it is sincere, a joke is felicitous if it is funny).

Fideist: One who affirms fideism, the view that divine existence is a matter of faith rather than a matter of knowledge.

Foundationalism: A position in knowledge theory that certain states of affairs are directly or immediately known and that all other knowledge is derived (in one way or another) from that foundation. For phenomenalists, for example, sense data are foundational to all knowledge of matters of fact.

God: A title for that which deserves worship.
**Henotheism**: A form of religious belief in which the existence of numerous divine beings may be recognized, but allegiance to the particular one associated with one’s tribe or culture is demanded.

**Holy**: Set apart, wholly other, sacred.

**Humanism**: The view, whether religious or secular in tone, that human values and concerns should be defined in human terms.

**Idealism**: The metaphysical view that there is a non-physical reality “behind” or “above” the apparent reality of everyday events.

**Illocutionary force**: That which is done in a speech act, such as warn, describe, promise, and the like.

**Imply, entail**: To provide sufficient grounds for the truth of, as a premise implies a conclusion. If a logical implication statement is a tautology, it is called an entailment.

**In principle**: By definition, not accidental.

**Incommensurable**: Of two or more statements, theories, or paradigms, not measurable or assessable on a common standard.

**Inference**: The mental process of drawing a conclusion from one or more premises. People infer; statements imply.

**Knowledge**: Justified true belief, at least, but more than that according to skeptics who deny its occurrence.

**Logic**: A system of rules of inference to determine whether or not the premises of an argument validly imply its conclusion.

**Logical empiricism**: A philosophical position identified with the Vienna Circle that insisted that all cognitively meaningful language is, in principle, either empirically or formally verifiable; logical positivism.

**Logical form**: The syntactical structure of an argument, such as *modus ponens* (that is, If P, then Q; P, therefore Q) and *modus tollens* (that is, If P, then Q; Not-Q, therefore Not-P).

**Logical positivism**: See Logical empiricism.

**Meaning**: Either the sense or the reference (or both) of a word or phrase.

**Meta-…**: Beyond, about, or parasitic on; for example, meta-ethics is an abstract area of inquiry that takes the discourse of ethics as its subject matter for examination.

**Metaphilosophy**: An abstract area of inquiry that takes the discourse of philosophy as its subject matter.

**Metaphysics**: In Aristotle’s collected works, what comes after *Physics*. To logical positivists, nonsense. To the ambitious, speculative “theories of everything.” More generally, abstract inquiry that takes all discourse about “the furniture of the world” as its subject matter. Ontology.

**Mithraism**: A mystery religion widely practiced at the beginning of the common era.

**Modus ponens**: See Logical form.

**Modus tollens**: See Logical form.

**Monotheist**: One affirming *monotheism*, the view that exactly one God exists and, typically, that the divine is interested and involved in human affairs (cf. Deist).

**Moral relativism**: The view that the moral value of an act varies as a function of things other than the nature of the act itself (such as the traditions of a culture, the perspective and interests of an individual, the precise circumstances in which an act occurs, and so on). This view looks very subjective but need not be, depending on what moral values are said to be relative to.

**Mysticism**: A form of religion that cultivates human interaction with the supernatural independent of reason or everyday experience; occultism.
Myth: Typically, an ancient tale that, though not to be taken literally, conveys some significant insight into the human condition; a vehicle (which may be utterly fantastic) for delivering home truths in a memorable way. (The vehicle should never be confused with its point.)

Naming theory of meaning: An ancient (and still common) view that words and phrases mean by naming something. It encounters difficulty with such words as “nothing” and such phrases as “the present king of France.”

Natural evils: Bad things that occur in the world independent of any human input.

Nominalism and realism: Metaphysical positions on the status of abstract nouns. Realism insists that they name actual entities (such as The Good), while nominalism allows that they express only notions.

Ockham’s razor: The primary tool of theoretical economy; hypothesizing no more than is necessary to save the appearances.

Operationalism: Metaphysical position that abstract nouns must be given operational definitions (see Definition).

Other: A negative descriptor for God, reminding one that God is different (without indicating in what way); usually intensified with “wholly;” holy, set apart, sacred.

Pantheism: A form of religious belief in which everything is held to be divine or held to be a manifestation of the divine.

Paradigm: Generally, a model, template, or pattern. In recent usage, the frame of reference or perspective in which one operates that determines how things appear and, hence, how one describes or explains them.

Parsees: Indian Zoroastrians.

Performative: A variety of speech act in which something is transacted rather than described, such as “I baptize thee...”

Perlocutionary force: That which is achieved by a speech act; its results.

Philosophical analysis: Taking some system of thought apart to discover its inner logic, presuppositions, and implications; essentially, meta-inquiry.

Philosophical synthesis: Putting the results of various philosophical analyses together in an attempt to synthesize an inclusive account of how things are.

Polytheism: A form of religion that holds there are many gods, often (but not always) placed in a hierarchy and differentiated in terms of their interests or spheres of influence.

Positivism: The philosophical position of Auguste Comte, typified by the rejection of myth, magic, and metaphysics and the affirmation of “positive science.” A precursor of logical positivism.

Post hoc ergo propter hoc: “After, therefore because of”; a common fallacy.

Premise: An assumption or starting point, the basis from which an argument’s conclusion is inferred.

Principle of sufficient reason: The notion that “nothing just happens”; that in order for anything to occur, the adequate causes of its occurrence must have themselves already occurred.

Properly basic: Immediate, non-inferential or foundational, and properly so. For empiricists, experiential phenomena are said to constitute the proper basis of all discourse. Some recent theistic arguments make the same claim for elementary god talk.

Rationalism: The view that genuine knowledge (perhaps all of it) must be achieved through the exercise of the mind rather than through experience.

Reductionism: A philosophical enterprise that consists of translating accounts of one sort of phenomena into the vocabulary of an allegedly simpler and more inclusive sort of phenomena. Thus, for example, behaviorism is a reductionist theory of mind.

Reference: Denotation or extension; that which is referred to or picked out by the sense of a word or phrase.
Reform tradition: A tradition associated with Calvinism that emphasizes and prizes closely argued philosophical analyses of theological issues.

Revelation: That which is allegedly discovered by humans when the divine lifts the veil of transcendence sufficiently for them to have a glimpse of what could not be ordinarily known.

Scholasticism: High medieval thought.

Secular: Non-religious. Recently, a term of abuse, as in “secular humanism.”

Semantic: Having to do with the sense and reference of language, as opposed to its internal structure or logic. See Syntactic.

Sense: Connotation, intention; the set of properties or characteristics invoked by a word or phrase in terms of which one can pick out its reference.

Sociology of knowledge: The idea that what is known is always a function of the culture in which one operates. “Epistemic cultural relativism” is the more common label now.

Sound: The quality of an argument that is valid and has true premises as well.

Speech acts: Actual events or acts in which language is employed or used. Many philosophers of language now hold that they (rather than the words or phrases employed in them) are the locus of meaning.

Syntactic: Having to do with the internal structure or logic of language (as opposed to its meaning). See Semantic.

Synthetic: Traditionally, the character of a statement that cannot be shown to be true or false by logical analysis, logically contingent. See Analytic.

Tautology: A statement that is necessarily true, true by virtue of its form, or analytically true (for example, “In base-10 arithmetic, $2 + 2 = 4$” and “All bachelors are unmarried.”)

Thomism: The thought system of St. Thomas Aquinas, theological and philosophical.

Transcendent: “Beyond,” in some sense. In religious contexts, often “totally beyond” the level of human access. Other, holy, sacred; on the far side of a great gulf fixed.

Truth conditions: Circumstances in which a statement will be true or false. These may be experiential or logical, at least.

Truth criteria (tests): Ideas about how we can ascertain whether a statement is true or not, such as correspondence (seeing if it “matches” the way things really are), coherence (seeing if it is consistent with other statements that are held to be true), and pragmatic (seeing if it works, in use).

Truth theories: Ideas about what makes a statement true, such as correspondence (actually matching the ways things are), coherence (meshing with other statements that are true themselves), and pragmatic (being reliable in use).

Use theory of meaning: The theory, associated with Wittgenstein’s later work, that the meaning of a statement amounts to nothing more than the uses to which the statement can be put.

Valid: The quality of an argument with a logical form such that the truth of its premises assures the truth of its conclusion.

Verification: Testing a statement for truth.

Verificationism: The notion, associated with logical empiricism, that a statement can only be meaningful if it is testable by either experience or logic.

Weltanschauung: A worldview or “big picture”; possibly a “paradigm.”
Biographical Notes

The purpose of these sketches is to identify some of the interests and connections of the more influential philosophers who are referred to in the lectures, not to argue the merits of their positions. Further information can be found in: The Directory of American Scholars (U.S. and Canada), The Dictionary of National Biography (Britain), The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and on such Web sites as:

http://www.biography.com/  [Biography.com]
http://www.philosophypages.com/  [Philosophy Pages from Garth Kemerling]
http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/  [The Catholic Encyclopedia]
http://www.xrefer.com/  [Xrefer, the Web’s Reference Engine]
http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/  [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy]

Anselm, St. (1033–1109). An Italian Scholastic theologian, philosopher, and difficult Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm was a rather Augustinean rationalist, most noted by modern philosophers for his articulation of the ontological argument for divine existence. Though most find that argument more intriguing than convincing, it still has its notable advocates (including, especially, Alvin Plantinga).

Aquinas, St. Thomas (1225–1274). An Italian Dominican Scholastic theologian, logician, and philosopher, Aquinas was markedly Aristotelian in temperament and method. Something of a mystic, and concerned with witchcraft and alchemy, he is most noted by modern philosophers for his monumental works: Summa Contra Gentiles and Summa Theologica. The definitive voice of Roman Catholic theology and philosophy of religion, Thomas is never an easy read but always a profitable one.

Augustine, St. (354–430). A convert in his twenties, Augustine has been called the most influential Christian writer after St. Paul. Directly, as well as by way of Calvin, he still influences Protestant as well as Catholic thinkers, his Confessions and City of God continuing to have wide audiences. Born and educated in North Africa, teaching in Rome and Milan, and (from 396) Bishop of Hippo, he was a critic of heresies while they were still being defined and much concerned with evil and theodicy.

Austin, J. L. (1911–1960). An English philosopher, Austin studied at Oxford and taught there from 1952. He delighted in ordinary language as a key to unlock philosophical puzzles, recommending reading the Oxford English Dictionary from cover to cover as a source book. In essays and lectures, Austin laid out the groundwork for “speech act” theory, distinguishing what we say, what we mean when we say it, and what is accomplished by the saying. His papers were collected and published after his untimely death as Philosophical Papers and Sense and Sensibilia. His Harvard lectures were also transcribed and published as How to Do Things with Words.

Ayer, Sir Alfred Jules (1910–1989). An English philosopher, Ayer studied at Oxford under Ryle and (after the war) taught there, at University College London, and again at Oxford as Wykeham Professor of Logic from 1959. His most influential book was Language, Truth and Logic, a forceful introduction of logical empiricism to the English-speaking world. Other works include The Problem of Knowledge and The Central Questions of Philosophy. Your lecturer was privileged to attend his lectures at Oxford in 1975 and found him as witty and astute at the lectern as he was at his writing desk.

Buber, Martin (1878–1965). A Viennese philosopher and theologian, Buber studied at Vienna, Berlin, and Zürich; founded and edited the journal Der Jude; and taught at the University of Frankfurt, as well as in an adult education program until, fleeing the Nazis, he moved to a post in Jerusalem. His outlook on religious, social, and ethical issues is still influential, chiefly by way of his book I and Thou.


Comte, Auguste (1798–1857). A French thinker, the inventor of sociology, and the founder of classical positivism, Comte argued that science has emerged from theological and metaphysical stages into its modern “positive” (operational or experiential) posture and that human reverence should be for humanity itself. His works include six
volumes on *Positive Philosophy* and four on *Positive Polity*. He is said to have practiced what he called “mental hygiene” by avoiding reading the works of others.

**Descartes, René (1596–1650).** A French rationalist philosopher and mathematician, Descartes was Jesuit trained and strictly Catholic but no Scholastic. He was most notable for his reconstruction of rational knowledge by way of systematic doubt. Apart from the *cogito* and everything built on it, he is also noted for the invention of analytic geometry and for providing a foil for all subsequent philosophers. His notable works include *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

**Flew, Antony (1923– ).** A British skeptical philosopher, Flew taught at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele, Reading, and York (Toronto), as well as holding many visiting posts throughout the English-speaking world. His books range from *A New Approach to Psychical Research* and *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief* to *Atheistic Humanism* and *Setting Schools Back on Course*. His *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (with Alasdair MacIntyre) helped make analytic philosophy of religion accessible at mid-century.

**Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939).** An essentially Viennese physician (though born in Moravia), Freud studied and taught at the University of Vienna before entering private practice. The founder of psychoanalysis and a thinker of sweeping influence, Freud is primarily of interest to philosophers of religion because of his theories about the pathological origins of religious consciousness ideas—most notably expressed in his works * Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

**Geach, Peter Thomas (1919– ).** A British philosopher and logician, Geach taught at Birmingham and was a frequent lecturer in North America. Orthodoxly Catholic in outlook, he gives a vigorous account of Christian morality and of his own theodicy in *The Virtues* and *Providence and Evil*. A combative arguer, he questioned the use of modal logic to “prove” divine existence as early as 1975, showing that secularists are not alone in their uneasiness over Plantinga’s resurrection of Anselm.

**Hick, John (1922– ).** A North Yorkshire theologian and philosopher of religion, Hick studied at Edinburgh, was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of England, and taught at Cambridge, Birmingham, and Claremont (California). In addition to his definitive textbooks and anthologies in philosophy of religion, he made major contributions to theodicy building (in *Evil and the God of Love*) and to the analysis of the common elements of world religions (in *God and the Universe of Faiths* and *The Myth of God Incarnate*). No Augustinean, Hick bet the farm on free will and “soul making.”

**Hume, David (1711–1776).** A Scottish philosopher, historian, and lawyer, Hume studied at Edinburgh but was denied professorships at Edinburgh and Glasgow for religious reasons. His many important works include *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *Essays Moral and Political*, and the posthumously published *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. He was the definitive British empiricist and is credited for awakening Kant from his “dogmatic slumbers.”

**James, William (1842–1910).** A definitively American philosopher and psychologist, in an era when those disciplines were not distinct, James pursued art, literature, philosophy, medicine, and science. He was strongly interested in the psychological examination of religion, in mysticism, and in various altered states of consciousness (drug induced and otherwise). His ideas were admired by Wittgenstein, and such works as his *Varieties of Religious Experience* and *Pragmatism* are still widely read.

**John of the Cross, St. (1542–1591).** Described by Thomas Merton as the greatest of all mystical theologians, this Spanish saint, mystic, and poet helped Teresa of Avila establish the Discalced Carmelites; became a Carmelite monk himself; was ordained and imprisoned; and escaped to became vicar-provincial of Andalusia. His works include *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel* and many poems. Taken with Teresa, St. John provides a useful insight into a variety of religious belief and practice that is intuitive rather than rational and robustly empirical (though not in a way Hume would countenance).

**Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804).** A German philosopher, perhaps the first professional philosopher, Kant was a career academic. His three *Critiques* (of *Pure Reason*, *Practical Reason*, and *Judgment*) are landmarks in modern philosophical history, responding to Hume’s empiricism and permanently marking out the limits of reason in such as way as to exclude the ontological argument and any knowledge whatever of “things in themselves.” His *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* was also a watershed in its rejection of ethical “consequentialism” in all its forms.

Kierkegaard, Soren (1813–1855). A Danish philosopher/theologian and, in a sense, an early existentialist. After his studies at Copenhagen, Kierkegaard inveighed against philosophical speculation and worldview constructions as poor rationalistic substitutes for the radical choices that underlie what would later be called “authentic” existence. Prefiguring Sartre (but in a distinctly religious frame of reference), he attempted to retrieve Will from the hegemony of Reason to which Plato had assigned it and where Descartes had left it to languish. His major works were Either/Or (1843) and Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846).

Kuhn, Thomas (1922–1996). An American philosopher and historian of science, Kuhn taught at Harvard, Berkeley, Princeton, and MIT. His The Structure of Scientific Revolution was published at mid-century as a volume in the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science—a surprisingly positivistic venue for a non-positivistic treatise. If Kuhn did not invent paradigms and paradigm shifts, he certainly put them on the map for the rest of us. In his view, there is no rational basis for choosing one paradigm over another. Other works include The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change and The Road Since Structure: Philosophical Essays, 1970–1993.

Lewis, C. S. (1898–1963). An English litterateur, satirist, and lay apologist, Lewis lectured on medieval and renaissance English literature at Oxford from 1924. His scholarly writings include English Literature in the 16th Century and Experiment in Criticism. Other books, however, such as his Screwtape Letters and The Chronicles of Narnia, put him in the public arena as a primary apologist for faith and feeling in an increasingly skeptical and secular culture. A frequent debater, Lewis’ storyteller’s imagination and eloquence gave fire to his defense of the faith.

MacIntyre, Alasdair (1929– ). A Scottish philosopher who, after a number of university posts in Britain, came to the United States. Here, he has taught at Brandeis, Wellesley, Vanderbilt, and Notre Dame. His works include Marxism and Christianity, After Virtue, and other influential writings on ethics and philosophy of mind. His New Essays in Philosophical Theology (with Antony Flew) helped make analytic philosophy of religion accessible at mid-century.

Nielsen, Kai (?– ). A North American philosopher educated at Chapel Hill and Duke, Nielsen taught at New York, Calgary, and Concordia (Montreal) Universities. With interests in metaphilosophy, contemporary ethical and political theory, and Marxism, he is an outspoken critic of theism, noted for his critique of the relationships between religion and morality. His works include Ethics without God, On Transforming Philosophy, and Equality and Liberty.

Otto, Rudolf (1869–1937). A German philosopher, Protestant theologian, and professor at Göttingen, Wroclaw, and Marburg, Otto focused his research on non-Christian religions, producing such studies as India’s Religion of Grace and Christianity and Mysticism East and West. His treatment of “the other” in The Idea of the Holy (1917) had become a centerpiece in liberal Protestant thought and theological education by mid-century and remains essential reading for students of transcendentalism.

Paley, William (1743–1805). An Anglican theologian and cleric; fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge; archdeacon of Carlisle; and subdean of Lincoln, Paley argued that divine existence is evident. His works include Horae Paulinae (on the improbability that the New Testament is a fable) and Natural Theology; or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity. He was a contemporary of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, and Thomas Jefferson, but of a less skeptical mind.

Peirce, Charles Sanders (1839–1914). An American philosopher, logician, and mathematician; a student at Harvard; and a long-time researcher with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Peirce lectured at Harvard and Johns Hopkins Universities before his lengthy “retirement,” which commenced in 1887. The author of many articles and essays on an extremely wide variety of topics, Peirce is best remembered for his work on Boolean logic and on the semantic and syntactical structure of language, and for his “invention” of pragmatism. He was an important precursor of William James and John Dewey and, hence, of Wittgenstein.
Plantinga, Alvin (1932–). An American philosopher, metaphysician, and rock climber in the Reform tradition, and called the most important philosopher of religion now writing, Plantinga studied at Yale and has taught at Wayne State, Calvin College, and since 1982, Notre Dame. Noted for his application of modal logic to the ontological argument, for his treatments of the problem of evil, and for his analyses of the epistemology of religious belief, Plantinga is the author of numerous books and articles, including “A Valid Ontological Argument?” “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?” God and Other Minds, The Nature of Necessity, Faith and Rationality, and Warranted Christian Belief.

Russell, Lord Bertrand (1872–1970). An English philosopher, logician, mathematician, freethinker, and essayist, Russell was a student, fellow, and professor at Cambridge, where he influenced the shape of philosophy for generations (by way of “both” Wittgensteins, as well as the Vienna Circle) and set the course of all subsequent philosophy of logic and mathematics. His early works included Principles of Mathematics and Principia Mathematica. Mid-career books included An Enquiry into Meaning and Truth and Human Knowledge, plus myriad essays and polemics on topics ranging from education and marriage to nuclear disarmament. Social and political issues were his primary focus after 1949.

Ryle, Gilbert (1900–1976). An English philosopher, Ryle studied at Brighton and Oxford and taught (with a hiatus for the war) at Oxford until 1968. Although he devoted a quarter century to editing the distinguished journal Mind, he published several important essays and books in conceptual analysis, including “Systematically Misleading Expressions,” “Categories,” Dilemmas, Plato’s Progress and—of permanent importance—The Concept of Mind, his devastating refutation of Cartesian mind-body dualism as a “category mistake.”

Searle, John R. (1932–). An American philosopher of language, educated at Wisconsin and Oxford, and professor at Oxford and Berkeley, Searle’s works include The Campus War, a study of the Berkeley student riots, and Minds, Brains, and Science. Influenced by Wittgenstein and Austin, his Speech Acts and Expression and Meaning laid out an analysis of language and its relation to mental operations that continues to influence philosophers, linguists, and cognitive scientists alike.

Swinburne, Richard (?–). An English philosopher, Swinburne is Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oriel College, Oxford. His interests include the relations of science and religion, the nature of God, and arguments for divine existence, with special attention to the issue of suffering. He is the author of many books, including The Christian God, Is There a God?, The Evolution of the Soul, and Providence and the Problem of Evil.

Teresa of Avila, St. (1515–1582). A Spanish saint, ascetic, mystic, and organizer, Teresa entered a Carmelite convent in 1535 and, amidst considerable adversities, founded the convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Primitive Rule of St. Joseph at Avila in 1562. Among her many works, her autobiographical The Way of Perfection and The Interior Castle are still widely read. She is notable for her critical response to her own mystical encounters—a person of faith with a very practical mind.

Tillich, Paul (1886–1965). A German/American cleric, theologian, and philosopher, Tillich taught at Frankfurt until suspended (1933) and, thereafter, in the United States, at Union Theological Seminary, Harvard, and Chicago. Possessed of a distinctly liberal and existential outlook, he is popularly noted for The Courage to Be and professionally for his Systematic Theology. Not particularly appreciated by analytic philosophers, his notion of God as “ultimate concern” was the target of many critical pieces, such as Paul Edward’s “Professor Tillich’s Confusions” (frequently reprinted).

Voltaire (François Marie Arouet) (1694–1778). A wicked French philosophe, educated by Jesuits, a student of law, a prisoner in the Bastille, and an exile in England for a time, Voltaire wrote in Paris, Berlin, and Geneva. An intractable foe of injustice, his ideas helped set the stage for the French Revolution. Convinced that this ought to be the “best of all possible worlds,” he set out the problem of evil with panache in Candide. Other notable works include Lettres philosophiques and Dictionnaire philosophique.

William of Ockham (c. 1280–c. 1349). An English Scholastic, Franciscan, and philosophical nominalist, Ockham studied theology at Oxford (perhaps under Duns Scotus) and Paris, where he taught. Charged with heresy and, subsequently, a refugee in Bavaria, he denied papal authority over temporal matters. A dogged opponent of metaphysical largess, more remembered today for his “razor” than for any particular treatise, this “doctor invincibilis” reminds us of the importance of philosophical method.
Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1889–1951). A Viennese/English philosopher, inventor, and sometime schoolteacher, Wittgenstein studied engineering at Berlin and Manchester and mathematical logic at Cambridge, where he taught (with lengthy interruptions) between 1929 and 1947. The most influential Western philosopher of the twentieth century, Wittgenstein’s two major works, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, laid the foundations for logical atomism and logical positivism, on the one hand, and for “ordinary language analysis,” on the other. Neither an easy person nor an easy philosopher, this brilliant and quirky thinker stirs interest even among non-philosophers, as evidenced by the current reception of David Edmonds’ and John Eidinow’s *Wittgenstein’s Poker*. 
Bibliography

Notes:
5. New copies of these books are generally available from online book dealers, such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble at: http://www.amazon.com/ and http://www.barnesandnoble.com/.
6. Where noted, they are only available from the source indicated in the listing.
7. In most cases, used copies are also available from online book dealers, such as the Advanced Book Exchange at: http://www.abebooks.com/.
8. In each case, the date given is the year of the edition with the ISBN listed. The original edition may have appeared in an earlier year.

Essential Readings

Recommended Readings
Rosenberg, Jay F. *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1996. ISBN: 0132308487 (paperback). (Cited as: Rosenberg, *Handbook*.) This little book is exactly what its title says it is, and as handbooks go, it is a dandy. Philosophical practices do not come entirely naturally to most of us. This is a good place to become familiar with them.

Supplementary Readings
A. Monographs dealing with philosophical issues in religion
Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998. ISBN: 0872204200 (paperback). This is a fortissimo demonstration of where reason can lead, including astray. Descartes’ notion of God, with only a little fudging, grounds his notions of mind, body, and rational certainty.

God Has Many Names. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1986. ISBN: 066424419X (paperback). This book further exhibits Hick’s concern to find common ground for all the players in a religiously plural world. It is likely to rankle those who think that Christianity is uniquely correct.


James, William. Varieties of Religious Experience. New York: Scribner, 1997. ISBN: 0684842971 (paperback). This exercise in descriptive psychology shows that religious phenomena are not all the same (or even similar) and stimulates philosophical reflection on the diversity of their sources and uses.


Ockham, William. Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983. ISBN: 0915144131 (paperback). Predestination, per se, is not our issue, but omniscience is a critical card in the theodicy game, and having talked about (and used) Ockham’s razor, it is useful to see it at work in the barber’s hand.

Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958. ISBN: 0195002105 (paperback). This extraordinarily influential little book is an attempt to parse out the notion of the “other” that is as essential to much of twentieth-century existentialism as it is to transcendentalist theism. Read it with Buber (q.v.).

for down-to-earth argument from design. Paley is deliciously Victorian in style and unabashedly committed in faith. He should be read side-by-side with Hume (q.v.).


St. Anselm. *Proslogian*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. ISBN: 0268016976 (paperback). Here is the original ontological argument, in full and in context. Widely dismissed by Anselm’s contemporaries and still controversial today, is it word magic or an illumination of natural necessity?


———. *The Free Choice of the Will*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993. ISBN: 0872201899 (paperback). The presence (or absence) of free will is, of course, crucial to whether the “free will theodicy” works. One expects something a little different from a predestinarian, and one gets it.

St. John of the Cross. *The Collected Works*. Washington: ICS Publications, 1991. ISBN: 0935216146 (clothbound). Mysticism is alien to most these days, and even reading about it is difficult. This is a good place to start, given that St. Teresa trusted the writer to reliably assess the authenticity of her own encounters.

St. Teresa of Avila. *The Interior Castle*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988. ISBN: 0809122545 (paperback). St. Teresa is a challenge to the modern reader but also a reminder that honest empiricists should not prejudge the data. The bottom line, as she saw, is how to interpret the experiences one has.

St. Thomas Aquinas. *Aquinas's Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas’s Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2001. ISBN: 1928832431 (paperback). St. Thomas said it all. This widely acclaimed condensation of it all is far less intimidating than the *Summa* proper, and reading it is a good way to put his views on “the arguments” in context.


Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. ISBN: 0520013549 (paperback). Wittgenstein did not have much to say directly about religious belief, although his main writings certainly have influenced how we interpret it. Here is what he does have to say. Some call him a mystic.

B. Monographs dealing with related philosophical issues


Ayer, A. J. *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover, 1946. ISBN: 0486200108 (paperback). This introduced logical positivism to most English readers. “A young man’s book,” as Russell called it, it still crackles, but its conception of language is far too narrow, as we have come to see.


Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge, 2001. ISBN: 0415254086 (paperback). This is the “early” Wittgenstein at his reductivist and enigmatic best. It was a primary tributary to logical positivism, but Wittgenstein’s own *bête noire* by the time he wrote *Philosophical Investigations*. It is very hard going.


C. Textbooks and anthologies of readings in philosophy of religion


Geivett, R. Douglas, and Brendan Sweetman. *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. ISBN: 019507324X (paperback). This stellar and demanding collection has a tighter focus than the other anthologies listed here. If philosophy starts with epistemology, then so does philosophy of religion, and so should you.

Plantinga, Alvin, and Nicholas Wolterstorf, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984. ISBN: 0268009651 (paperback). This is a collection of pieces on theistic epistemology in the Reform tradition, including several selections from the editors and from George Mavrodes. It provides an effective counterbalance to Geivett’s collection.


———. *Philosophy of Religion*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000. ISBN: 0767408195 (paperback). This is a fairly inclusive textbook introduction to philosophy of religion (both analytic and non-analytic). It is as good as any current textbook in print (except Hick’s original jewel) and better than most.

Quinn, Philip, and Kevin Meeker. *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0195121554 (paperback). The editors of this tightly focused collection must have had Hick’s “unity” project in mind when they put it together. Some of it is hard going, especially Plantinga’s defense of religious exclusivism, but the issue is important enough to deserve some mind sweat.

D. General philosophy and reference


Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN 0872200981 (paperback). This classic is short, clear, and useful, even though it is quite dated for anyone who works at philosophy professionally. The basics are there for the layman, all presented with Russell’s customary élan.

**Useful, Out-of-Print Books** (Note: These books can all be obtained from online used book dealers, such as the Advanced Book Exchange at: http://www.abebooks.com/)

**A. Monographs dealing with philosophical issues in religion**


Stace, W. T. *Man against Darkness*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967. ISBN: 0822951347 (paperback). Everything Stace wrote was lucid, informative, and accessible. This collection of his essays deals with such topics as the nature of our response to the unknown, without icing or wishful thinking.


**B. Textbooks and anthologies on philosophy of religion**

———. Logic, Language and God. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961. ISBN: None (paperback). This concise explication and critique of linguistically focused philosophy of religion was the second twentieth-century work in the field that your lecturer read and one he still rereads from time to time.


C. General philosophy

Gray, William D. Thinking Critically about New Age Ideas. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN: 0534143946 (paperback). A little bit “pop,” but an effective presentation of how to get a handle on strange beliefs. Because even our own beliefs may be strange to others, it is a useful study. Light and an easy read but solid.

Pap, Arthur. Elements of Analytical Philosophy. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1972. ISBN: 0028500407 (clothbound). This is possibly the best introduction to analytic philosophy ever written. It is not easy. It is not entertaining. But it is powerfully illuminating. Also, alas, it is hard to find.

Radner, Daisie, and Michael Radner. Science and Unreason. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982. ISBN: 0534011535 (paperback). Every bit as useful as Gray’s New Age book (q.v.), this is also an easily read volume on a crucially important topic. We live in an age of poor thinking. Here are ways to get that under control.
Philosophy of Religion
Part III
Professor James H. Hall
Born in Weimar, Texas, in 1933, I spent my early childhood there and in New Orleans, Louisiana. Just before World War II, my family moved to Washington, D.C. I lived in that city and received my education from its public schools, museums, and newspapers, until I went off to college in Baltimore, Maryland, in the fall of 1951.

I knew that I wanted to teach by the time I graduated from high school, but I didn’t know what I wanted to teach until much later. So I made a career of being a student for twelve more years (at Johns Hopkins University, Southeastern Theological Seminary, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), before trying to earn a living full time.

I had discovered my discipline by 1959, but it was 1965 before I found my school and my city. Each of the thirty-seven years since then has confirmed my good fortune in joining the University of Richmond community and putting my roots down.

Teaching remains my calling and first professional priority. With more than forty years in the classroom, I have taught most of the standard undergraduate philosophy curriculum, including courses in Symbolic Logic, Moral Issues, and Philosophical Problems, to thousands of beginners, and advanced courses and seminars on Analytic Philosophy (especially the works of Russell, Ayer, Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin), Philosophy of Religion, and Epistemology, to hundreds of majors and minors. I have also pursued a number of issues beyond the boundaries of philosophy per se, in interdisciplinary courses as varied as Science and Values, Ideological Roots of the American Revolution, and Science, Pseudoscience, and the Paranormal. My research has produced two published books, Knowledge, Belief and Transcendence and Logic Problems, with two more in progress—Practically Profound and Taking the Dark Side Seriously.

A life totally confined to the ivied tower would be truncated and precarious. My own is constantly expanded and kept in balance by ongoing involvements in church (Episcopal), politics (Democratic), and music (from Bach to Durufle); by travel (Wales or the Pacific Northwest for preference); and by a daily bout with the New York Times crossword. Many people outside of the academy have enriched my life by their work—Herblock and Harry Truman, John D. MacDonald and David Lodge, to name four, and others by their friendship and character—chief among them my wife, Myfanwy, and my sons, Christopher, Jonathan, and Trevor.

My complete track record, academic and otherwise, can be seen on the Web at: http://www.richmond.edu/~jhall/. E-mail will always reach me at: jhall@richmond.edu.
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## Philosophy of Religion
### Part III

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Philosophy of Religion

Scope:

Philosophically examining religion is a tricky enterprise. Teaching a series of lessons on it is trickier still. The problems begin with the fact that there are not only many different religions but many different concepts of what religion itself amounts to. They are further compounded by the fact that people have many different conceptions of what philosophy amounts to as well.

This series of lectures begins, consequently, with some careful attention to what philosophy is and a careful demarcation of the sort of religion that we will scrutinize philosophically. Working from a philosophical perspective generally called “British analytic,” attention is focused entirely on a religious tradition generally called “ethical monotheism.” Within the many concepts and practices of that religious tradition, particular attention is focused on the notion of divine existence as an issue for what philosophers call “epistemology” or “knowledge theory.”

Thus, our central questions are:

1. Can humans know whether the claim “God exists” is true or not?
2. If so, how?
3. If not, why not?

As a person, one may be more interested in the direct question “Does God exist?” But that is a question in religion; and, as a philosopher of religion, one gives priority to questions about its concepts and how they work, rather than to practicing the enterprise oneself. (This is not to say that no philosophers practice it. It is only to say that when they practice it, they do not do so as philosophers.)

After clearing a considerable amount of such methodological underbrush in Section I (Lectures One through Eight), we will begin to explore the positive side of our central question (“Can humans know that God exists?”) in the ten lectures of Section II. These map various alleged bases for answering in the affirmative, including reason, experience, and divine encounters. Throughout, the discussion traces the give and take of two basic principles of explanation: the “principle of sufficient reason” and “Ockham’s razor.” The bottom line, as might be expected, is essentially a “Scottish verdict,” that is, “not proved.”

Consequently, in the five units of Section III, we will raise the reverse side of the question, “Can humans know that God does not exist?” Tracing out a complex exchange of arguments and counter-arguments that focus on what is called the “problem of evil” and on various replies to it (called “theodicies”), Section III also invites a hung jury. Atheism is no more an obvious candidate for knowledge than theism is.

This leaves agnosticism, but that is a more complex posture than it is often taken to be. It includes not only the skepticism of the irreligious who recognize the virtue of epistemological modesty but also the “fideism” of the devoutly religious who are equally epistemologically modest. Because the latter stance seems to be unfairly shortchanged by many commentators, Section IV begins with an exploration of religious agnosticism: Lectures Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six on the pros and cons of faith without (or against) evidence, and Lectures Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight on the pros and cons of theological transcendentalism.

The problem with faith without (or against) evidence is its irrelevance to life, and the same problem is attached to theological transcendentalism with a vengeance. Fideists have trouble enough maintaining that the world’s harsh events don’t count against their conviction that God exists. The transcendentalists’ affirmations have so little grit (factually relevant content) that it is close to impossible for them to make any difference at all to life-in-the-world.

As a result of all this, one wonders if all these attempts to determine whether “God exists” is a true assertion or a false assertion are off on the wrong foot (either by assuming that it operates in the same paradigm and follows the same rules as ordinary assertions of fact or by assuming that it is an assertion at all). Thus, Section IV continues with two examinations of the utterances of ethical monotheism from radically different perspectives. Lectures Twenty-Nine through Thirty-One examine and assess them as part of a “form of life” operating under an alternative “paradigm” that includes intentionality as one of its basic categories of description and explanation. Lectures Thirty-Two through Thirty-Five examine and assess them as moves in one or another, possibly nondescriptive, “language game,” especially one that consists of stories-told-for-a-purpose (no more to be believed or disbelieved than any
such set of stories) that shape and illumine the lives of those who tell and retell them—stories that are not to be assessed as true or false, but as functional or dysfunctional, in terms of their life impact.

Then, in the last lecture, we will retrace the conceptual problems in ethical monotheism that urged its philosophical examination in the first place and the discoveries along the way that have led to characterizing it the way that we have. But, given that philosophy, in all of its applications, is an ongoing reflective enterprise, the very last point is an invitation to all who have worked through this series to carry the reflection on themselves.
Lecture Twenty-Five
Evidence Is Irrelevant to Faith

Scope: To many religionists, the fact that the arguments for divine existence invite a hung jury is no great concern. Indeed, the fact that “divine encounters” (because they require interpretation) don’t force closure is no great concern either. For, it is said, faith and evidence have very little to do with one another. This line of thinking can take several forms: At one level, it suggests that faith allows one to move beyond evidence and arguments. At another, it insists that arguments and evidence are impediments to faith that must be set aside if true religious insight and knowing are to occur. Along with several classical versions of this idea, we will take a preliminary look at a postmodern version that claims that religious faith constitutes its own paradigm and that canons of evidence and argument can only operate within paradigms, never upon them. (This is a new way of saying that faith determines what is relevant to truth and what is not—a theme to which we shall return in Lecture Twenty-Nine).

Outline

I. There are many models for saying that evidence and argument have little or nothing to do with what one ultimately believes to be true. They include the following:
   A. The only role of arguments and evidence, as far as religious belief is concerned, is to reinforce whatever beliefs are already in place.
      This view, traditionally associated with St. Thomas, may be true enough, but what does one say to arguments and evidence that subvert the beliefs that one holds uncritically?
   B. God is above logic, evidence, and rationality. Consistency, then, is simply “beside the point,” as far as religious belief is concerned.
      This view, exemplified by an example from a Calvin College conference, is common enough, but if it is legitimate, then all arguments fail in religious settings.
   C. Faith is “steadfastly believing what you know ain’t so” and is best exercised “in the teeth of” evidence.
      The view that the presence of evidence would obviate the possibility of faith is traditionally associated with Tertullian, but if it is proper, it leaves the issue of how to select one’s faith at the level of a crapshoot.
   D. Faith is a matter of choosing to believe in parity situations, that is, situations where the evidence is “in balance” (including those where there is no evidence either way).
      Some people (such as Clifford [q.v.]), however, claim that when evidence is in balance, morality demands a cautious, rather than an arbitrary, approach.
   E. Religious faith is not propositional anyway. It is, rather, a matter of a committed personal relationship. If that relationship is right, then one will believe the message of the one to whom one is committed, whatever that message may be.
      That certainly is one way to construe “faith” and a common one among evangelical Christians, but it is not an exclusively religious approach (cf. commitment to one’s party or country, “right or wrong”), and it ignores the possibility of one’s personal loyalty being catastrophically misplaced. Trust in an individual needs to begin with a careful appraisal of the truth of what he or she has to say.
   F. Every argument must start somewhere, and because every one of them begins with some set of assumptions or another, it all comes down to a “leap of faith,” whatever one calls it. It is just a matter of which premise set one happens to choose as a starting point.
      But it is not at all obvious that starting points have to be this arbitrary. Are there no grounds whatever for preferring one premise set over another?

II. There is a postmodern version of this to the effect that evidence is always internal to a perspective, worldview, or paradigm.
   A. On this account, faith voices the paradigm within which one works; consequently, it is prior to all issues of evidence and argumentation.
B. The view that all argument and evidence is paradigm-bound does not boil down to anything so simple as the notion that different people start their arguments from different premises. Rather, its core is the radically subjectivist notion that facts are made in the context of one’s stance on the world, never found.

C. We shall examine this complex view in Lectures Twenty-Nine and Thirty.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Is it possible for a person with fixed beliefs to see evidence that would, if processed and appreciated, count against his or her mindset? Similarly, is a person in a committed relationship likely to pay attention to gossip that his or her partner is a rover?

2. What are the connections between having a fixed set of beliefs and being in a committed relationship—that is, between propositional faith and personal faith, especially for the religious beliefs and relationships of an ethical monotheist?
Lecture Twenty-Six

Groundless Faith Is Irrelevant to Life

Scope: In this lecture, we will explore the way the notion of relevance works, showing that if the events that occur are irrelevant to the truth value of a claim, then the truth value of that claim is irrelevant to the events that occur. Relevance is, after all, a reciprocal relation. We will first look briefly at the role that relevance plays in marshaling evidence to establish everyday knowledge, then explore its religious applications and assess the implications of a disconnect between propositional beliefs and the standard canons of evidence in religious contexts.

Outline

I. The general characteristics of relevance determine its use in everyday contexts.
   A. Relevance and irrelevance are two-place, symmetrical, and reciprocal relations.
      1. If X is relevant to Y, then Y is relevant to X; and
      2. If Y is not relevant to X, then X is not relevant to Y.
   B. These characteristics determine the role of relevance in such situations as domestic relations, criminal law, medical practice, and market operations.
      1. If whether A loves B is (ir)relevant to how A treats B, then how A treats B is (ir)relevant to whether A loves B.
      2. If evidence of a given kind is (ir)relevant to one’s guilt or innocence, then one’s guilt or innocence will be (ir)relevant to whether such evidence occurs.
      3. If symptoms of a given kind are (ir)relevant to a diagnosis, then the occurrence of the diagnosed condition will be (ir)relevant to the occurrence of those symptoms.
      4. If particular interests are (ir)relevant to the effectiveness of an advertising campaign on a certain demographic, then the effectiveness of a campaign there will be (ir)relevant to whether those interests occur there.

II. Similarly, if mundane events are (ir)relevant to whether the divine exists, then the existence of the divine will be (ir)relevant to mundane events.
   A. The existence of God is alleged to be strongly relevant to what happens in this life.
   B. If so, then what happens in this life must be relevant to whether or not there is a god.
   C. If what happens in this life is not relevant to whether God exists, then whether God exists cannot be relevant to what happens in this life.
   D. One can try to wiggle off of this hook by appealing to the “transcendence” of God and implausibly suggesting that when X transcends Y, Y can be relevant to X without X being relevant to Y. (“Transcendence” is tricky enough that we shall reserve an exploration of this point until the next lecture, where we will discover that “transcendence” can be defined in at least three different ways.)
   E. One can also try to wiggle off this hook (as does John Hick) by saying that God’s involvement does show in this life, but only “eschatologically” (that is, later).
      1. It is important to pay attention, as Hick does, to what religionists actually say.
      2. What is the role of the “eschaton” in traditional Christian terms?
      3. How relevant to this life are states of affairs whose connections can only be established by late testing?
      4. What, exactly, is the connection between this life here and now and this putative “later” life?
      5. If God is not discernibly involved in this life here and now, then how does (or can) it matter that God is alleged to be involved in some later life there and then?
      6. How does this reliance on an eschatological verification of God handle the need for radical change—either in God or in the individual—so that the unknowable can become known?

Essential Reading:
Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider the similarities and differences of these two claims:
   a. How parents treat their children has no implications about the reality of their love for them.
   b. How parents treat their children reflects their love for them in every nuance and circumstance, even when that is not obvious to an outside observer (or even the children) at the time.
2. What does your analysis imply about a parallel set of claims about God’s love for humans?
3. Would a jury be likely to be moved by a lawyer who said, “I don’t care what your so-called evidence is. I know my client is innocent, and you would know it too, if you only had the advantage of my perspective”?
Lecture Twenty-Seven

God Is Beyond Human Grasp, But That’s O.K.

Scope: The most radical disconnect between divine existence and the canons of ordinary cognition is voiced in the claim that God, in one way or another, transcends the world and everything in it. This lecture begins by exploring three notions of transcendence. Then it examines the implications of each of them for the relevance of the divine to everyday affairs and, consequently, for the possibility of: (1) knowing whether God exists and (2) knowing God. We will see that one sort of transcendentalism perfectly defends against skeptical rebuttals to the various arguments for divine existence, as well as against atheistic arguments to the opposite effect, based on evil. It achieves such defenses at a significant cost, however. (See Lecture Twenty-Eight.)

Outline

I. Questions of relevance will become even more vexed when we examine the notion that ethical monotheism constitutes a paradigm (a way of taking experience, a particular way of spinning the world). We need to keep two caveats about relevance in mind in anticipation of our exploration of paradigm talk in Lectures Twenty-Nine and Thirty.

A. A paradigm and the experience that is interpreted in terms of it have to connect. Experience must be “spinnable” in this fashion, and there should be some reason for spinning it this way rather than some other way.

B. A paradigm must establish its own criteria of internal testing to distinguish between what is reasonable and what is not reasonable within it. (“Stuff happens” is not a viably complete paradigm.)

C. So this move does not make relevance irrelevant.

II. One might appeal to the “transcendence” of God as a way of achieving two goals.

A. This might explain why arguments and evidence cannot prove divine existence.

B. This might block arguments and evidence from proving divine nonexistence.

III. To evaluate such maneuvers, we must figure out what “transcendence” means in this context, and we must also determine the costs of making such a move.

IV. Although it is often said that God transcends this world and all that is in it, it is not always clear exactly what is meant by that claim, given that “transcendence” can be interpreted in three distinctly different ways.

A. Transcendence¹ is the “transcendence of heft.”

1. This is exemplified in the way in which the strength of Charles Atlas “transcended” the strength of all those teenage boys who read his advertisements in Popular Science Monthly.

2. Here, “transcends” means about the same thing as exceeds or surpasses. The relationship here is not symmetrical. X can go beyond Y without Y going beyond X.

B. Transcendence² is the “transcendence of distance or remoteness.”

1. This is exemplified in the way in which the culture of classical Japan “transcended” the understanding of most Western explorers in early days.

2. Here, “transcendent” means about the same thing as different, foreign, unfamiliar, or strange.

3. Here, the relationship can be symmetrical, though it need not be. If X is foreign to Y (perhaps because Y is not well experienced), then Y could either be or not be foreign to X (depending on how well experienced X is).

C. Transcendence³ is the “transcendence of otherness.” The only place in which this is commonly said to be exemplified is in the “great gulf(s) fixed” between humans and God or between bodies and minds.

1. Here, “transcendent” means about the same thing as having absolutely nothing in common with. On the religious front, it is clearest in the medieval notion that humans are not in a position to say anything about God because of God’s total “otherness.”
2. Here, the relationship is strictly symmetrical. If X is totally other to Y, then Y is totally other to X. If God is radically other to us, then we are radically other to God. The same disconnect (but between appearance and reality rather than between men and God) occurs in Plato’s theory of the Forms.

3. There is strong ambivalence throughout the monotheistic community over God’s transcendence and immanence.

V. There are a number of issues that have a bearing on the cost of the notion that God’s relation to the world and everything in it is one of transcendence.

A. Unless something can be both transcendent and immanent, then if X transcends Y, X and Y must be totally irrelevant to each other.

B. Unless transcendence can be temporary, then if X transcends Y at any point of time, then X and Y are always totally irrelevant to each other.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider two languages, X spoken widely on earth and Y common in a “galaxy far, far away.” Would it make any sense to claim that everything that is or can be said in X is fully understandable to Y-speakers, but that nothing that is or can be said in Y is even partially understandable to X-speakers?

2. Does this metaphor about two languages on opposite sides of “a great gulf fixed” throw any light on the notion that humans are fully understandable to God, but that God is not even partially understandable to humans?
Lecture Twenty-Eight

Transcendental Talk Is “Sound and Fury”

Scope: If God transcends the world and everything in it, then claims that God exists cannot be shown to be false. Nor, however, can such claims be shown to be true. One possible implication of this is that such claims are unintelligible and/or “cognitively empty.” In this lecture, we will examine the “verificationist” contention (by logical positivists and others) that god talk is vacuous for this reason. Then we will compare the implications of verificationism for contemporary theological liberalism and evangelical fundamentalism. Finally, we will set the stage for an inquiry (in the next several lectures) into whether verificationism underestimates the variety of language games that occur and/or overlooks the possibility that there is more than one conceivable paradigm in terms of which the world might be understood.

Outline

I. It would be improper to suggest that the notion of divine “transcendence” was invented solely to get God off the evidential hook (excusing the failure of arguments for God and blocking the possibility of arguments against God). It does, however, achieve that result, intended or not. But it does so at great cost.
   A. A claim that cannot be shown to be false (because its subject matter transcends one) equally cannot be shown to be true (because its subject matter still transcends one).
   B. This has (historically) lead to the assertion that such a claim is nonsensical.

II. Traditionally, the meaning of a proposition is understood in terms of the sense and the reference of its terms and phrases.
   A. The sense of X is the set of associations, intentions, or connotations by means of which it picks out, identifies, or represents its reference, extension, or denotation. This can be best understood in terms of a few examples.
      1. With regard to the sense and reference of a word, consider “optimist.”
      2. With regard to the sense and reference of a descriptive phrase, consider “U.S. President.”
   B. When some X does not have a sense, then there is no way that it can pick out, identify, or represent a reference. The nonsensical does not refer.

III. A word or descriptive phrase might fail to have a sense for any number of reasons.
   A. Because the senses of terms and phrases are matters of linguistic conventions, where there happens to be no convention in place, there will be no sense in operation. Nonsense verse, such as Lewis Carroll’s “The slithy toves did gyre and gimbal in the wabe,” illustrates this nicely.
   B. When, for one reason or another, no working convention can be put in place, then no sense can be in operation. Some of the best illustrations of this, lamentably, are found in philosophical pronouncements, such as Alexius Meinong’s “The absolute enters into but does not undergo transformation and change.”
   C. When, for one reason or another, no one set of conventions can be put in place to cover all of the terms and phrases in a context, a special kind of confusion can arise (usually called a category mistake, following Gilbert Ryle). Some (such as “The square root of 11 sleeps late except on Tuesdays” and “She entered the room in a flood of tears and a sedan chair”) are fairly trivial. Others (such as “Human beings are made of two kinds of stuff: body and mind”) are not trivial at all. But all are nonsensical.

IV. When crucial terms and phrases in putative assertions either happen to have no sense or can have no sense, for whatever reason, the potential truth or falsehood of the sentence-like strings in which they occur vanishes and, with it, all possibility of knowledge, pro or con.
   A. An assertion attempt can succeed if and only if it is testable (that is, confirmable or falsifiable), at least indirectly and in principle.
   B. Empirical and formal tests are the methods of choice.
   C. One cannot run such tests on a sentence-like utterance in which crucial terms and phrases have no sense and, consequently, do not pick out, identify, or refer to anything on which a test could be based.
D. Absent the possibility of testing, the utterance is “sophistry and illusion” according to Hume and “strict nonsense” according to the logical empiricists (but with the consolation, according to A. J. Ayer, that “while they cannot be true, they cannot be false, either”).

V. This analysis originally targeted philosophy’s “metaphysics,” but it splashes over onto ethical discourse, too, and poses difficulty for some religious discourse, as well.

A. On this account, unless value talk is analytic (which would make it only “trivially true”), it must either have experiential connections in terms of which it can be confirmed or disconfirmed, or it falls out of the arena of possible knowledge.

B. Exactly the same thing holds for religious talk.
   1. Literalists’ religious talk passes muster as meaningful, though often false.
   2. Transcendentalists’ religious talk, however, does not pass.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider the languages X and Y again, assuming that whether or not everything that can be said in X is fully understandable to Y-speakers, nothing that can be said in Y is even partially understandable to X-speakers. Under what circumstances would it be reasonable for Jabba (the ruler of the Y-speakers) to require X-speakers to know, remember, keep track of, and comply with his commands (as articulated in Y)?

2. Does this metaphor about being held to rules articulated in an unintelligible language shed any light on the claim that humans are accountable to the edicts of a transcendent one (that is, to divine laws)?
Lecture Twenty-Nine
Discourse in an Intentionalist Paradigm

Scope: This lecture and the two that follow explore the notion of paradigms. This lecture begins with an account of what a paradigm is, how paradigms work, and where the notion of paradigms came from. It takes special note of the claims that: (1) the paradigm in which one operates determines what is, and what is not, intelligible to one and sets one’s boundaries for truth and falsehood and (2) utterances made in one paradigm cannot be assessed in terms of, translated into the language of, or even understood in, another. It then shows how rival paradigms can differ in terms of what they include or exclude as categories of understanding. Finally, it compares the paradigms within which ethical monotheism and natural science operate, noting that the primary difference between them is their respective inclusion and exclusion of intentionality as a category of understanding.

Outline

I. Just after mid-century, echoing Wittgenstein and Kant, Thomas Kuhn introduced the notions of paradigms and paradigm shifts into the discussion of how science changes.
   A. When scientists disagree, they may be in conflict over the truth of utterances with fixed meanings that they both understand. However, they may be operating in such different frames of reference that their statements, however similar, don’t mean the same thing.
      1. Arguments about whether apples ever have lavender flesh, over whether oranges are best classified as berries, or whether the second law of thermodynamics is precisely accurate illustrate the first kind of disagreement.
      2. The different use of “time” in the discourse of Newton and Einstein illustrates a potential occasion for the second kind of disagreement.
   B. In circumstances of the second kind, the disputants have no common body, or canons, of evidence to which they can appeal to settle their conflict.
      1. Bodies and canons of evidence are “theory laden,” that is, functions of the paradigm within which one works.
      2. As a result, truth is also a function of the paradigm within which one works.
      3. Statements are neither true nor false outside their own paradigm.
      4. Thus, although the true statements in Newton’s paradigm are not the same as the true statements in Einstein’s, the latter do not contradict the former. They are just different.
      5. Paradigms themselves are neither true nor false, but that does not mean that they are “nonsensical.” Paradigms set the limits of sense.
   C. Allegedly, disputants in situations of this kind cannot truly understand one another, and nothing articulated in one paradigm can be translated into the vocabulary and syntax of another. If so, then rival paradigms are mutually incommensurable and untranslatable.
   D. Fundamental changes in dominant scientific opinion are not the result of rational argument in the arena of demonstration, but of rhetorical argument in the arena of persuasion. The shifts are not evidence-driven, they are driven by the dynamics of culture and by the utility—at a given time and place—of seeing things this way rather than that.

II. Though rival paradigms may differ in many ways, one likely way is in the selection of the basic categories that are used in it in describing, explaining, and theorizing about events.
   A. Where B. F. Skinner handled human phenomena with only one dynamic principle (causation) and one substantial one (matter in space and time), Rene Descartes handled them with two dynamic principles (causation plus intention) and two substantial ones (matter in space and time plus mind in time alone). All Skinner was conceptually equipped to see was behavior determined by causal input, whereas Descartes had the categories necessary to see action generated by purposes, reasons, and goals.
   B. The world did not change between Descartes’ and Skinner’s times. Only the conceptual equipment and, consequently, what could be said.
C. Although we can talk about what is true or false in each of these systems, we cannot talk about which of these systems is true. Indeed, we may not even be able to talk about which of these systems is better (in any sense of “better”). Setting standards for systems themselves is a very tricky business, to which we shall turn in the next lecture.

III. Science and theism constitute importantly different paradigms for handling phenomena.

A. Science uses three primary categories in dealing with all phenomena, human and otherwise: space-time, matter-energy, and causation.

B. Monotheism uses two additional categories in dealing with all phenomena, human and otherwise: intention (functioning somewhat like Aristotle’s category of final causation) and immaterial substance (functioning somewhat like Descartes’ category of mind).

C. Since these extra categories can interfere with the other three and since the larger set generates its own standards and grounds for truth and falsehood (which does not always mesh with the ones science is used to), a great deal rides on which “take” one takes.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Which of the following are examples of rival paradigms, and which of them are examples of disagreements within a paradigm:
   - allopathic medicine and homeopathic medicine?
   - Newtonian mechanics and quantum mechanics?
   - behavioral psychology and Jungian psychology?
   - Keynesian economics and Marxian economics?
   - materialism and spiritualism?
2. What criteria did you use to decide which was which?
Lecture Thirty
Evaluating Paradigms

Scope: If one’s paradigm makes a difference in one’s success in coming to terms with the world, then it is important to use one that works. Discovering and using one that works involves evaluating paradigmatic rivals, then choosing the better alternative—a process that requires the availability of public criteria for assessment and the possibility of making such a choice (LectureThirty-One will examine this possibility). This lecture sets the stage for that by: (1) enumerating and explaining some possible paradigm assessment criteria and (2) using those criteria to assess some sample paradigms in concrete applications.

Outline

I. In response to Jon Wisdom’s notion of god talk as a “way of taking the world,” R. M. Hare noted that it is important to take the world the right way but impossible to know which way is right. This is an uncomfortable, but temporary, paradox because there are ways to appraise the “rightness” of the way one takes the world.

II. Here is one primary way to assess a paradigm in use.
   A. Weigh categorizing the way a particular paradigm does, to get answers to the following questions (using the same criteria used to appraise an individual explanatory theory inside a paradigm but at a more inclusive and abstract level):
      1. Does this way of categorizing save the appearances? Fit.
      2. Does it do so without finagling? Honesty.
      3. How broad a range of data does it cover? Scope.
      7. Does it generate new and useful ideas and applications? Fertility.
      8. Does it have felicity standards that work? Effectiveness.
     10. Does it have internal procedures for dealing with failures? Self-correctiveness.
     11. Does it have legs? Endurance.
     12. Does it pay attention to Ockham’s razor? Parsimony and elegance.
     13. Does it have perspicuous rules of operation? Clarity.
   B. A few examples illustrate how such criteria work.
      1. Copernican and Ptolemeic stances on astronomy do equally well on fit, but the latter is the weaker of the two on adaptability and mesh and is dreadfully so on elegance.
      2. Evolutionary and intentionalist stances on “which way noses go” do equally well on most criteria, but the latter requires frequent finagling to save the appearances (a failure of honesty) and may employ a superfluous category (a failure of parsimony).
      3. The intentionalist stance certainly employs a superfluous category if applied to rocks, trees, and guppies and may do so if applied to human behavior and/or action, the psychological community being at a standoff on the matter. (Whether it can be fruitfully applied to the world as a whole is the issue, of course, for monotheism.)

III. There are at least two other ways to assess a paradigm in use.
   A. Check to see how well a paradigm’s rules work.
   B. Check the paradigm’s output.
      1. Does it generate a coherent belief package for those who use it?
         Example: Intentionalism is favored by ethical monotheists because it occasions a divine intender as the sufficient reason for beneficent non-human intentionality. But, by the same argument, it also occasions a demonic intender as the sufficient reason for malevolent non-human intentionality. This seems only marginally “monotheistic.”
      2. If weak paradigms generate dysfunctional practice, the quality of a culture that uses a paradigm may indicate the quality of what it’s using.
Example: People who go hungry on fertile land in a temperate climate and sacrifice children to improve harvests may have more conceptual problems than bad luck.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider a culture in which dreadful diarrhea, vomiting, and weakness are explained as the result of an individual’s or a community’s failure to honor the earth and water spirits in appropriate ways and another culture in which such things are explained as the result of toxins produced by parasites that invade people’s bodies when the drinking water supply is contaminated by fecal matter. Are there any ways to determine which of these “ways of taking the world” is the better of these two? If *not*, why not?
2. If *so*, which way of determining that would be the best way? Why?
Lecture Thirty-One
Choosing and Changing Paradigms

Scope: There is no doubt that paradigm shifts occur. The question is how they occur, and there are several possible answers to that. This lecture will examine the issue of whether one’s paradigm can be “chosen”—an important issue that speaks to whether one’s paradigm is under any kind of intentional control. After an examination of the reasons that it has been claimed that people cannot choose, or voluntarily change, their paradigms, we will then examine the implications of the fact that people do voluntarily change their paradigms from time to time and spell out some of the ways that this comes about.

Outline

I. Having seen ways in which one might appraise a paradigm in place (assuming the ability to identify one, understand it, and apply criteria of effectiveness to it), it is time to ask whether one can choose or change one’s own paradigm.

II. There are a number of reasons why one supposedly can’t do this at an intentional level.
   A. Because discourse that occurs in any one paradigm is *incommensurable* with and *untranslatable* into the discourse of any other paradigm (Kuhn), it is impossible even to catch the drift of what is going on in any paradigm other than one’s own or to compare another to one’s own, much less substitute another for one’s own.
   B. Because everything that one perceives and all the ways that one describes what one perceives, everything that one thinks and all the ways that one analyzes what one thinks, everything one feels and all the ways that one sorts and arranges those feelings, and all the appraisals one makes and all the justificatory maneuvering one goes through with those appraisals are *all* paradigm-dependent (theory laden, perspectively determined), one cannot achieve the distance it would take to bring the whole apparatus under scrutiny.
   C. And, of course, if one could achieve that distance, then the paradigm would no longer be in operation for him or her, so it would no longer be intelligible.

III. Paradigm change does occur, in an evolutionary way as a result of:
   A. Exposure to alternative forms of life, and in the case of
   B. Paradigm failure in new and perplexing circumstances.
   C. It also happens at an intentional level, however.
      1. It happens when people consciously engage in culture critique, whether internal or external. This has happened more than once in our own culture. The gradual shift in majority perceptions of minority characteristics is one instance; the rumblings of “multiculturalism” and “diversity,” another.
      2. It also happens when a conceptual “revolution” is in the air and people *take sides*. This has happened more than once in science. There are those who still wrestle with space/time relativity and with disparate analyses of data in Newtonian and quantum mechanics. The current conceptual revolution has to do with “chaos.”
   D. The clearest and most convincing response to the claim that people cannot engage in intentional paradigm reform is that they do.
      1. This means that the “incommensurable and untranslatable” charge is spurious.
      2. It means that the “impossibility of abstraction” charge is spurious, too.
   E. Intentional paradigm change is intentional paradigm choice, though never *de novo*.
      1. It always occurs in the context of a paradigm already in place.
      2. However many shifts one may go through, there must always be one in place when each shift occurs.
      3. The “original” one is culturally inherited, implicit in the language learned at one’s mother’s knee, in the discourse of one’s culture, and in the discourse of one’s intellectual community.
   F. There are ample models for such intentional change, such as:
      1. Capitulating (or refusing to capitulate) to the culture, values, and form of life of an invading society.
2. Moving to, and assimilating the ways of, another society.
3. Pressing one’s study of another language and literature until one begins to think and dream in the “alien” tongue.

G. Intentional changes to one’s original, or some subsequent, paradigm-in-place can happen in response to:
   1. Discontent: what happens when adolescents rebel against the orthodoxies of their childhood.
   2. Exposure to other forms of life as one’s culture increases “scale”: what happens when young people go away to university or when older people read books and take video courses.
   3. Conversion experiences and thunderbolts: what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus and Newton under the apple tree.

Essential Reading:
Sir Arthur Eddington, “Two Tables,” reprinted in Klemke, Philosophy, pp. 82ff.

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Are there just as good grounds, under an intentionalist paradigm, for inferring a destroyer as a creator, a saboteur as a designer, a devil as a god, the dark side as the force?
2. Assuming that intentionalism does invite cosmic dualism in this way, how might one decide between adopting it, with both factors taken equally seriously, and bagging it altogether and settling for a non-intentionalist view, such as science?
Lecture Thirty-Two
Language Games and Theistic Discourse

Scope: This lecture begins with an exploration of the sources and point of the notion of “language games.” It then notes the connections between games and rules and the occurrence of language games where the rules are predicated on felicity conditions other than truth and falsehood. It then proceeds with sketches of several language games encompassed in theistic discourse and, contra the idea that “any move will do,” an examination of some of the criteria that can be used to evaluate moves in nondescriptive talk. Finally, echoing our previous discussion of choosing paradigms, it asks whether there are any meta-criteria for choosing which game to play. With this as a context, Lectures Thirty-Three through Thirty-Five will then explore a particular nondescriptive game that appears central to theistic discourse: “fabulation.”

Outline

I. However important description may be, it is not the only language game in town.
   A. What, exactly, is a “language game,” and where did that idea come from?
      1. Wittgenstein examines games to illuminate language.
      2. He enjoins us, “Don’t ask for the meaning, ask for the use.”
      3. The idea of different uses obeying different rules is developed by J. L. Austin.
   B. Asserting and describing don’t exhaust what can be done in language, because it also includes imperatives, performatives (such as promises, namings, and forgivings), expressives, and so on.

II. Different games have different rules for “good play.”
   A. In some contexts (promises, for example), “true” and “false” don’t apply, just as “following suit” does not apply in chess or poker.
   B. In such contexts, however, other “felicity conditions” do apply.
      1. In the case of promises, such conditions are: sincerity, there being a convention in place, being in the position to follow up, etc.
      2. The theory of how this works was fully developed by Richard Searle.
   C. It is absurd to try to weigh moves in one game by the rules of another game.
   D. What did Wittgenstein mean when he said, “This game is played”? 
   E. Without some notion of felicity conditions, “This game is played” admits all noises whatsoever.
   F. Theists certainly jumped on this wagon.
      1. If every game has its own rules and no external critique is allowed, then one enterprise might be just as good as another.
      2. On such a view, theism is not liable to scientific rules; it is different and just as good.
   G. Generally, however, the mark of good play in any game, even if it is a bad game, is effectiveness-in-the-game.
      1. If one is lying to achieve or maintain social control, one needs to tell credible lies.
      2. If one is fantasizing to escape reality, one needs strong imagery.

III. What sort of language game(s) might theistic discourse encompass (besides the usual ones, such as descriptions, performatives, imperatives, and so on)?
   A. Lying and/or propagandizing to maintain social control.
      Example: What Marx, Engels, and orthodox Communists say about religion.
   B. Fantasizing for purposes of escape.
      Example: What Freud says about religion in “The Future of an Illusion.”
   C. Quoting alleged commands to ground morals.
      Examples: The books of Amos and Hosea; the Ten Commandments.
   D. Motivating desirable behavior.
Example: The atheist who taught a Sunday school class.

E. Telling large stories, that is, weaving worldviews.
   Example: The Gilgamesh Epic.

F. Telling small stories, that is, weaving parables for life.
   Example: The parable of the widow’s mite.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Considering a parent who promises to take the kids to the circus on Saturday but is too hung over from a Friday night bender to do so, another who promises them to always be there for them but is then run over by a truck and dies, and a third who promises them that hard work will always guarantee prosperity: Which, if any, of these variously flawed promises amounts to describing things falsely, and what (else) is wrong with the rest of them?

2. Considering a four-year-old who wants to play Candy Land™ with daddy, why bridge champions are far more famous than Donkey Kong™ champions, and why three-player chess never caught on: Is it really true that all one can say when observing a game in play is, “This game is played”? 
Lecture Thirty-Three
Fabulation—Theism as Story

Scope: This lecture, and the next three, are devoted to an analysis of religious discourse as “fabulation,” that is, the telling of stories (myths, parables, fables, and so on) for a purpose. After laying out some general felicity conditions for purposeful storytelling in everyday settings, it examines a few familiar stories (from Aesop, Andersen, and others) in terms of them. Finally, it looks at religious discourse itself as purposeful storytelling, ending with an enumeration of several possible purposes for its stories. The two lectures that follow focus on one group of those purposes, to see if religious discourse, taken this way, meets the standards for good storytelling.

Outline

I. There are many kinds of stories, but one that is of interest here.
   A. Some are for entertainment, escape, or innumerable other non-instructive purposes.
   B. A large number, however, are said to be instructive, illuminating, and/or uplifting.
   C. They are the ones that often have a moral at the end.
   D. One must distinguish the point of such stories from the vehicle. The medium is not the message. The kernel is not the shell. The “kerygma” is not the “myth.”
   E. There are many possible general criteria for this kind of story, some of which are appropriate and some, not.
      1. A story need not be true, but it does need to ring true.
      2. It does not even need to be believed, but it does need to be believable.
      3. It need not be foolproof, but it does need to be effective.
      4. It need not be profound, but it does need to have a point.
      5. It need not be transparent, but it does need to be accessible.

II. That much said, one looks for the following in an effective story.
   A. It needs to be clear, unambiguous, and focused and to avoid obscurity.
      Example: Compare Peter and the Wolf to The Barren Fig Tree.
   B. It needs to be subtle rather than obvious.
      Example: Compare “Hans Brinker” to Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.
   C. It needs to have a constructive point.
      Example: Compare “Johnny Appleseed” to “Jack and the Beanstalk.”
   D. It needs to have a general “power to move.”
      Example: Compare The Man without a Country to The Poky Little Puppy.
   E. It needs to be credible (that is, either literally or figuratively “could be so,” “true to life”).
      Example: Compare Star Wars to Flash Gordon.
   F. It needs to avoid being manipulative or coercive.
      Example: Compare “Achilles and the Tortoise” to “Tommy Turtle.”
   G. It needs to be free of untoward side effects and dysfunctional intentions.
      Example: Compare “The Little Dutch Boy” to “The Story of Little Suck-a-Thumb.”
   H. It needs to be imaginative and fresh rather than trite or hackneyed.
      Example: Compare Goodnight Moon to “Sleeping Beauty.”
   I. It needs to be spun in a way that is accessible to the hearer and re-spun from time to time, as hearers and their circumstances change.
      Example: Compare Romeo and Juliet to West Side Story.
III. Certain points are common to religious stories.

A. Encouraging group identity, cohesion, traditions, and roots.
   Example: The story of the Exodus, read at a Seder.

B. Cultivating an attitude toward such things as life, persons, nature, and so on.
   Example: The story of “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” sung to a child.

C. Funding, defining, and fleshing out a moral framework for personal and social life.
   Example: The story of the prodigal son, told to a wastrel youth.

D. Promoting and/or enhancing moral understanding.
   Example: The story of the Good Samaritan, told to an Enron executive.

E. Enhancing and/or motivating behavior that is of the right sort, whether done for the right reason or not.
   Example: The story of Lazarus and the rich man, told to a wastrel youth when the story of the prodigal son doesn’t work.

F. Providing fortitude in the face of adversity.
   Example: Reinhold Niebuhr’s serenity prayer, on any decision-requiring occasion.

G. Providing reassurance and comfort in times of perplexity or fear.
   Example: The 23rd Psalm, read before going into battle.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Hard-to-Find Reading (but worth the effort):
Rudolph Bultmann et al., *Kerygma and Myth*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961. (Long out of print, but used copies are readily available through on-line booksellers.)

Questions to Consider:
1. Considering the way the same point can be fleshed out in different tales, might it ever be necessary, over the passage of time, to re-embodie a point in a new tale in order to maintain its effectiveness?
2. Relative to whether a story has to be believed in order to be effective, what is the difference between being believed and being believable and between being true and being true-to-life?
Lecture Thirty-Four

Theistic Stories, Morality, and Culture

Scope: This lecture and the next examine and appraise the notion that religious fabulation is aimed at funding, upholding, and/or reforming individual and social morality. This lecture deals with the hypothesis that the primary functions of the ethical monotheists’ stories are to identify, give weight to, and motivate morals for individuals and, concomitantly, to underwrite the core culture of their societies. Along with that, it examines the counter-hypothesis that these stories misidentify the good, misplace the locus of moral weight, mislocate the proper motivation for individuals’ moral action, and concomitantly, embalm a culture’s status quo. We will not reach closure on this, however, until the next lecture’s exploration of the possibility that the negative side of this debate misses a basic component of theistic fabulation: the prophetic.

Outline

I. Theism lays out a set of values.
   A. Its stories tell one what is good.
      1. Sometimes, this is simply implicit in the kernel of the story
      2. Sometimes, it is reinforced by the attachment of a “moral.”
      3. This is more effective than lists of “dos” and “don’ts.”
   B. Such an external determination of values may be destructive to human responsibility and autonomy, however.
      1. This encourages sloughing one’s own proper responsibilities off onto God (which, in practice, amounts to sloughing them off onto priests or other mundane authorities).
      2. It is ineffective, anyway, because one must still decide which god (or priests) to obey. And, since that is a moral choice itself, it follows that one’s ultimate values cannot be obtained from one’s god.

II. Theism gives weight or “authority” to a set of values.
   A. Its stories give one reasons for doing good.
      1. This is not a matter of sticks and carrots. (See point III.)
      2. A code articulated in terms of divine will, divine law, destiny, and/or “the ultimate way things are” has more apparent weight than one from, say, Miss Manners.
   B. This may give a set of values too much weight, however, even the conviction that one’s values express destiny.
      1. This tends toward arrogance and intolerance.
      2. It also encourages violence toward “heretics.”

III. Theism motivates moral behavior.
   A. Its stories of judgment, heaven, and hell supply the carrots and sticks, a package of incentives that actually stirs people to perform (which is necessary, given that moving people to act well is more than getting them to see how they should act).
   B. “Good deeds” done for wrong reasons are not true morality, however.
      1. Even if one separates appraisal of the doer and of what is done, settling for good things done for bad reasons is a parody of right action.
      2. The typical theistic package of incentives encourages fear, its notion of right action amounting to an avoidance response.
      3. It encourages shirking real moral duties in favor of seeking paradise and avoiding damnation.
      4. Less time spent there, and more spent on a humanistic cultivation of the good life, would change world affairs dramatically for the better.

IV. Theism holds the fabric of culture together.
   A. Its stories give context, roots, and continuity to a culture’s way of life, assure its identity, encourage it in adversity, and protect it from its enemies.
1. As Ronald Reagan noted, it is the foundation of America’s values and way of life.
2. The faith of our fathers is built on the rock of ages. All other ground is sinking sand.

B. Theism does this without regard to the merits or demerits of the way of life it is preserving, however, as was clearly seen by both Jesus and Karl Marx.
1. Paralyzing social reform, theism invests all its energy in the preservation of the status quo, dressing repressive political, economic, racial, and gender agendas in (admittedly powerful and, hence, dangerous) “godly” clothing.
2. This is evident in the theistic defenses of slavery in the old American South and of male supremacy in the modern Middle East.
3. It is particularly vivid in the forceful suppression of creedal and behavioral unorthodoxy throughout theism’s history.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What might the parable of Lazarus and the rich man have meant to those who encouraged their slaves to read it, and what might it have said to the slaves themselves?
2. Are religious wars, in fact, culture wars? (Look at this not only in terms of the confrontation of jihad and the U.S. “war on terrorism,” but also in terms of the “Protestant/Catholic” conflict in Ulster.)
Lecture Thirty-Five
Stories, Moral Progress, and Culture Reform

Scope: Although it would be folly to ignore how theism and its stories can be used to freeze a community’s allocation of power and privilege, one wonders whether critics who dwell on this have ever read Amos or Hosea. As a rebuttal to Freud, Marx, and others, this lecture notes the occurrence of both priestly and prophetic dimensions in ethical monotheism and its stories. Then, paying particular attention to the fact that its prophetic stories regularly indict individual hubris, cultural rigidity, and oppression, it shows that there is much more to religious fabulation than painting word pictures of “pie in the sky” to encourage the proles to accept their lot without rocking the boat.

Outline

I. Granted, theism often functions in a “preservation” or “repression” mode, but it frequently functions in a “reform” mode, too. This can be seen across the array of human institutions.
   A. Economics:
      Repression: All God’s chil’en got shoes... the fiery pit awaits...
      Reform: Give everything you have to the poor and... who is my neighbor?...
   B. Politics:
      Repression: The sovereign is God’s vicar on earth... America is God’s country...
      Reform: My kingdom is not of this world... I have other flocks...
   C. Morals:
      Repression: The moral majority... book banning...
      Reform: Man was not made for the Sabbath... judge not...
   D. Education and science:
      Repression: Man was not meant to fly... the Scopes trial...
      Reform: Literacy for the working class... medical research and missions...
   E. Social, racial, and gender issues:
      Repression: Slavery... oppression of women... homophobia...
      Reform: Abolition... child labor laws... women’s suffrage...

II. How can this be?
   A. Most theistic communities recognize the legitimacy of what they call “progressive revelation.” In secular language, that amounts to the notion that each stage of human social and moral development makes us ready for a further one. The effect of this is openness to change and concern for growth. This has been called the “prophetic” tradition.
   B. Most theistic communities also feel that since God, by hypothesis, cannot change, truth is absolute. In secular language, that amounts to the notion that any change in the social order would have to be for the worse. The effect of this is opposition to change and concern for stability. This has been called the “priestly” tradition.
   C. Because most theistic religions have both prophets and priests, the ambivalences enumerated in point I are inevitable. But the same phenomenon occurs in secular communities, too.

III. The perpetual theistic struggle between repressors and reformers is apparent not only in history, but across all contemporary cultures.
   A. For examples, look at contemporary Christian groups.
      1. For Episcopalians, consider the prayer book and gay marriage conflicts.
      2. For Protestants in general, consider the “social gospel” conflict.
      3. For Roman Catholics, consider the “liberation theology” conflict.
      4. For Evangelicals, consider the disintegration of the World Wide Church of God.

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B. The same sort of struggle can be found in Judaism and Islam, too.
   1. For Jews, consider the struggle over who can be a rabbi in Jerusalem.
   2. For Muslims, consider the Shiite/Suni struggle in Pakistan.

IV. In any case, then, one cannot simply dismiss theism as the opiate of the masses.
   A. Seeing the world under the aspect of intentions, one can express and reinforce its value dimensions with
      the telling and retelling of prophetic theistic stories that demand the constant enhancement of basic values
      and their social and cultural expression. To claim otherwise is simply to stereotype theism as the Grand
      Repressor.
   B. One cannot claim, however, that prophetic monotheism is the only voice of culture critique/reform at work
      in the world. Secular society itself, or secular iconoclasts within it, can be very effective in the role, too.
      Prophetic humanistic stories can also demand the constant enhancement of basic values and their social and
      cultural expression.
   C. There is, consequently, every practical reason to encourage both theistic and humanistic efforts for
      progress.
   D. However, given what humans have discovered historically about the general desirability of checks and
      balances in the power structure of social organizations, there is also every practical reason to keep the
      institutional embodiments of these theistic and secular efforts separate, so that each can act as a prophetic
      voice of reform for the other.

Essential Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Consider hymns as another vehicle of theistic fabulation, for example, the text of James Russell Lowell’s “Once
   to Every Man and Nation.” How might its lines “New occasions teach new duties/Time makes ancient good
   uncouth;/They must upward still and onward/Who would keep abreast of truth” have spoken to the issues of
   social oppression and reform as the U.S. prepared for its civil war over slavery?
2. Who is speaking theistically to these issues in the world today?
3. What do their stories say to the present human condition?
Lecture Thirty-Six
Conclusions and Signposts

Scope: Our philosophical reflections support at least four conclusions:

• Those who claim to know whether God exists display terminal hubris;
• Intolerance is an inappropriate response to worldviews that are different from one’s own, religious or otherwise;
• Religious claims are better seen as locutions in an alternative paradigm that construes the world as an arena of intention, rather than in the usual one that construes the world solely as an arena of causation; and
• Religious discourse can usefully be seen as a fabric of stories aimed at fruitfully illuminating the human condition.

This lecture summarizes the path that has brought us to these conclusions and suggests some issues that invite continued philosophical reflection.

Outline

I. We have examined how one might claim to know that there is, or is not, a deserving target for human worship. The bottom lines in every case turned out to be a Scottish verdict.

A. Ontological argument (from reason alone) tells us only that if anything deserves worship, it must exist. But the fact that it is improper to worship something that does not exist does not tell us whether it is proper to worship anything that does exist.

B. Cosmological argument (from causation) tries to tell us that the world has an external source, but it does not force that, nor indicate that this source (if there is one) deserves worship—even though it would have to be very powerful and intelligent.

C. Teleological argument (from apparent design) shows that the world’s external source (if it has one) must be very, very powerful and intelligent, but the occurrence of dysteleological events blocks any conclusion that the putative source deserves worship.

D. Encounter experiences show us circumstances in which many people have come to affirm that they know a suitable object of worship by direct contact. But because such accounts are interpretations of experiences, they are reinterpretable in others ways.

E. Dysteleological argument (from apparent evil) tries to show that the nature of the world demonstrates that its source (if it has one) does not deserve worship, but assorted theodicies show that it is possible to maintain a god hypothesis if one couples it with some corollary hypotheses about the value and reality of free will or about the intractable opposition (of one sort or another) that the hypothesized world maker has to deal with. What falls by the wayside is the notion that an intentionalist take on reality is necessary. That was the essential impact of Darwin. But that we no longer must make this assumption is no ground for saying that we no longer can.

F. We next examined the possibility that affirmations of God are not so much propositional claims to know something as they are expressions of faith, or metaphysical claims, about the unknowable, and finding these approaches unhelpful, we turned our attention to the idea that monotheism is a “form of life” with two distinct dimensions.

II. The ethical monotheists’ form of life has two distinct dimensions. It is an intentionalist paradigm marked by the telling of stories for a purpose.

A. Supplementing the interpretive categories of science (space/time and matter/energy in a causal nexus), ethical monotheism adds a nexus of intention to its construal of events.
   1. Though it is not necessary to interpret the world this way, one can do so.
   2. If one does so, the descriptions of the world that one makes in this framework must then be appraised in it, on its terms.
3. The decision to construe the world this way is neither true nor false, but it can be appraised readily on pragmatic grounds as a fairly workable categorical approach as long as one makes room in it for handling “the dark side.”

B. Not so much an attempt to describe things directly, most of the discourse of ethical monotheism consists of interpretive stories, fables, myths, and parables designed to highlight the intention/value dimension of the world.
   1. The stories are not assessable as true or false, but they are assessable as functional/dysfunctional.
   2. They fare reasonably well on that assessment, especially when viewed as “prophetic”—that is, aimed at the progressive enhancement of the quality of human life in the face of horrific adversity.
   3. In this context, worship itself is somewhat reconstrued, not as obeisance at the feet of perfection, but as celebration of the intentional fabric of life in all its forms.

III. Something approaching dualism invites consideration here by anyone who sees the world in an intentionalist paradigm.
   A. It may not be strictly monotheistic, but strict monotheism is not exactly obvious in everyday Christian, Jewish, and Muslim practice, for all they say.
   B. Whatever tirelessly battles intractable evil certainly deserves loyalty and commitment, and perhaps, that will do for worship.
   C. And even those who don’t share the intentionalist paradigm can still enlist in the cause, although the stories of the faithful will remain to them just stories.

**Essential Rereading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Do all of the myths, stories, and fables of the Christmas season have to be believed in order to do their work?
2. Do stories of a cosmic divine/demonic struggle illuminate world events in a way that helps or hinders the human quest for the good?

**Another Issue for Long-Term Reflection:**
Many writers, such as John Hick, have suggested that although there are many different religions, they (mostly) all worship the same god, albeit “in their own ways.” While this may look plausible, it poses a practical issue.

Given widespread religious persecutions, inquisitions, wars, and cleansings, how might it be possible to free various religions from their obsession with exclusivity and purity and encourage their common commitment to the universal “fatherhood of god” and “brotherhood of man”?

Might this not best begin with the admission that there is much to be said for agnosticism, especially among the faithful—that people do not necessarily know everything that they believe?
### Timeline

**Events and People with Implications for Philosophy of Ethical Monotheism**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>People</th>
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<tr>
<td>1500 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Job discusses theodicy</td>
<td>Job</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brahminism/Hinduism coalescing</td>
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<tr>
<td>1300 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Moses said to receive Decalogue</td>
<td>Moses</td>
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<tr>
<td>800–700 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Major Hebrew prophets</td>
<td>Amos, Hosea, Isaiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>624–545 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thales</td>
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<tr>
<td>639–553 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Zoroastrian religion founded</td>
<td>Zoroaster</td>
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<tr>
<td>604–531 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Taoism begins</td>
<td>Lao Tzu</td>
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<tr>
<td>599–527 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Jainism founded</td>
<td>Mahavira Jeni</td>
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<tr>
<td>597–538 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Much Hebrew oral tradition</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>inscribed during Babylonian exile</td>
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<tr>
<td>590–500 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Delphic Oracle at</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>zenith</td>
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<td>581–497 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pythagoras</td>
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<tr>
<td>551–479 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Confucianism founded</td>
<td>Confucius</td>
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<tr>
<td>550–480 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Buddhism founded</td>
<td>Siddhartha</td>
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<tr>
<td>515–450 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parminides of Elia</td>
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<tr>
<td>490–425 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zeno of Elia</td>
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<tr>
<td>470–399 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Socrates</td>
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<tr>
<td>427–347 B.C.E.</td>
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<td>Plato</td>
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<td>384–322 B.C.E.</td>
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<td>Aristotle</td>
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<tr>
<td>375 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Canon of Pentateuch settled</td>
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<tr>
<td>341–271 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Epicurus</td>
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<tr>
<td>333–264 B.C.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zeno the Stoic</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Jesus of Nazareth</td>
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<tr>
<td>to 30 C.E.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3–65</td>
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<td>St. Paul</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Christianity founded</td>
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<tr>
<td>115–200</td>
<td>St. Irenaeus</td>
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<tr>
<td>160–220</td>
<td>Quintus Tertullian</td>
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<tr>
<td>215–276</td>
<td>Manicheanism founded</td>
<td>Mani</td>
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<tr>
<td>313</td>
<td>Edit of Milan (toleration of Christians)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>325</td>
<td>First Shinto shrines in Japan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Council of Nicea, Nicene Creed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>354–430</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Augustine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>440</td>
<td>Taoism established in China</td>
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<tr>
<td>480–524</td>
<td>Anicius Boethius</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>570–632</td>
<td>Mohammed the Prophet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>622</td>
<td>Muslim calendar year 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>697</td>
<td>Arabs destroy Carthage</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>711</td>
<td>Spain an Arab state</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish Jews freed by Arabs</td>
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<tr>
<td>712</td>
<td>Sind (India) an Arab state</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>732</td>
<td>Arab advance stopped at Tours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>810–877</td>
<td></td>
<td>Johnannes Scotus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>912–976</td>
<td>Omayyad rule in Spain at zenith</td>
<td>Erigena</td>
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<tr>
<td>1006</td>
<td>Islam reaches northwest India</td>
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<tr>
<td>1031</td>
<td>Caliphate of Cordoba abolished</td>
<td>St. Anselm</td>
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<tr>
<td>1033–1109</td>
<td>Battle of Hastings</td>
<td>Peter Abelard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1006</td>
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<tr>
<td>1079–1144</td>
<td>Crusades begin</td>
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<td>1095</td>
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<td>1100–1160</td>
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<td>1126–1198</td>
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<td>1214–1293</td>
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<td>1225–1274</td>
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<td>1233</td>
<td>Spanish Inquisition under Dominicans</td>
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<td>1265–1321</td>
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<td>1266–1308</td>
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<td>1280–1349</td>
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<td>1291</td>
<td>Crusades end</td>
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<td>1304–1374</td>
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<td>1452–1519</td>
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<td>1477–1535</td>
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<td>1483–1546</td>
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<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>Columbus sailed the ocean blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>1499</td>
<td>Torquemada gives Spanish Jews three months to convert</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Sikhhism founded in India</td>
<td>Guru Nanak Dev</td>
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<tr>
<td>1509–1564</td>
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<td>1515–1582</td>
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<tr>
<td>1516</td>
<td>Erasmus publishes New Testament in Greek and Latin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1517</td>
<td>Luther posts 95 theses</td>
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<tr>
<td>1520</td>
<td>Luther excommunicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>1530</td>
<td>Augsburg Confession</td>
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<tr>
<td>1531</td>
<td>Erasmus publishes first complete edition of Aristotle</td>
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<tr>
<td>1534</td>
<td>Luther completes translation of the Bible into German</td>
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<tr>
<td>1536</td>
<td>Calvin’s <em>Institutes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1538</td>
<td>Calvin expelled from Geneva</td>
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<td>1542–1591</td>
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<tr>
<td>1545–1564</td>
<td>Council of Trent</td>
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<td>1559–1609</td>
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<tr>
<td>1561</td>
<td>Scottish Confessions of Faith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>People</td>
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<tr>
<td>1561–1626</td>
<td>Calvin’s <em>Institutes</em> in English</td>
<td>Sir Francis Bacon</td>
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<td>1564–1642</td>
<td></td>
<td>Galilei Galileo</td>
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<td>1571–1630</td>
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<td>Johannes Kepler</td>
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<td>1588–1679</td>
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<td>Thomas Hobbes</td>
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<td>1596–1650</td>
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<td>René Descartes</td>
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<td>1632–1677</td>
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<td>Benedictus Spinoza</td>
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<td>1632–1704</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Locke</td>
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<td>1642–1727</td>
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<td>Sir Isaac Newton</td>
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<tr>
<td>1642–1660</td>
<td>English Revolution, Civil War, and Protectorate</td>
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<tr>
<td>1646</td>
<td>Westminster Confession</td>
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<td>1646–1716</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gottfried Leibniz</td>
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<tr>
<td>1685–1753</td>
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<td>George Berkeley</td>
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<td>1694–1778</td>
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<td>Voltaire (François Marie Arouet)</td>
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<td>1711–1776</td>
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<td>David Hume</td>
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<td>1724–1804</td>
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<td>Immanuel Kant</td>
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<td>1743–1805</td>
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<td>William Paley</td>
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<tr>
<td>1748–1832</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jeremy Bentham</td>
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<tr>
<td>1776–1783</td>
<td>American Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1789–1795</td>
<td>French Revolution</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1798–1857</td>
<td></td>
<td>Auguste Comte</td>
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<tr>
<td>1806–1873</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Stuart Mill</td>
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<tr>
<td>1809–1882</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Darwin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Napoleon at zenith of power</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>Luddite uprising</td>
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<tr>
<td>1812–1814</td>
<td>War of 1812</td>
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<tr>
<td>1813–1855</td>
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<td>Søren Kierkegaard</td>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>Karl Marx</td>
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<tr>
<td>1818–1883</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Spanish Inquisition suppressed</td>
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<td>1839–1914</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Sanders Peirce</td>
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<tr>
<td>1842–1910</td>
<td></td>
<td>William James</td>
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<tr>
<td>1844–1900</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friedrich Nietzsche</td>
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<tr>
<td>1856–1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmund Freud</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861–1865</td>
<td>American Civil War</td>
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<td>1869–1937</td>
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<td>Rudolf Otto</td>
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<tr>
<td>1872–1970</td>
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<td>Lord Bertrand Russell</td>
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<td>1878–1965</td>
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<td>Martin Buber</td>
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<td>1879–1955</td>
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<td>Albert Einstein</td>
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<td>1884–1976</td>
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<td>Rudolf Bultmann</td>
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<td>1886–1965</td>
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<td>Paul Tillich</td>
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<td>1889–1951</td>
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<td>Ludwig Wittgenstein</td>
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<td>1898–1963</td>
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<td>C. S. Lewis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900–1976</td>
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<td>Gilbert Ryle</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910–1989</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sir Alfred Jules Ayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Theory of Atomic Structure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1911–1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>J. L. Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914–1918</td>
<td>World War I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>General Theory of Relativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1922–1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Kuhn</td>
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<td>1922–</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Hick</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923–</td>
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<td>Antony Flew</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Quantum Theory</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Market crash, Depression begins</td>
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<td>1929–</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alasdair MacIntyre</td>
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<td>1931–</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sir Anthony Kenny</td>
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<td>1932–</td>
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<td>John R. Searle</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932–</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alvin Plantinga</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Concentration camps in Germany</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Japan invades China</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936–1939</td>
<td>Spanish Civil War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Germany annexes Austria and Czechoslovakia</td>
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<td>1939–1945</td>
<td>World War II</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Post-colonial era and Cold War begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Collapse of USSR</td>
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Glossary

**A posteriori**: Known or knowable on the basis of experience of some sort.

**A priori**: Known or knowable independent of experience of any sort.

**Agnostic**: One who claims not to know, or one who denies the possibility of knowing, whether or not something is the case; particularly one who takes such a position (agnosticism) on divine existence.

**Analytic**: Traditionally, the character of a statement that can be shown to be true or false by logical analysis, logically necessary. See **Synthetic**.

**Analytic falsehood**: Traditionally, a statement whose predicate denies what is contained in its subject, a self-contradiction or necessary falsehood.

**Analytic truth**: Traditionally, a statement whose predicate is contained in its subject, a tautology or necessary truth.

**Analytic/synthetic distinction**: An alleged “dogma” of empiricism in terms of which statements can be neatly sorted into necessary and contingent categories.

**Animism**: A form of religious belief that vests various natural objects (such as trees, hills, and so on) with indwelling spirits.

**Argument**: An arrangement of statements in which one or more (called the premises or assumptions) are presented as evidence or support for the truth of another (called the conclusion).

**Arguments for divine existence**:

- **Ontological**: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a priori* because “God exists” is analytically true.
- **Cosmological**: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a posteriori* because of what can be discovered about the nature of causation.
- **Teleological**: The argument that the existence of God can be known *a posteriori* because of what can be discovered about the nature of causation and because the world is manifestly “designed.”

**Aseity**: Self-contained, self-dependent, self-explanatory; not contingent in any way on anything external.

**Atheist**: One who affirms atheism, claiming or claiming to know that no god exists.

**Behaviorism**: The theory that mental phenomena, states, and processes can be reduced to, or explained in terms of, observable behavior and/or dispositions to behave.

**Belief**: An experiential expectation, usually based on mental processing of experiences that have already occurred or are occurring.

**Bifurcate**: To radically divide, as Descartes divided mind and body, Plato divided ideas and appearances, and transcendentalists divide the divine and the mundane.

**Ceteris paribus**: All things held equal.

**Circumstantial**: Accidental, contingent.

**Common sense**: Whatever beliefs are held by consensus in a community, but usually focused on beliefs that are directly supported by everyday experience.

**Consensus**: Common agreement, considerably more than majority opinion but not necessarily unanimous.

**Contingent**: That which is circumstantial or accidental, depending on external factors.

**Cultural relativism**: The view that value (moral cultural relativism) and/or truth (epistemic cultural relativism) are local to a culture, being produced by the culture itself rather than found in the external world.
Ostensive: Defining a term or phrase by pointing to its referent.

Paradigm case: Defining a term or phrase by reference to a stipulated model.

Essential: Defining a term or phrase in terms of the “essence” of its referents, that is, the universal necessary and sufficient conditions of its use.

Family resemblance: Defining a term or phrase in terms of overlapping similarities that may be observed in its referents.

Operational: Defining an abstract term or phrase in terms of observable phenomena or operations (for example, defining “gravity” as the acceleration of objects toward one another at a certain rate).

Deist: One affirming deism, the view (common in the eighteenth century) that the divine being that produced the natural world is detached from and disinterested in it.

Divine encounters: Occasions in which the divine becomes apparent to one or more humans, either by sight (visions), in sound or speech (locutions), or by general contact or indwelling (transports, raptures, unity experiences).

Dualist: One who affirms dualism, that is, in religious contexts, that there are two divine powers, usually separated in function as well as in identity. (Sometimes called bitheism, this view may include the notion that the two are in conflict with each other and/or vie for human allegiance and support.)

Dynamism: A form of religious belief that vests various natural objects (such as trees, hills, and so on) with innate but impersonal and unpredictable powers.

Empiricism: The view that experience (sometimes limited to sense experience) is the primary (or even the exclusive) source of human knowledge.

Enlightenment: An age of humanism and naturalism (and some deism), broadly associated with the eighteenth century.

Epistemic relativism: The view that the knowable and known vary independently of what is the case, as a function of one’s culture, paradigm, mind set, or circumstances; a variety of collective subjectivism.

Epistemology: Knowledge theory, one of the main traditional branches of philosophy.

Eschatological: Having to do with the eschaton, the end of the age, the last days.

Ethical monotheism: The position taken by ethical monotheists that there is exactly one God, a being notable for moral perfection in addition to unlimited power and wisdom.

Evils: Dysfunctional, harmful, and/or hurtful events that occur, whether because of the activities of people (human evils) or independent of them (natural evils).

Explanation: The rendering intelligible of a state of affairs by carefully noting how it came about and how it relates to other states of affairs (causal explanation), why or for what purpose it occurred (teleological explanation), or the use that it serves (functional explanation).

Faith: Trust or reliance on the truth of a set of propositions either largely or entirely independent of evidence and argumentation, or trust or dependence on the reliability of an individual (or group) in the same way.

Felicity conditions: The circumstances in which a locution is “happy,” (for example, a description is felicitous when it is true, a promise is felicitous when it is sincere, a joke is felicitous if it is funny).

Fideist: One who affirms fideism, the view that divine existence is a matter of faith rather than a matter of knowledge.

Foundationalism: A position in knowledge theory that certain states of affairs are directly or immediately known and that all other knowledge is derived (in one way or another) from that foundation. For phenomenalists, for example, sense data are foundational to all knowledge of matters of fact.

God: A title for that which deserves worship.
Henotheism: A form of religious belief in which the existence of numerous divine beings may be recognized, but allegiance to the particular one associated with one’s tribe or culture is demanded.

Holy: Set apart, wholly other, sacred.

Humanism: The view, whether religious or secular in tone, that human values and concerns should be defined in human terms.

Idealism: The metaphysical view that there is a non-physical reality “behind” or “above” the apparent reality of everyday events.

Illocutionary force: That which is done in a speech act, such as warn, describe, promise, and the like.

Imply, entail: To provide sufficient grounds for the truth of, as a premise implies a conclusion. If a logical implication statement is a tautology, it is called an entailment.

In principle: By definition, not accidental.

Incommensurable: Of two or more statements, theories, or paradigms, not measurable or assessable on a common standard.

Inference: The mental process of drawing a conclusion from one or more premises. People infer; statements imply.

Knowledge: Justified true belief, at least, but more than that according to skeptics who deny its occurrence.

Logic: A system of rules of inference to determine whether or not the premises of an argument validly imply its conclusion.

Logical empiricism: A philosophical position identified with the Vienna Circle that insisted that all cognitively meaningful language is, in principle, either empirically or formally verifiable; logical positivism.

Logical form: The syntactical structure of an argument, such as modus ponens (that is, If P, then Q; P, therefore Q) and modus tollens (that is, If P, then Q; Not-Q, therefore Not-P).

Logical positivism: See Logical empiricism.

Meaning: Either the sense or the reference (or both) of a word or phrase.

Meta-…: Beyond, about, or parasitic on; for example, meta-ethics is an abstract area of inquiry that takes the discourse of ethics as its subject matter for examination.

Metaphilosophy: An abstract area of inquiry that takes the discourse of philosophy as its subject matter.

Metaphysics: In Aristotle’s collected works, what comes after Physics. To logical positivists, nonsense. To the ambitious, speculative “theories of everything.” More generally, abstract inquiry that takes all discourse about “the furniture of the world” as its subject matter. Ontology.

Mithraism: A mystery religion widely practiced at the beginning of the common era.

Modus ponens: See Logical form.

Modus tollens: See Logical form.

Monotheist: One affirming monotheism, the view that exactly one God exists and, typically, that the divine is interested and involved in human affairs (cf. Deist).

Moral relativism: The view that the moral value of an act varies as a function of things other than the nature of the act itself (such as the traditions of a culture, the perspective and interests of an individual, the precise circumstances in which an act occurs, and so on). This view looks very subjective but need not be, depending on what moral values are said to be relative to.

Mysticism: A form of religion that cultivates human interaction with the supernatural independent of reason or everyday experience; occultism.
**Myth:** Typically, an ancient tale that, though not to be taken literally, conveys some significant insight into the human condition; a vehicle (which may be utterly fantastic) for delivering home truths in a memorable way. (The vehicle should never be confused with its point.)

**Naming theory of meaning:** An ancient (and still common) view that words and phrases mean by naming something. It encounters difficulty with such words as “nothing” and such phrases as “the present king of France.”

**Natural evils:** Bad things that occur in the world independent of any human input.

**Nominalism and realism:** Metaphysical positions on the status of abstract nouns. Realism insists that they name actual entities (such as The Good), while nominalism allows that they express only notions.

**Ockham’s razor:** The primary tool of theoretical economy; hypothesizing no more than is necessary to save the appearances.

**Operationalism:** Metaphysical position that abstract nouns must be given operational definitions (see Definition).

**Other:** A negative descriptor for God, reminding one that God is different (without indicating in what way); usually intensified with “wholly;” holy, set apart, sacred.

**Pantheism:** A form of religious belief in which everything is held to be divine or held to be a manifestation of the divine.

**Paradigm:** Generally, a model, template, or pattern. In recent usage, the frame of reference or perspective in which one operates that determines how things appear and, hence, how one describes or explains them.

**Parsees:** Indian Zoroastrians.

**Performativity:** A variety of speech act in which something is transacted rather than described, such as “I baptize thee...”

**Perlocutionary force:** That which is achieved by a speech act; its results.

**Philosophical analysis:** Taking some system of thought apart to discover its inner logic, presuppositions, and implications; essentially, meta-inquiry.

**Philosophical synthesis:** Putting the results of various philosophical analyses together in an attempt to synthesize an inclusive account of how things are.

**Polytheism:** A form of religion that holds there are many gods, often (but not always) placed in a hierarchy and differentiated in terms of their interests or spheres of influence.

**Positivism:** The philosophical position of Auguste Comte, typified by the rejection of myth, magic, and metaphysics and the affirmation of “positive science.” A precursor of logical positivism.

**Post hoc ergo propter hoc:** “After, therefore because of”; a common fallacy.

**Premise:** An assumption or starting point, the basis from which an argument’s conclusion is inferred.

**Principle of sufficient reason:** The notion that “nothing just happens”; that in order for anything to occur, the adequate causes of its occurrence must have themselves already occurred.

**Properly basic:** Immediate, non-inferential or foundational, and properly so. For empiricists, experiential phenomena are said to constitute the proper basis of all discourse. Some recent theistic arguments make the same claim for elementary god talk.

**Rationalism:** The view that genuine knowledge (perhaps all of it) must be achieved through the exercise of the mind rather than through experience.

**Reductionism:** A philosophical enterprise that consists of translating accounts of one sort of phenomena into the vocabulary of an allegedly simpler and more inclusive sort of phenomena. Thus, for example, behaviorism is a reductionist theory of mind.

**Reference:** Denotation or extension; that which is referred to or picked out by the sense of a word or phrase.
**Reform tradition**: A tradition associated with Calvinism that emphasizes and prizes closely argued philosophical analyses of theological issues.

**Revelation**: That which is allegedly discovered by humans when the divine lifts the veil of transcendence sufficiently for them to have a glimpse of what could not be ordinarily known.

**Scholasticism**: High medieval thought.

**Secular**: Non-religious. Recently, a term of abuse, as in “secular humanism.”

**Semantic**: Having to do with the sense and reference of language, as opposed to its internal structure or logic. See **Syntactic**.

**Sense**: Connotation, intention; the set of properties or characteristics invoked by a word or phrase in terms of which one can pick out its reference.

**Sociology of knowledge**: The idea that what is known is always a function of the culture in which one operates. “Epistemic cultural relativism” is the more common label now.

**Sound**: The quality of an argument that is valid and has true premises as well.

**Speech acts**: Actual events or acts in which language is employed or used. Many philosophers of language now hold that they (rather than the words or phrases employed in them) are the locus of meaning.

**Syntactic**: Having to do with the internal structure or logic of language (as opposed to its meaning). See **Semantic**.

**Synthetic**: Traditionally, the character of a statement that cannot be shown to be true or false by logical analysis, logically contingent. See **Analytic**.

**Tautology**: A statement that is necessarily true, true by virtue of its form, or analytically true (for example, “In base-10 arithmetic, 2 + 2 = 4” and “All bachelors are unmarried.”)

**Theodicy**: An argument aimed at reconciling divine existence with apparent evils.

**Thomism**: The thought system of St. Thomas Aquinas, theological and philosophical.

**Transcendent**: “Beyond,” in some sense. In religious contexts, often “totally beyond” the level of human access. Other, holy, sacred; on the far side of a great gulf fixed.

**Truth conditions**: Circumstances in which a statement will be true or false. These may be experiential or logical, at least.

**Truth criteria (tests)**: Ideas about how we can ascertain whether a statement is true or not, such as **correspondence** (seeing if it “matches” the way things really are), **coherence** (seeing if it is consistent with other statements that are held to be true), and **pragmatic** (seeing if it works, in use).

**Truth theories**: Ideas about what makes a statement true, such as **correspondence** (actually matching the ways things are), **coherence** (meshing with other statements that are true themselves), and **pragmatic** (being reliable in use).

**Use theory of meaning**: The theory, associated with Wittgenstein’s later work, that the meaning of a statement amounts to nothing more than the uses to which the statement can be put.

**Valid**: The quality of an argument with a logical form such that the truth of its premises assures the truth of its conclusion.

**Verification**: Testing a statement for truth.

**Verificationism**: The notion, associated with logical empiricism, that a statement can only be meaningful if it is testable by either experience or logic.

**Weltanschauung**: A worldview or “big picture”; possibly a “paradigm.”
The purpose of these sketches is to identify some of the interests and connections of the more influential philosophers who are referred to in the lectures, not to argue the merits of their positions. Further information can be found in: *The Directory of American Scholars* (U.S. and Canada), *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Britain), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and on such Web sites as:

http://www.biological.com/ [Biography.com]
http://www.philosophypages.com/ [Philosophy Pages from Garth Kemerling]
http://www.newadvent.org/cathan/ [The Catholic Encyclopedia]
http://www.xrefer.com/ [Xrefer, the Web’s Reference Engine]
http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/ [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy]

**Anselm, St. (1033–1109).** An Italian Scholastic theologian, philosopher, and difficult Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm was a rather Augustine rationalist, most noted by modern philosophers for his articulation of the ontological argument for divine existence. Though most find that argument more intriguing than convincing, it still has its notable advocates (including, especially, Alvin Plantinga).

**Aquinas, St. Thomas (1225–1274).** An Italian Dominican Scholastic theologian, logician, and philosopher, Aquinas was markedly Aristotelian in temperament and method. Something of a mystic, and concerned with witchcraft and alchemy, he is most noted by modern philosophers for his monumental works: *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologica*. The definitive voice of Roman Catholic theology and philosophy of religion, Thomas is never an easy read but always a profitable one.

**Augustine, St. (354–430).** A convert in his twenties, Augustine has been called the most influential Christian writer after St. Paul. Directly, as well as by way of Calvin, he still influences Protestant as well as Catholic thinkers, his *Confessions* and *City of God* continuing to have wide audiences. Born and educated in North Africa, teaching in Rome and Milan, and (from 396) Bishop of Hippo, he was a critic of heresies while they were still being defined and much concerned with evil and theodicy.

**Austin, J. L. (1911–1960).** An English philosopher, Austin studied at Oxford and taught there from 1952. He delighted in ordinary language as a key to unlock philosophical puzzles, recommending reading the *Oxford English Dictionary* from cover to cover as a source book. In essays and lectures, Austin laid out the groundwork for “speech act” theory, distinguishing what we say, what we mean when we say it, and what is accomplished by the saying. His papers were collected and published after his untimely death as *Philosophical Papers* and *Sense and Sensibilia*. His Harvard lectures were also transcribed and published as *How to Do Things with Words*.

**Ayer, Sir Alfred Jules (1910–1989).** An English philosopher, Ayer studied at Oxford under Ryle and (after the war) taught there, at University College London, and again at Oxford as Wykeham Professor of Logic from 1959. His most influential book was *Language, Truth and Logic*, a forceful introduction of logical empiricism to the English-speaking world. Other works include *The Problem of Knowledge* and *The Central Questions of Philosophy*. Your lecturer was privileged to attend his lectures at Oxford in 1975 and found him as witty and astute at the lectern as he was at his writing desk.

**Buber, Martin (1878–1965).** A Viennese philosopher and theologian, Buber studied at Vienna, Berlin, and Zürich; founded and edited the journal *Der Jude*; and taught at the University of Frankfurt, as well as in an adult education program until, fleeing the Nazis, he moved to a post in Jerusalem. His outlook on religious, social, and ethical issues is still influential, chiefly by way of his book *I and Thou*.


**Comte, Auguste (1798–1857).** A French thinker, the inventor of sociology, and the founder of classical positivism, Comte argued that science has emerged from theological and metaphysical stages into its modern “positive” (operational or experiential) posture and that human reverence should be for humanity itself. His works include six
volumes on *Positive Philosophy* and four on *Positive Polity*. He is said to have practiced what he called “mental hygiene” by avoiding reading the works of others.

**Descartes, René (1596–1650).** A French rationalist philosopher and mathematician, Descartes was Jesuit trained and strictly Catholic but no Scholastic. He was most notable for his reconstruction of rational knowledge by way of systematic doubt. Apart from the *cogito* and everything built on it, he is also noted for the invention of analytic geometry and for providing a foil for all subsequent philosophers. His notable works include *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

**Flew, Antony (1923– ).** A British skeptical philosopher, Flew taught at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele, Reading, and York (Toronto), as well as holding many visiting posts throughout the English-speaking world. His books range from *A New Approach to Psychical Research* and *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief* to *Atheistic Humanism* and *Setting Schools Back on Course*. His new essays in *Philosophical Theology* (with Alasdair MacIntyre) helped make analytic philosophy of religion accessible at mid-century.

**Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939).** An essentially Viennese physician (though born in Moravia), Freud studied and taught at the University of Vienna before entering private practice. The founder of psychoanalysis and a thinker of sweeping influence, Freud is primarily of interest to philosophers of religion because of his theories about the pathological origins of religious consciousness ideas—most notably expressed in his works *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

**Geach, Peter Thomas (1919– ).** A British philosopher and logician, Geach taught at Birmingham and was a frequent lecturer in North America. Orthodoxly Catholic in outlook, he gives a vigorous account of Christian morality and of his own theodicy in *The Virtues* and *Providence and Evil*. A combative arguer, he questioned the use of modal logic to “prove” divine existence as early as 1975, showing that secularists are not alone in their uneasiness over Plantinga’s resurrection of Anselm.

**Hick, John (1922– ).** A North Yorkshire theologian and philosopher of religion, Hick studied at Edinburgh, was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of England, and taught at Cambridge, Birmingham, and Claremont (California). In addition to his definitive textbooks and anthologies in philosophy of religion, he made major contributions to theodicy building (in *Evil and the God of Love*) and to the analysis of the common elements of world religions (in *God and the Universe of Faiths* and *The Myth of God Incarnate*). No Augustinean, Hick bet the farm on free will and “soul making.”

**Hume, David (1711–1776).** A Scottish philosopher, historian, and lawyer, Hume studied at Edinburgh but was denied professorships at Edinburgh and Glasgow for religious reasons. His many important works include *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *Essays Moral and Political*, and the posthumously published *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. He was the definitive British empiricist and is credited for awakening Kant from his “dogmatic slumbers.”

**James, William (1842–1910).** A definitively American philosopher and psychologist, in an era when those disciplines were not distinct, James pursued art, literature, philosophy, medicine, and science. He was strongly interested in the psychological examination of religion, in mysticism, and in various altered states of consciousness (drug induced and otherwise). His ideas were admired by Wittgenstein, and such works as his *Varieties of Religious Experience* and *Pragmatism* are still widely read.

**John of the Cross, St. (1542–1591).** Described by Thomas Merton as the greatest of all mystical theologians, this Spanish saint, mystic, and poet helped Teresa of Avila establish the Discalced Carmelites; became a Carmelite monk himself; was ordained and imprisoned; and escaped to became vicar-provincial of Andalusia. His works include *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel* and many poems. Taken with Teresa, St. John provides a useful insight into a variety of religious belief and practice that is intuitive rather than rational and robustly empirical (though not in a way Hume would countenance).

**Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804).** A German philosopher, perhaps the first professional philosopher, Kant was a career academic. His three *Critiques* (of *Pure Reason*, *Practical Reason*, and *Judgment*) are landmarks in modern philosophical history, responding to Hume’s empiricism and permanently marking out the limits of reason in such as way as to exclude the ontological argument and any knowledge whatever of “things in themselves.” His *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* was also a watershed in its rejection of ethical “consequentialism” in all its forms.

Kierkegaard, Søren (1813–1855). A Danish philosopher/theologian and, in a sense, an early existentialist. After his studies at Copenhagen, Kierkegaard inveighed against philosophical speculation and worldview constructions as poor rationalistic substitutes for the radical choices that underlie what would later be called “authentic” existence. Prefiguring Sartre (but in a distinctly religious frame of reference), he attempted to retrieve Will from the hegemony of Reason to which Plato had assigned it and where Descartes had left it to languish. His major works were Either/Or (1843) and Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846).

Kuhn, Thomas (1922–1996). An American philosopher and historian of science, Kuhn taught at Harvard, Berkeley, Princeton, and MIT. His The Structure of Scientific Revolution was published at mid-century as a volume in the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science—a surprisingly positivistic venue for a non-positivistic treatise. If Kuhn did not invent paradigms and paradigm shifts, he certainly put them on the map for the rest of us. In his view, there is no rational basis for choosing one paradigm over another. Other works include The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change and The Road Since Structure: Philosophical Essays, 1970–1993.

Lewis, C. S. (1898–1963). An English litterateur, satirist, and lay apologist, Lewis lectured on medieval and renaissance English literature at Oxford from 1924. His scholarly writings include English Literature in the 16th Century and Experiment in Criticism. Other books, however, such as his Screwtape Letters and The Chronicles of Narnia, put him in the public arena as a primary apologist for faith and feeling in an increasingly skeptical and secular culture. A frequent debater, Lewis’ storyteller’s imagination and eloquence gave fire to his defense of the faith.

MacIntyre, Alasdair (1929– ). A Scottish philosopher who, after a number of university posts in Britain, came to the United States. Here, he has taught at Brandeis, Wellesley, Vanderbilt, and Notre Dame. His works include Marxism and Christianity, After Virtue, and other influential writings on ethics and philosophy of mind. His New Essays in Philosophical Theology (with Antony Flew) helped make analytic philosophy of religion accessible at mid-century.

Nielsen, Kai (?– ). A North American philosopher educated at Chapel Hill and Duke, Nielsen taught at New York, Calgary, and Concordia (Montreal) Universities. With interests in metaphilosophy, contemporary ethical and political theory, and Marxism, he is an outspoken critic of theism, noted for his critique of the relationships between religion and morality. His works include Ethics without God, On Transforming Philosophy, and Equality and Liberty.

Otto, Rudolf (1869–1937). A German philosopher, Protestant theologian, and professor at Göttingen, Wrocław, and Marburg, Otto focused his research on non-Christian religions, producing such studies as India’s Religion of Grace and Christianity and Mysticism East and West. His treatment of “the other” in The Idea of the Holy (1917) had become a centerpiece in liberal Protestant thought and theological education by mid-century and remains essential reading for students of transcendentism.

Paley, William (1743–1805). An Anglican theologian and cleric; fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge; archdeacon of Carlisle; and subdean of Lincoln, Paley argued that divine existence is evident. His works include Horae Paulinae (on the improbability that the New Testament is a fable) and Natural Theology; or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity. He was a contemporary of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, and Thomas Jefferson, but of a less skeptical mind.

Peirce, Charles Sanders (1839–1914). An American philosopher, logician, and mathematician; a student at Harvard; and a long-time researcher with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Peirce lectured at Harvard and Johns Hopkins Universities before his lengthy “retirement,” which commenced in 1887. The author of many articles and essays on an extremely wide variety of topics, Peirce is best remembered for his work on Boolean logic and on the semantic and syntactical structure of language, and for his “invention” of pragmatism. He was an important precursor of William James and John Dewey and, hence, of Wittgenstein.
Plantinga, Alvin (1932– ). An American philosopher, metaphysician, and rock climber in the Reform tradition, and called the most important philosopher of religion now writing, Plantinga studied at Yale and has taught at Wayne State, Calvin College, and since 1982, Notre Dame. Noted for his application of modal logic to the ontological argument, for his treatments of the problem of evil, and for his analyses of the epistemology of religious belief, Plantinga is the author of numerous books and articles, including “A Valid Ontological Argument?” “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?” God and Other Minds, The Nature of Necessity, Faith and Rationality, and Warranted Christian Belief.

Russell, Lord Bertrand (1872–1970). An English philosopher, logician, mathematician, freethinker, and essayist, Russell was a student, fellow, and professor at Cambridge, where he influenced the shape of philosophy for generations (by way of “both” Wittgensteins, as well as the Vienna Circle) and set the course of all subsequent philosophy of logic and mathematics. His early works included Principles of Mathematics and Principia Mathematica. Mid-career books included An Enquiry into Meaning and Truth and Human Knowledge, plus myriad essays and polemics on topics ranging from education and marriage to nuclear disarmament. Social and political issues were his primary focus after 1949.

Ryle, Gilbert (1900–1976). An English philosopher, Ryle studied at Brighton and Oxford and taught (with a hiatus for the war) at Oxford until 1968. Although he devoted a quarter century to editing the distinguished journal Mind, he published several important essays and books in conceptual analysis, including “Systematically Misleading Expressions,” “Categories,” Dilemmas, Plato’s Progress and—of permanent importance—The Concept of Mind, his devastating refutation of Cartesian mind-body dualism as a “category mistake.”


Swinburne, Richard (?– ). An English philosopher, Swinburne is Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oriel College, Oxford. His interests include the relations of science and religion, the nature of God, and arguments for divine existence, with special attention to the issue of suffering. He is the author of many books, including The Christian God, Is There a God?, The Evolution of the Soul, and Providence and the Problem of Evil.

Teresa of Avila, St. (1515–1582). A Spanish saint, ascetic, mystic, and organizer, Teresa entered a Carmelite convent in 1535 and, amidst considerable adversities, founded the convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Primitive Rule of St. Joseph at Avila in 1562. Among her many works, her autobiographical The Way of Perfection and The Interior Castle are still widely read. She is notable for her critical response to her own mystical encounters—a person of faith with a very practical mind.

Tillich, Paul (1886–1965). A German/American cleric, theologian, and philosopher, Tillich taught at Frankfurt until suspended (1933) and, thereafter, in the United States, at Union Theological Seminary, Harvard, and Chicago. possessed of a distinctly liberal and existential outlook, he is popularly noted for The Courage to Be and professionally for his Systematic Theology. Not particularly appreciated by analytic philosophers, his notion of God as “ultimate concern” was the target of many critical pieces, such as Paul Edward’s “Professor Tillich’s Confusions” (frequently reprinted).

Voltaire (François Marie Arouet) (1694–1778). A wicked French philosophe, educated by Jesuits, a student of law, a prisoner in the Bastille, and an exile in England for a time, Voltaire wrote in Paris, Berlin, and Geneva. An intractable foe of injustice, his ideas helped set the stage for the French Revolution. Convinced that this ought to be the “best of all possible worlds,” he set out the problem of evil with panache in Candide. Other notable works include Lettres philosophiques and Dictionnaire philosophique.

William of Ockham (c. 1280–c. 1349). An English Scholastic, Franciscan, and philosophical nominalist, Ockham studied theology at Oxford (perhaps under Duns Scotus) and Paris, where he taught. Charged with heresy and, subsequently, a refugee in Bavaria, he denied papal authority over temporal matters. A dogged opponent of metaphysical largess, more remembered today for his “razor” than for any particular treatise, this “doctor invincibilis” reminds us of the importance of philosophical method.
Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1889–1951). A Viennese/English philosopher, inventor, and sometime schoolteacher, Wittgenstein studied engineering at Berlin and Manchester and mathematical logic at Cambridge, where he taught (with lengthy interruptions) between 1929 and 1947. The most influential Western philosopher of the twentieth century, Wittgenstein’s two major works, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, laid the foundations for logical atomism and logical positivism, on the one hand, and for “ordinary language analysis,” on the other. Neither an easy person nor an easy philosopher, this brilliant and quirky thinker stirs interest even among non-philosophers, as evidenced by the current reception of David Edmonds’ and John Eidinow’s *Wittgenstein’s Poker*. 
Bibliography

Notes:
9. New copies of these books are generally available from online book dealers, such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble at: http://www.amazon.com/ and http://www.barnesandnoble.com/.

10. Where noted, they are only available from the source indicated in the listing.

11. In most cases, used copies are also available from online book dealers, such as the Advanced Book Exchange at: http://www.abebooks.com/.

12. In each case, the date given is the year of the edition with the ISBN listed. The original edition may have appeared in an earlier year.

Essential Readings


Recommended Readings

Rosenberg, Jay F. *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1996. ISBN: 0132308487 (paperback). (Cited as: Rosenberg, *Handbook*.) This little book is exactly what its title says it is, and as handbooks go, it is a dandy. Philosophical practices do not come entirely naturally to most of us. This is a good place to become familiar with them.

Supplementary Readings
A. Monographs dealing with philosophical issues in religion


Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998. ISBN: 0872204200 (paperback). This is a fortissimo demonstration of where reason can lead, including astray. Descartes’ notion of God, with only a little fudging, grounds his notions of mind, body, and rational certainty.


James, William. *Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Scribner, 1997. ISBN: 0684842971 (paperback). This exercise in descriptive psychology shows that religious phenomena are not all the same (or even similar) and stimulates philosophical reflection on the diversity of their sources and uses.

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Ockham, William. *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983. ISBN: 0915144131 (paperback). Predestination, per se, is not our issue, but omniscience is a critical card in the theodicy game, and having talked about (and used) Ockham’s razor, it is useful to see it at work in the barber’s hand.

Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958. ISBN: 0195002105 (paperback). This extraordinarily influential little book is an attempt to parse out the notion of the “other” that is as essential to much of twentieth-century existentialism as it is to transcendental theism. Read it with Buber (q.v.).


St. Anselm. *Proslogian*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. ISBN: 0268016976 (paperback). Here is the original ontological argument, in full and in context. Widely dismissed by Anselm’s contemporaries and still controversial today, is it word magic or an illumination of natural necessity?


———. *The Free Choice of the Will*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993. ISBN: 0872201899 (paperback). The presence (or absence) of free will is, of course, crucial to whether the “free will theodicy” works. One expects something a little different from a predestinarian, and one gets it.

St. John of the Cross. *The Collected Works*. Washington: ICS Publications, 1991. ISBN: 0935216146 (clothbound). Mysticism is alien to most these days, and even reading about it is difficult. This is a good place to start, given that St. Teresa trusted the writer to reliably assess the authenticity of her own encounters.

St. Teresa of Avila. *The Interior Castle*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988. ISBN: 0809122545 (paperback). St. Teresa is a challenge to the modern reader but also a reminder that honest empiricists should not prejudge the data. The bottom line, as she saw, is how to interpret the experiences one has.

St. Thomas Aquinas. *Aquinas’s Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas’s Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica*. Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2001. ISBN: 1928832431 (paperback). St. Thomas said it all. This widely acclaimed condensation of it all is far less intimidating than the *Summa* proper, and reading it is a good way to put his views on “the arguments” in context.


Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. ISBN: 0520013549 (paperback). Wittgenstein did not have much to say directly about religious belief, although his main writings certainly have influenced how we interpret it. Here is what he does have to say. Some call him a mystic.

**B. Monographs dealing with related philosophical issues**


Ayer, A. J. *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover, 1946. ISBN: 0486200108 (paperback). This introduced logical positivism to most English readers. “A young man’s book,” as Russell called it, it still crackles, but its conception of language is far too narrow, as we have come to see.


Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge, 2001. ISBN: 0415254086 (paperback). This is the “early” Wittgenstein at his reductivist and enigmatic best. It was a primary tributary to logical positivism, but Wittgenstein’s own *bête noire* by the time he wrote *Philosophical Investigations*. It is very hard going.


C. Textbooks and anthologies of readings in philosophy of religion


Geivett, R. Douglas, and Brendan Sweetman. *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. ISBN: 019507324X (paperback). This stellar and demanding collection has a tighter focus than the other anthologies listed here. If philosophy starts with epistemology, then so does philosophy of religion, and so should you.

Plantinga, Alvin, and Nicholas Wolterstorf, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press. 1984. ISBN: 0268009651 (paperback). This is a collection of pieces on theistic epistemology in the Reform tradition, including several selections from the editors and from George Mavrodes. It provides an effective counterbalance to Geivett’s collection.


———. *Philosophy of Religion*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000. ISBN: 0767408195 (paperback). This is a fairly inclusive textbook introduction to philosophy of religion (both analytic and non-analytic). It is as good as any current textbook in print (except Hick’s original jewel) and better than most.

Quinn, Philip, and Kevin Meeker. *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0195121554 (paperback). The editors of this tightly focused collection must have had Hick’s “unity” project in mind when they put it together. Some of it is hard going, especially Plantinga’s defense of religious exclusivism, but the issue is important enough to deserve some mind sweat.

D. General philosophy and reference


Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN 0872200981 (paperback). This classic is short, clear, and useful, even though it is quite dated for anyone who works at philosophy professionally. The basics are there for the laymen, all presented with Russell’s customary élan.

**Useful, Out-of-Print Books** (Note: These books can all be obtained from online used book dealers, such as the Advanced Book Exchange at: http://www.abebooks.com/)

**A. Monographs dealing with philosophical issues in religion**


Stace, W. T. *Man against Darkness*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967. ISBN: 0822951347 (paperback). Everything Stace wrote was lucid, informative, and accessible. This collection of his essays deals with such topics as the nature of our response to the unknown, without icing or wishful thinking.


**B. Textbooks and anthologies on philosophy of religion**

———. Logic, Language and God. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961. ISBN: None (paperback). This concise explication and critique of linguistically focused philosophy of religion was the second twentieth-century work in the field that your lecturer read and one he still rereads from time to time.


C. General philosophy

Gray, William D. Thinking Critically about New Age Ideas. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN: 0534143946 (paperback). A little bit “pop,” but an effective presentation of how to get a handle on strange beliefs. Because even our own beliefs may be strange to others, it is a useful study. Light and an easy read but solid.

Pap, Arthur. Elements of Analytical Philosophy. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1972. ISBN: 0028500407 (clothbound). This is possibly the best introduction to analytic philosophy ever written. It is not easy. It is not entertaining. But it is powerfully illuminating. Also, alas, it is hard to find.

Radner, Daisie, and Michael Radner. Science and Unreason. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982. ISBN: 0534011535 (paperback). Every bit as useful as Gray’s New Age book (q.v.), this is also an easily read volume on a crucially important topic. We live in an age of poor thinking. Here are ways to get that under control.