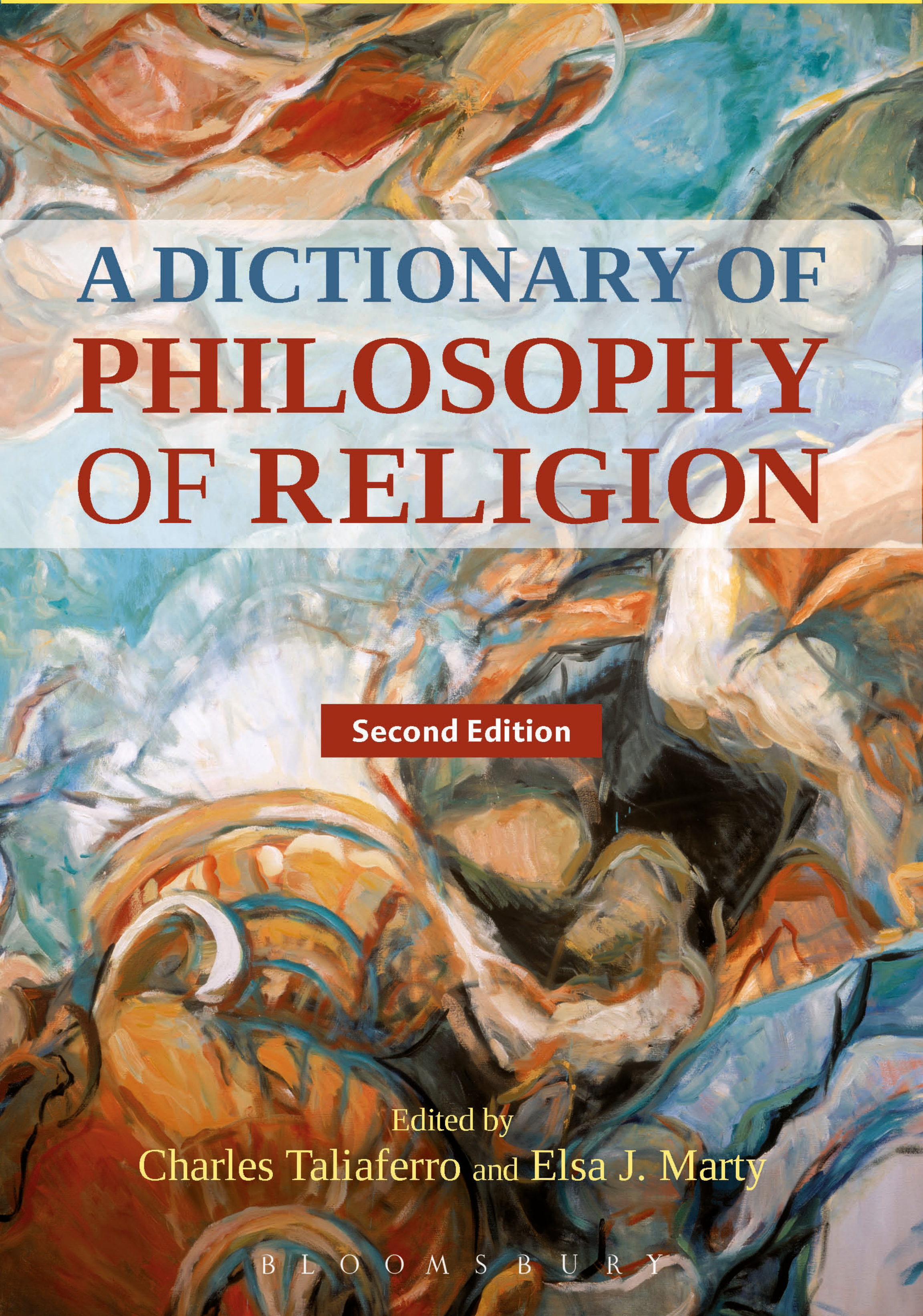
Revised and Updated Edition Includes more than 100 new entries



A DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Second Edition

Edited by
Charles Taliaferro and Elsa J. Marty

BLOOMSBURY

A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion

A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion

Second Edition

EDITED BY
Charles Taliaferro and Elsa J. Marty

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Inc

BLOOMSBURY
NEW YORK • LONDON • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Inc

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

www.bloomsbury.com

**BLOOMSBURY and the Diana logo are trademarks
of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc**

First published 2018

© Charles Taliaferro and Elsa J. Marty, 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the editors.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Taliaferro, Charles, editor. | Marty, Elsa J., editor.
Title: A dictionary of philosophy of religion / edited by Charles Taliaferro and Elsa J. Marty.
Description: Second edition. | New York: Bloomsbury Academic, An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017042955 (print) | LCCN 2017046278 (ebook) | ISBN 9781501325267 (ePDF) | ISBN 9781501325250 (ePub) | ISBN 9781501325236 (pbk.: alk. paper) | ISBN 9781501325243 (hardback: alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Religion–Philosophy–Dictionaries.
Classification: LCC BL51 (ebook) | LCC BL51 .D514 2018 (print) | DDC 210.3–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017042955

ISBN: HB: 978-1-5013-2524-3
PB: 978-1-5013-2523-6
ePub: 978-1-5013-2525-0
ePDF: 978-1-5013-2526-7

Cover image © Jil Evans

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com. Here you will find extracts, author interviews, details of forthcoming events, and the option to sign up for our newsletters.

Contents

Acknowledgments vi

Preface ix

Introduction xi

Chronology xxvi

Dictionary 1–317

Bibliography 319

About the Authors 353

Acknowledgments

To our editor, Haaris Naqvi, our many thanks for his guidance and encouragement. Thanks also go to Katherine De Chant, Andrew Lupton, Lindsey Merritt, Emma Claire dePaulo Reid, Erika Rist, and Linden Smith for assistance in preparing the manuscript. We also thank Divya Bardhan for her expert copy-editing and our project manager, Monica Sukumar. We are the joint authors of all entries with the exception of those scholars we invited to make special contributions. We thank: Shatha Almutawa, Willamette University (Ikhwān al-Safā’); Pamela Sue Anderson, Oxford University (Feminist Philosophy of Religion, Lacan, Lyotard, Ricoeur); Benjamin Carter, University of Durham (Florentine Academy, Glanvill, History, Lessing’s Ditch, Mendelssohn); Sung-Yeon Moon Choi, St. Antony’s College, Oxford (Kyoto School, Nishitani); Robin Collins, Messiah College (Fine-Tuning Argument); Brian Davies, O.P., Fordham University (Divine Simplicity); Paul R. Draper, Purdue University (Bayes’ Theorem); Ashley B. Dreff, Hood Theological Seminary (Wesley); Elizabeth Duel (Buddha, Dalai Lama, Native American Traditions, Wicca); Rika Dunlap, Seattle University (Dōgen); Kevin Flannery, S. J., Gregorian University, Rome (Aquinas, Aristotle); Ian Gerdon, University of Notre Dame (Pelagianism, Roman Catholicism, Transubstantiation); John J. Giannini, Hope College (Analogy, Habermas); Paul J. Griffiths, Duke Divinity School (Augustine, Lying, Reading); Shandon Guthrie, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Angels, Demons); Harriet Harris, University of Edinburgh (Evangelicalism, Evangelism, Fundamentalism, Prayer); Victoria Harrison, University of Macau (Holiness, von Balthasar); William Hasker, Huntington College (Intelligent Design, Molinism, Open Theism); Douglas Hedley, Cambridge University (Coleridge, Divine Sensations, Iamblichus, Literal, *Naturphilosophie*, Neoplatonism, Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Sacrifice, Theurgy); James N. Hoke, Luther College (Basil, Chrysostom, Dion Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Paul); Sonam Kachru, University of Virginia (*Dukkha*, Four Noble Truths, *Śūnyatā*); Dale Jacquette, University of Bern, Switzerland (Schopenhauer); Mark Linville, Clayton State University (Moral Arguments for Theism); Jessica Locke, Loyola University Maryland (Tibetan Buddhism); Robert MacSwain, The School of Theology, Sewanee: The University of the South (Farrer, Lewis); Karen O’Brien-Kop, SOAS, University of London (Sāṃkhya, Yogācāra); David L. O’Hara, Augustana College (Bishop, Heraclitus, Maimonides, Parmenides, Peirce,

Pneuma, Providence, Ptolemaic, Reality, Sacrament, Satan, Separation of Church and State, Suspicion, Symbol, Syncretism, Thales, Transcendentalism, Zeno of Citium); Elizabeth Palmer, Christian Century (Luther); Stephen R. Palmquist, Hong Kong Baptist University (Kant); Stephen R. Palmquist and Sai-ming Wong, Hong Kong Baptist University (Confucianism, Confucius, *Lǐ*, Mencius, Móu Zōngsān, *Qì*, *Tiān*, Wáng Shǒurén); Naimi Patel, Rutgers University (Advaita Vedānta, Rāmānuja, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta); Sunny Patel, George Washington University (*Āśrama*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Dharma*, *Mūrti*, Purāṇas); Paul Reasoner, Bethel University (*Bodhisattva*, Reincarnation, Sincerity, Transfer of Merit); Dan N. Robinson, Oxford University (Reid); Joshua Seachris, University of Notre Dame (Meaning of Life); Lad Sessions, Washington and Lee University (Honor); Vivek Shah, Rutgers University (*Brahman*, Nyāya, *Pramāṇa*, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, Vedas); Marciano Spica, Universidade Estadual Do Centro-Oestem, Brazil (Candomblé); Leslie Stevenson, University of St. Andrews (Religious Society of Friends); Koert Verhagen, University of St. Andrews (Bonhoeffer); David Vessey, Grand Valley State University (Gadamer, Husserl, James, Levinas, Maritain, Pragmatism); Jerry Walls, Houston Baptist University (Universalism); Lesley-Anne Dryer Williams, LeTourneau University (Gnosticism, Scripture, Time); and Sarah Zager, Yale University (Mendelssohn, Rosenzweig).

We are especially grateful to our colleagues at St. Olaf College and the University of Chicago. At St. Olaf: Bob Entenmann (Chéng Hào, Chéng Yí, *Huáinánzǐ*, Huayan School, Lǎozǐ, Neo-Confucianism, Shintoism, Xióng Shílì, Xuánzàng, Xúnzǐ, Zhāng Dōngsūn, Zhāng Zài, Zhū Xī, Zhuāngzǐ), Almut Furchert (Hildegard of Bingen), Jeanine Grenberg (Humility), Benjamin Heidgerken (Baptism, Canon Law, Canonical, Confirmation, Doctrine, Dogmatics/Dogmatic Theology, Donatism, Excommunication, Heaven, Hell, Holocaust, *Homoiousia*, *Homoousia*, Idol/Idolatry, Jansenism, John of the Cross, Judaism, Justification, Liberal Theology, Liturgy, *Logos*, Marcionism, Mass, Messiah, Millennialism, Neo-Thomism, Ordination, Orthodox Church, Orthodoxy, Purgatory, Resurrection, Saints, Salvation, Sanctification, Schism, Sovereignty, Supersessionism, Theocracy, *Theotokos*), Jason Marsh (Cognitive Science), Anantanand Rambachan (Hinduism, Śankara), Anthony Rudd (Fichte, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Schelling, Schiller), Jamie Schillinger (*Falṣafa*, *Jihad*), and Doug Schuurman (Vocation).

At the University of Chicago: Erin Atwell (Hadith, Sufism), David Barr (H. Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold Niebuhr), Olivia Bustion (Analytic Philosophy of Religion, Continental Philosophy of Religion, Eschatology, Queer Theology, Schleiermacher), Jason Cather (Cobb, Ogden), Julius Crump (Black Theology, Rorty), Erik Dreff (Spinoza), Eun Young Hwang (Soteriology, *Wú Wéi*),

Russell Johnson (Gandhi, Heschel, Lindbeck, Peace, Reconciliation, Rhetoric), Hannah Jones (Suffering, Tillich), Allison Kanner (Avicenna, Suhrawardī), SoJung Kim (Cone, Womanist Theology), Susan Lee (Averroës, Ibn Arabi, al-Kindī), Zahra Moeini (al-Rāzī, *Kalām*, Rumi, Shia Islam, Sunni Islam, *Ummah*), Anil Mundra (*Ahiṃsā*, *Anekāntavāda*, *Tīrthāṃkara*), Daniel Owings (Protestantism, *Sola Scriptura*), Viraj Patel (Swaminarayan Hinduism), Andrew Packman (Race), Samantha Pellegrino (Ibn Ezra, Wahhābism), Paride Stortini (Ancestor), Willa Swenson-Lengyel (Hope), Sara-Jo Swiatek (Derrida, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism), Matthew Vanderpoel (Duns Scotus, Lombard, Melanchthon), and Raúl Zegarra (Liberation Theology, Pope John Paul II, Second Vatican Council).

Finally, we thank our families and friends for their continued support and encouragement.

Preface

Some of the earliest recorded philosophy in the West and East concerns matters that are of central religious significance: the existence of God or gods, the holy, the soul, good and evil, the afterlife, the meaning and nature of birth, growth, and maturity, the relationship of the individual to the family or tribe or community or nation state, sacrifice, guilt, mercy, and so on. And from the beginning, philosophers have expressed a passionate commitment to understanding the meaning of the words we use in exploring such terrain. So Confucius gave central importance to what he is said to have referred to as the "rectification of names." And the earliest recordings we have of Socrates show him engaged in a vigorous inquiry into whether his fellow Athenians knew what they were talking about when they appealed to such concepts as holiness, duty to the gods, justice, courage, goodness, friendship, beauty, and art.

This dictionary is in this tradition of seeking to attain clarity and understanding through attention to words, names, and titles. One thing we rediscovered in the course of our work is the importance of community and conversation in the practice of philosophy of religion (historically and today). Sometimes scholarship can be a solitary affair, but while some solitude can provide enviable time for creative reflection, we believe that scholarship is most vibrant when it is a shared activity. We are reminded of the story of the explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley who took on his disastrous journey to the Belgian Congo a host of great books such as the complete collection of Shakespeare. But with no African conversation partners to discuss such books (and partly this was his fault), the bare existence of the books became a pointless burden. In fact, he had to leave all of them except those of Shakespeare, which some Africans insisted he actually burn, as they had become concerned they had become an ill totem of sorts. Without conversation and community, the best of books can be dull companions (unless you happen to be Robinson Crusoe).

We began this dictionary in conversation about the meaning of some terms in contemporary philosophy of religion. It was more of an argument than a conversation, but it led us to join forces in the broader, constructive enterprise of working together on this systematic, ambitious project. As noted in the acknowledgments, this undertaking involved many other scholars as well. We highlight the importance of conversation and exchange in this preface, as it is our earnest desire that this book might function as something of a companion in cultivating or helping inform conversations among our readers. Our hope is to enrich dialogue rather than to substitute for it in any way, for engaging these definitions is only the beginning of philosophical exploration.

Introduction

Philosophy of religion is the philosophical examination of the central themes and concepts involved in religious traditions. It engages all the main areas of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics and value theory, the philosophy of language, science, law, sociology, politics, history, and so on. Philosophy of religion also includes an investigation into the religious significance of historical events (such as the Holocaust) and general features of the cosmos (e.g., laws of nature, the emergence of conscious life, and the widespread testimony of religious experience). In this introduction we offer an overview of the field and its significance, with subsequent sections on the concept of God, arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, the challenge of logical positivism, and religious and philosophical pluralism. At the outset, we address philosophy of religion as chiefly studied primarily in so-called analytic departments of philosophy and religious studies in English-speaking countries, but we conclude with observations about so-called continental philosophy of religion. The qualification of "so-called" is added because the distinction between analytic and continental is controversial.

The Field and its Significance

The philosophical exploration of religious beliefs and practices is evident in the earliest recorded philosophy, Eastern and Western. In the West, throughout Greco-Roman philosophy and the medieval era, philosophical reflection on God or gods, reason and faith, the soul, afterlife, and so on were not considered to be a subdiscipline called "philosophy of religion." The philosophy of God was simply one component among many interwoven philosophical projects. This intermingling of philosophical inquiry with religious themes and the broader enterprises of philosophy (e.g., political theory, epistemology, and so on) is apparent among many early modern philosophers such as John Locke and George Berkeley. Only gradually do we find texts devoted exclusively to religious themes. The first use of the term "philosophy of religion" in English occurs in the seventeenth-century work of Ralph Cudworth. He and his Cambridge University colleague Henry More (who were part of a movement that came to be known as Cambridge Platonism) produced philosophical work with a specific focus on religion and so, if one insisted on dating the beginning of philosophy of religion as a field, there are good reasons for claiming that it began (gradually) in the mid-seventeenth century. We have inherited from the Cambridge Platonists, who were the first authors to do philosophy in the English language, many terms and projects used in philosophy of religion today such as “theism” and “consciousness.” The Cambridge Platonists also provided us with a model for practicing philosophy with charity, a deep concern for justice (personally and in governance), and toleration.

Today philosophy of religion is a robust, intensely active area of philosophy. The importance of philosophy of religion is chiefly due to subject matter: alternative beliefs about God, *Brahman*, and the sacred, the varieties of religious experience, the interplay between science and religion, the challenge of nonreligious philosophies, the nature and scope of good and evil, religious treatments of birth, history, and death, and other substantial terrain. A philosophical exploration of these topics involves fundamental questions about our place in the cosmos and about our relationship to what may transcend the cosmos. It requires an investigation into the nature and limit of human thought and explores embedded social and personal practices. A vast majority of the world population is either aligned with religion or affected by religion, making philosophy of religion not simply a matter of abstract theory but also highly relevant to practical concerns. Religious traditions are so comprehensive and all-encompassing in their claims that almost every domain of philosophy may be drawn upon in the philosophical investigation of their coherence, justification, and value.

Philosophy of religion also makes important contributions to religious studies and theology. Historically, theology has been influenced by, or has drawn upon, philosophy. Platonism and Aristotelianism had a major influence on the articulation of classical Christian doctrine, and in the modern era theologians frequently have drawn on work by philosophers (from Hegel to Iris Murdoch, Heidegger, and Derrida). Philosophy strives to clarify, evaluate, and compare religious beliefs. The evaluation has at times been highly critical and dismissive, but there are abundant periods in the history of ideas when philosophy has positively contributed to the flourishing of religious life. This constructive interplay is not limited to the West. The impact of philosophy on distinctive Buddhist views of knowledge and the self has been of great importance. Just as philosophical ideas have fueled theological work, the great themes of theology involving God’s transcendence, the divine attributes, providence, and so on have made substantial impacts on important philosophical projects.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a more general rationale for philosophy of religion should be cited: it can enhance cross-cultural dialogue. Philosophers of religion now often seek out common as well as distinguishing features of religious belief and practice. This study can enhance communication between traditions, and between religions and secular institutions. The current cultural climate in the West makes it especially important for persons to develop an appreciation for some religious traditions that are treated disparagingly in popular media.

The Concept of God

Most philosophy of religion in the West has focused on different versions of theism. Ancient philosophy of religion wrestled with the credibility of monotheism and polytheism in opposition to skepticism and very primitive naturalistic schemes. For example, Plato argued that the view that God is singularly good should be preferred to the portrait of the gods that was articulated in Greek poetic tradition, according to which there are many gods, often imperfect and subject to vice and ignorance. The emergence and development of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) on a global scale secured the centrality of theism for philosophical inquiry, but the relevance of a philosophical exploration of theism is not limited to those interested in these religions and the cultures in which they flourish. While theism has generally flourished in religious traditions amid religious practices, one may be a theist without adopting any religion whatever, and one may find theistic elements (however piecemeal) in Confucianism, Hinduism, some versions of Mahāyāna Buddhism (in which Buddha is depicted as omniscient), and other traditions. The debate over theism also has currency for secular humanism and religious forms of atheism as in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

Traditionally, theists have maintained that God is maximally excellent, necessarily existent, incorporeal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal or everlasting, and essentially good. Theists have differed over whether they regard God as impassable (not subject to passion) or passable. There is no space to address these issues in detail here; however, the nature of these divine attributes and their relationship to one another have been the subject of much reflection within philosophy of religion.

At least two concerns arise when articulating the concept of God and the divine attributes. First, some argue that there is a tension between the God of philosophy and the God of revelation. If scripture definitively portrays God as loving and just, then scriptural narratives in which God appears neither loving nor just must either be interpreted as reflecting a projection of fallible human lovelessness and injustice, or theologians need to show how the God of revelation is, despite appearances, consistently loving and just. Those adopting the first approach invoke the concept of progressive revelation, whereby God has been increasingly revealed over time. Precepts in Hebrew scripture that allow slavery, for example, are judged to be primitive, merely human projections that eventually give way to the purity and nobility of ethical monotheism as evidenced in prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos. Other philosophers respond by using the biblical understanding of God to shape the philosophy of God. Thus, while some traditional theists have believed God to be eternal, changeless, and impassable, other philosophers use biblical texts to defend the idea that God is in time, subject to change, and has passions (e.g., love of the good). Again, some traditionalists have held that God is not subject to passive states and thus God is not subject to a love that involves suffering. Others ask why suffering love has to be seen as a passive state of being subject to creation. Perhaps love (whether it is sorrowing or joyful) can be understood as supreme action, perhaps even as a reflection of a supreme, great-making excellence. This new discussion opens opportunities for the scriptural portrait of God to inform the philosophy of God, bringing a more affective dimension to the philosophy of God.

A second issue arising from philosophical reflection on the concept of God concerns the extent to which human thought and language can form an intelligible concept of God. God is beyond both insofar as God (the reality) is not a human thought or term; if God exists, God preexists all human and any other created life. In this sense, God's thoughts are (literally) different from any human thought. Theists seek to balance positive claims about God (technically referenced to as cataphatic theology) with an acknowledgment of the importance of negation or negative claims (apophatic theology). Defenders of a strict, apophatic philosophy of God sometimes assume that conceptual and linguistic limitations are in some sense religiously confining or subjugating. But without concepts or some language, deep religious practices like loving or worshiping God would be impossible. To love X, you have to have some concept or idea of X. How would you know whether you were or were not worshiping X if you had no idea whatsoever about X? At least in theistic traditions, some language and concept of God seems essential. Also, there is a difference between claiming that God is more than or greater than our best terms and concepts and the claim that God is not less than our best terms and concepts. So, one may assert that God is omniscient and analyze this in terms of God knowing all that can possibly be known. One may well grant that, and yet go on to claim that how God possesses this knowledge and what it would be like to be omniscient surpasses the best possible human imagination.

A significant amount of work on the meaningfulness of religious language was carried out in the medieval period, with major contributions made by Maimonides (1135–1204), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Duns Scotus (1266–1308), and William of Ockham (1285–1347). This work built on the even earlier work on religious language by Philo (20 BCE–50 CE), Clement (150–215), and Origen (185–259) of Alexandria. In the modern era, the greatest concentration on religious language has taken place in response to logical positivism and to the later work of Wittgenstein (1889–1951).

The Challenge of Logical Positivism

In the mid-twentieth century, a powerful movement, logical positivism, promoted an empiricist principle of meaning which asserted that for a propositional claim (statement) to be meaningful it must either be about the bare formal relations between ideas such as those enshrined in mathematics and analytic definitions ("A is A," "triangles are three-sided") or there must in principle be perceptual experience providing evidence of whether the claim is true or false. This delimited meaningful discourse about the world and meant that ostensibly factual claims that have no implications for our empirical experience are empty of content. In line with this form of positivism, A. J. Ayer (1910–1989) and others claimed that religious beliefs were meaningless.

Empiricist challenges to the meaningfulness of religious belief are still raised, but are now deemed less impressive than they once were. In the history of the debate over positivism, the most radical charge was that positivism is self-refuting. The empiricist criterion of meaning itself does not seem to be a statement that expresses the formal relation of ideas, nor does it appear to be empirically verifiable. How might one empirically verify the principle? At best, the principle of verification seems to be a recommendation as to how to describe those statements that positivists are prepared to accept as meaningful. But then, how might a dispute about which other statements are meaningful be settled in a non-arbitrary fashion? To religious believers for whom talk of "*Brahman*" and "God" is at the center stage of meaningful discourse, the use of the principle of empirical verification will seem arbitrary and question-begging. If the positivist principle is tightened up too much, it seems to threaten various propositions that at least appear to be highly respectable, such as scientific claims about physical processes and events that are not publicly observable. For example, what are we to think of states of the universe prior to all observation of physical strata of the cosmos that cannot be observed directly or indirectly but only inferred as part of an overriding scientific theory? Or what about the mental states of other persons, which may ordinarily be reliably judged, but which, some argue, are underdetermined by external, public observation? A person's subjective states—how one feels—can be profoundly elusive to external observers and even to the person him or herself. Can you empirically observe another person's sense of happiness? Arguably, the conscious, subjective states of persons resist airtight verification and the evidence of such states does not meet positivism's standards.

The strict empiricist account of meaning was also charged as meaningless on the grounds that there is no coherent, clear, basic level of experience with which to test propositional claims. The experiential "given" is simply too malleable (this has been called "the myth of the given"), often reflecting prior conceptual judgments and, once one appreciates the open-textured character of experience, it may be proposed that virtually any experience can verify or provide some evidence for anything. Not every philosopher has embraced such an epistemological anarchy, but the retreat of positivism has made philosophers more cautious about identifying a sensory foundation for testing all claims to meaningful language.

One of the most sustained lessons from the encounter between positivism and the philosophy of religion is the importance of assessing the meaning of individual beliefs in comprehensive terms. The meaning of ostensible propositional claims must take into account larger theoretical frameworks. Religious claims could not be ruled out at the start but should be allowed a hearing with competing views of cognitive significance.

Arguments for and against the Existence of God

One of the main issues in philosophy of religion concerns arguments for and against the existence of God. Naturalists argue that the cosmos itself, or nature, is all that exists. Strict naturalists, or eliminativists, believe that reality consists only of what is described and explained by the ideal natural sciences, especially physics, and therefore they deny the reality of subjective experiences or consciousness, ideas, emotions, morality, and the mental life in general. Broad naturalists affirm the possibility or plausibility of the mental life and ethical truths, but reject the existence of God. Appealing to Ockham's razor, the thesis that one should not posit entities beyond necessity, strict and broad naturalists argue that atheism ought to be the presumption of choice.

Theists respond by appealing to four significant, interconnected arguments for the existence of God: the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments, and an argument from religious experience. The ontological argument contends that reflections on the idea and possibility of God's existence provide a reason for thinking God actually exists. The cosmological argument contends that it is reasonable to think that our contingent cosmos must be accounted for, in part, by the causal creativity of a necessarily existing being. Teleological arguments contend that our ordered, complex cosmos, with its laws of nature, is better explained by theism rather than naturalism. And the argument from religious experience argues that the widespread reports by persons across time and culture who (appear to) experience a transcendent, divine reality provide grounds for thinking there is such a reality. Some theists also make arguments based on miracles and morality. These arguments are considered mutually reinforcing, so that, for example, the cosmological argument may be complemented by a teleological argument, thereby providing reasons for thinking the necessarily-existing being is also purposive. Few philosophers today advance a single argument as a proof. It is increasingly common to see philosophies—scientific naturalism or theism or some other worldview—advanced with cumulative arguments, a whole range of considerations, and not with a supposed knock-down, single proof.

One reason why the case for and against major, comprehensive philosophies are mostly cumulative is because of discontent in what is often called "foundationalism." In one classical form of foundationalism, one secures first and foremost a basis of beliefs which one may see to be true with certainty. The base may be cast as indubitable or infallible. One then slowly builds up the justification for one's other, more extensive beliefs about oneself and the world. Many (but not all) philosophers now see justification as more complex and interwoven; the proper object of philosophical inquiry is overall coherence, not a series of distinguishable building operations beginning with a foundation.

One way of carrying out philosophy of religion along non-foundationalist lines has been to build a case for the comparative rationality of a religious view of the world. It has been argued that the intellectual integrity of a religious worldview can be secured if it can be shown to be no less rational than the available alternatives. It need only achieve intellectual parity.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, some philosophers have downplayed (or even repudiated) the significance of theistic and anti-theistic arguments from the natural world. A movement called Reformed Epistemology has contended that a Christian might be warranted in her belief that there is a God if she has (what she believes to be) a sense of God and it turns out that God exists and has made her (and others) to have such a sense of God's presence. The contrary position, often called "evidentialism," claims that warranted or justified beliefs about God (and all other beliefs) need to be grounded in evidence.

While a great deal of philosophy of religion is devoted to the tension between secular naturalism and theism, there have been philosophers who have questioned this binary. Some naturalists have developed forms of their worldview that are explicitly religious (religious naturalism), some theists have developed forms of their worldview that are somewhat naturalistic (one phrase that captures this trend is "theism without the supernatural"). Still other philosophers, such as feminist philosophers, have focused not so much on the evidence and arguments for and against theism and naturalism, but more on the social, political, and ethical implications of those (and other) worldviews.

The Problem of Evil

The problem of evil is the most widely considered objection to theism in both Western and Eastern philosophy. If there is a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and completely good, why is there evil? There are two general versions of the problem: the deductive or logical version, which asserts that the existence of any evil at all (regardless of its role in producing good) is incompatible with God's existence; and the probabilistic version, which asserts that given the quantity and severity of evil that actually exists, it is unlikely that God exists. The deductive problem is currently less commonly debated because it is widely acknowledged that a thoroughly good being (a creature or the Creator) might allow or inflict some harm under certain morally compelling conditions (such as causing someone pain in a medical procedure when essential to prevent greater harm or to bring about a great good). More intense debate concerns the likelihood (or even possibility) that there is a completely good God given the vast amount of evil in the cosmos. Consider human and animal suffering caused by death, predation, birth defects, ravaging diseases, virtually unchecked human wickedness, torture, rape, oppression, and natural disasters. Consider how often those who suffer are innocent. Why should there be so much gratuitous, apparently pointless evil?

In the face of the problem of evil, some philosophers and theologians deny that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. John Stuart Mill took this line, and panentheist theologians today also question the traditional treatments of divine power. According to panentheism, God is immanent in the world, suffering with the oppressed and working to bring good out of evil, although in spite of God's efforts, evil will invariably mar the created order. Another response is to think of God as being very different from a moral agent. Brian Davies and others have contended that what it means for God to be good is different from what it means for an agent to be morally good. A more desperate strategy is to deny the existence of evil, but it is difficult to reconcile traditional monotheism with moral skepticism. Also, insofar as we believe there to be a God worthy of worship and a fitting object of human love, the appeal to moral skepticism will carry little weight. The idea that evil is a privation of the good, a twisting of something good, may have some currency in thinking through the problem of evil, but it is difficult to see how it alone could go very far to vindicate belief in God's goodness. Searing pain and endless suffering seem altogether real even if they are analyzed as being philosophically parasitic on something valuable.

In part, the magnitude one takes the problem of evil to pose for theism will depend upon one's commitments in other areas of philosophy, especially ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. If in ethics one holds that there should be no preventable suffering for any reason, no matter what the cause or consequence, then the problem of evil will conflict with the acceptance of traditional theism. Moreover, if one holds that any solution to the problem of evil should be evident to all persons, then again traditional theism is in jeopardy, for clearly the "solution" is not evident to all. Debate has largely centered on the legitimacy of adopting some position in the middle: a theory of values that would preserve a clear assessment of the profound evil in the cosmos as well as some understanding of how this might be compatible with the existence of an all-powerful, completely good Creator. Could there be reasons why God would permit cosmic ills? If we do not know what those reasons might be, are we in a position to conclude that there are none or that there could not be any? The different possibilities one considers will be shaped by one's metaphysics. For example, if one does not believe there is free will, then one will not be moved by any appeal to the positive value of free will and its role in bringing about good as offsetting its role in bringing about evil.

Theistic responses to the problem of evil distinguish between a defense and a theodicy. A defense seeks to establish that rational belief that God exists is still possible (when the defense is employed against the logical version of the problem of evil) and that the existence of evil does not make it improbable that God exists (when used against the probabilistic version). Some have adopted the defense strategy while arguing that we are in a position to have rational beliefs in the existence of evil and in a completely good God who hates this evil, even though we may be unable to see how these two beliefs are compatible. A theodicy is more ambitious, and is typically part of a broader project, arguing that it is reasonable to believe that God exists on the basis of the good as well as the evident evil of the cosmos. In a theodicy, the project is not to account for each and every evil, but to provide an overarching framework within which to understand at least roughly how the evil that occurs is part of some overall good—for instance, the overcoming of evil is itself a great good. In practice, a defense and a theodicy often appeal to similar factors, such as the Greater Good Defense, which contends that that evil can be understood as either a necessary accompaniment to bringing about greater goods or an integral part of these goods.

Some portraits of an afterlife seem to have little bearing on our response to the magnitude of evil here and now. Does it help to understand why God allows evil if all victims will receive happiness later? But it is difficult to treat the possibility of an afterlife as entirely irrelevant. Is death the annihilation of persons or an event involving a transfiguration to a higher state? If you do not think that it matters whether persons continue to exist after death, then such speculation is of little consequence. But suppose that the afterlife is understood as being morally intertwined with this life, with the opportunity for moral and spiritual reformation, transfiguration of the wicked, rejuvenation and occasions for new life, perhaps even reconciliation and communion between oppressors seeking forgiveness and their victims. Then these considerations might help to defend against arguments based on the existence of evil. Insofar as one cannot rule out the possibility of an afterlife morally tied to our life, one cannot rule out the possibility that God brings some good out of cosmic ills.

Religious Pluralism and other recent developments in philosophy of religion

In contemporary philosophy of religion, there has been a steady, growing representation of non-monotheistic traditions, involving fresh translations of philosophical and religious texts from India, China, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Exceptional figures from non-Western traditions have an increased role in cross-cultural philosophy of religion and religious dialogue. There are now extensive treatments of pantheism and student-friendly guides to diverse religious conceptions of the cosmos. This expansion of the field is reflected in this second edition of our dictionary, which features an expansion of entries outside the Abrahamic faiths.

The expanded interest in religious pluralism has led to extensive reflection on the compatibilities and possible synthesis of religions. John Hick is the preeminent synthesizer of religious traditions. Moving from a broadly based theistic view of God to what he calls “the Real,” a noumenal sacred reality, Hick claims that different religions provide us with a glimpse or partial access to the Real. He sees religious traditions as different meeting points in which a person might transcend ego-driven, selfish desires and be in relation to the same reality or the Real. While Hick is reluctant to attribute positive properties to the Real in itself (he leaves undetermined whether the Real is personal or impersonal), he holds that all persons will evolve or develop into a saving relationship with the Real after death. One advantage of Hick’s position is that it undermines a rationale for religious conflict. If successful, this approach would offer a way to accommodate diverse communities and undermine what has been a source of grave conflict in the past.

The response to Hick’s proposal has been mixed. Some contend that the very concept of “the Real” is incoherent or not religiously adequate. Indeed, articulating the nature of the Real is no easy task. Some think that Hick has secured not the equal acceptability of diverse religions but rather their unacceptability. In their classical forms, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity diverge. If, say, the incarnation of God in Christ did not occur, would not Christianity be false? In reply, Hick has sought to interpret specific claims about the incarnation in ways that do not commit Christians to the “literal truth” of God becoming enfleshed. The “truth” of the incarnation has been interpreted in such terms as these: in Jesus Christ (or in the narratives about Christ) God is disclosed. Or: Jesus Christ was so united with God's will that his actions were and are the functional display of God's character. Perhaps as a result of Hick's challenge, philosophical work on the incarnation and other beliefs and practices specific to religious traditions have received renewed attention.

As noted earlier, an interesting new development in philosophy of religion has been to explore the extent to which evidence is required in order for religious beliefs to be warranted. Related to this, debate is taking place today on the extent to which evidence that one religion is true counts as evidence that a religion that makes different truth claims is false. We are also seeing philosophers who see religions as not primarily making truth claims about the nature of reality but as advancing "forms of life" or ways of living that involve religious values such as humility, hope, solidarity with those who suffer, and so on. Yet another key movement that is developing has come to be called Continental Philosophy of Religion, for it approaches issues such as the concept of God, pluralism, religious experience, metaphysics, and epistemology in light of Heidegger, Derrida, and other continental philosophers.

There are many points at which continental philosophy can be seen as complementing classical and mainstream philosophy of religion, but some elements of continental thought are pitted against traditional philosophy of religion which is sometimes called "onto-theology." The latter privileges theoretical clarity, explanations of the cosmos, divine attributes, rules of evidence, and so on. Merold Westphal is a representative of those working in the continental tradition who believe that philosophy of religion should be so structured that it privileges the practical life of faith. Westphal develops his position as a Christian inspired by Martin Heidegger:

> the goal of theology "is never a valid system of theological prepositions" but rather "concrete Christian experience itself." . . . [B]ecause its goal is the *praxis* of the believer as a distinctive mode of existence, "*theology in its essence is a practical science*." Unlike onto-theology, theology properly understood is "innately homiletical" . . . It is as if Heidegger is saying, I have found it necessary to deny theory in order to make room for practice.[1]

Westphal further articulates his position in connection with a novel by C. S. Lewis (*Till We Have Faces*) in which a main character loses her beloved (the god Psyche) because she seeks knowledge about the beloved:

---

[1] Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 16.

> the challenge of faith is the same: the believer is called upon to sustain a beautiful and loving relationship through trust in a lover about whom she remains significantly (though not totally) in the dark and who, though he gives himself to her freely, is not at her disposal. The relationship is destroyed when the beloved . . . insists on Enlightenment, on dissipating the darkness of mystery with the light of human knowledge, on walking by sight and not by faith.
>
> To be able to resist this temptation, faith must deny theory, or, to be more precise, the primacy of insight. For such faith, Plato's divided line and Hegel's modern vision thereof as the movement "beyond faith" to knowledge are not the ascent from that which is inferior . . . to that which is superior . . . ; they are rather the withdrawal from the site at which alone is possible a loving, trusting relation with a God before whom one might sing and dance . . .
>
> This love, this trust, this relationship—these are the practice for the sake of which it was necessary to deny theory. This is not to abolish theology. It is to see that theology's task is to serve this life of faith, not the ideals of knowledge as defined by the philosophical traditions . . .[2]

This position calls for several observations. First, philosophy of religion has demonstrated that, as a field, it is wide enough to include diverse projects, including Westphal's. Second, Westphal advances his preferred model of theology and philosophy as a Christian. In a field with a plurality of religions represented, philosophers will find it difficult to abandon questions of knowledge, inquiry about the truth or plausibility of theological propositions, and only serve the "life of faith." Finally, it is hard to grasp how one can focus upon the religious or secular "beautiful and loving relationship through trust" in God or the sacred or a beloved human without having a theoretical commitment to the reality of God, the sacred, or the beloved human and concepts of that beloved, assumed reality. We suggest that proposals like Westphal's will find it difficult to supplant (though they may complement) traditional and contemporary philosophy of religion.

Conclusion

At its best, we believe that the philosophy of religion is about openness to serious dialogue and respectful argument across religious, cultural, and other boundaries. This kind of careful, disciplined thinking provides one of the best ways to engage other religions, and to engage those who reject religion, in a way that can bring deeper understanding of and sympathy for others. There is some resistance to acknowledging the way philosophy of religion should promote what is best described as the pursuit of such wise exchanges between different parties. Christian philosopher Michael Rea recently signaled his resistance to the idea that philosophy of religion (or theology) should promote wisdom.

---

[2] Ibid., 27.

> But I cannot resist noting that, despite the superficial attractiveness of the idea that philosophers and theologians ought to be aiming in the direction of wisdom and moral improvement, Christian philosophers as such, and theologians as well, might in fact have some reason for resisting this idea. Recently, a student from another (religious) university emailed me and asked, among other things, what philosophy books or articles I'd recommend for the purpose of helping him to grow in wisdom. My answer was that I wouldn't recommend philosophical texts for that purpose at all; rather, I'd recommend scripture. If philosophy as a discipline (or theology) were to aim its efforts at the production of a self-contained body of wisdom, or at a general theory of right living, it would (I think) be aiming at the production of a *rival* to scripture. And that is a project that I think Christian philosophers and theologians ought to try to avoid. Indeed, to my mind, this sort of project involves just as much hubris as onto-theology is said to involve. Thus, it seems to me that the right *theoretical* task for Christian philosophers and theologians to pursue is in fact one that involves clarifying, systematizing, and model-building—precisely the sort of project that analytic philosophers are engaged in.[3]

We are far from suggesting that philosophy of religion should aim at a "self-contained body of wisdom" or produce a sacred scripture, but we suggest by way of reply two points.

First, no scripture in any tradition (including the Christian Bible) is best described as "self-contained wisdom." All sacred scriptures are linked with religious communities, histories, traditions of interpretation, and so on. Second, although Rea is an outstanding, highly gifted philosopher of religion, we suggest that, in the above statement, he seems to underestimate how respectful dialogue, joint inquiry into multiple religions and their secular alternatives (with all the involved "clarifying, systematizing, and model-building"), can be foundational for a life that involves the love of wisdom which is, after all, the etymological root of the term "philosophy" (from the Greek *philo* for love and *sophia* for wisdom).

---

[3] Michael Rea, *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18–19.

Resources

Philosophy of religion is represented in virtually all the main philosophy journals, but it is the specific focus of *The International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Religious Studies, Faith and Philosophy, Philosophia Christi, Philosophy and Theology, Sophia, American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (formerly *New Scholasticism*), *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, European Journal for Philosophy of Religion,* and *The Thomist*. Theology journals also carry considerable philosophy of religion, especially *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion, The Journal of Religion, Theological Studies, The Journal of Religious Ethics, Heythrop Journal, The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics, Theology Today, New Blackfriars, Modern Theology, Harvard Theological Review,* the *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies,* and the *Scottish Journal of Theology.* Philosophy of religion can also be found in some cross-disciplinary journals like *Law and Religion, The Journal of Law and Religion, Literature and Theology, The Journal of Humanism and Ethical Religions,* and *Christian Scholar's Review.*

Several scholarly presses produce series of books in philosophy of religion. Continuum publishes a series in philosophy of religion under the editorship Stewart Goetz. Cornell University Press publishes *Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion,* Indiana University Press publishes *The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion,* Kluwer Academic Publishers publishes *Studies in Philosophy and Religion,* and the State University Press of New York publishes *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions*. University presses such as Oxford, Cambridge, Notre Dame, Pennsylvania State, and Temple regularly publish work in philosophy of religion. Prometheus Books produces a substantial number of works in philosophy of religion, most of them highly critical of theism.

Topics in the philosophy of religion are indexed in the *Philosopher's Index*, published by the Philosophical Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University. Entries are listed under such titles as "God," "Religious Experience," and "Buddhism." This is a highly valued tool for writing papers, whether these be for a class or for making a contribution to the field. The *Philosopher's Index* offers brief abstracts summarizing the main tenets of books and articles. It is available on CD covering works published from 1940 to the present thought DIALOG Information Services. Philosophy of religion is also indexed in yearly publications of the *Religion Index* (in two volumes). These are produced by the American Theological Association, Evanston, Illinois, USA, and are also available on CD. Books in philosophy of religion are also regularly reviewed by in the journal *Philosophical Books*.

There are regular sessions on the philosophy of religion on the programs of the annuals meetings of the three divisions of the American Philosophical Association, as well as on the program of the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Societies and institutions focusing on the philosophy of religion include: the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion; the Society for the Philosophy of Religion; the Society of Christian Philosophers; the Philosophy of Religion Society; the American Catholic Philosophical Association; Boston University Institute for Philosophy of Religion; the American Humanist Association; the American Maritain Association; the fellowship of Religious Humanists; the Jesuit Philosophical Association; the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy; and the Society for Philosophy and Theology. Addresses for most of these organizations are listed in the *Directory of American Philosophers,* a publication of the Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University.

There is a Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame which offers fellowships to undertake research in the field. Information about the center is noted in the journal *Faith and Philosophy*. St. Olaf College is the site of the Kierkegaard Library, a Publication and Study Center dedicated to the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) who made an enormous contribution to the philosophy of religion. Fellowships to study at the center are available. The website “www.infidels. org” is a wonderful and easily accessible database for journal articles exploring the philosophy of religion from the atheist school of thought. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy also exists as an outstanding source for the study of the philosophy of religion.

Chronology

(c.= circa, signifying approximate dates)

c. 2600 BCE	Indus Valley Civilization
c. 1812–c. 1637 BCE	Abraham
c. 1500–c. 1200 BCE	Development of Brahmanism. Likely composition of Hindu Vedas.
c. 1300 BCE	Moses and the Ten Commandments
c. 1000 BCE	Kingdom of Israel begins
c. 1000–500 BCE	Pentateuch is written
c. 800–400 BCE	Likely composition of early Hindu Upaniṣads
c. 600–583 BCE	Zoroaster (Zarathustra), founder of Zoroastrianism in Persia
c. 599–527 BCE	Mahāvīra, founder of Jainism
586–587 BCE	Babylonians conquer Jerusalem; Israelites taken into captivity
c. 570–510 BCE	Lǎozǐ, founder of Taoism
c. 570–495 BCE	Pythagoras of Samos
c. 570–480 BCE	Xenophanes of Colophon
566–486 BCE	Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), founder of Buddhism
c. 551–479 BCE	Confucius, founder of Confucianism
531 BCE	Siddhartha attains Enlightenment
c. 500–450 BCE	Parmenides of Elea
c. 500 BCE	Founding of Shintoism in Japan
490–480 BCE	Persian Wars
c. 469–399 BCE	Socrates
431–404 BCE	Peloponnesian War; End of the Golden Age of Greece
427–347 BCE	Plato
c. 400–c. 325 BCE	Diogenes the Cynic
c. 387 BCE	Plato founds the Academy
384–322 BCE	Aristotle
c. 372–289 BCE	Mencius, Confucian philosopher
367 BCE	Aristotle enters the Academy
c. 365–c. 275 BCE	Pyrrho the Sceptic

c. 343–339 BCE	Aristotle tutors Alexander
341–270 BCE	Epicurus, founder of Epicurean philosophy
c. 336 BCE	Aristotle founds Lyceum
c. 333–264 BCE	Zeno of Citium, founds Stoic school
323 BCE	Death of Alexander the Great
221 BCE	Great Wall of China built
206 BCE–220 CE	Han Dynasty
200–100 BCE	Buddhism splits into Theravada and Mahāyāna
106–43 BCE	Marcus Tullius Cicero
27 BCE	End of the Roman Republic
c. 4 BCE–c. 30 CE	Jesus of Nazareth, founder of Christianity
c. 1 BCE–65 CE	Lucius Annaeus Seneca
c. 55–135	Epictetus of Hierapolis
70	Destruction of Jewish temple in Jerusalem
100–165	Justin Martyr
121–180	Marcus Aurelius
c. 150–200	Nāgārjuna, founder of Madhyamaka school of Buddhism
c. 200	Sextus Empiricus
205–c. 269	Plotinus, founder of Neoplatonism
c. 215–276	Mani, founder of Manicheaism
325	Council of Nicaea
c. 338–397	St. Ambrose
354–430	St. Augustine of Hippo
380	Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire
410	Fall of Rome
451	Council of Chalcedon
c. 475–524	Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius
c. 480–c. 540	Dignāga
570–632	Muḥammad, prophet of Islam
610	Muḥammad receives his first revelation from God in a cave during Ramadan
613	Muḥammad begins preaching about his revelations
c. 650	Qur’an written
c. 788–c. 820	Adi Śankara, founder of Advaita Vedānta Hinduism
789	Beginning of the Viking Expansion
c. 801–866	Al-Kindī
859	Founding of the first university, University of Karueein, Fez, Morocco

c. 870–950	Al Fārābī
962	The Holy Roman Empire is established
980–1037	Avicenna (Ibn Sīna)
1017–1137	Rāmānuja, founder of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta Hinduism
1033–1109	St. Anselm of Canterbury
1059–1111	Al-Ghazālī
1079–1142	Peter Abélard
1096–1099	First Crusade
1099	Christian capture of Jerusalem
1101–1164	Héloïse
1126–1198	Averroës (Ibn Rushd)
1135–1204	Moses Maimonides
c. 1181–1226	St. Francis of Assisi
1200	Sacking and burning of Library of Nalanda
1214–1292	Roger Bacon
1215	Magna Carta signed
1221–1274	Bonaventure of Bagnoregio
1221–1327	Mongol Invasion of India
1225–1274	Thomas Aquinas
1254–1324	Marco Polo
1258	Sack of Baghdad
1265–1321	Dante Alighieri
c. 1266–1308	Duns Scotus
c. 1285–c. 1349	William of Ockham
c. 1299	Birth of the Ottoman Empire
c. 1304–c. 1576	The Renaissance
1337–1453	The Hundred Years War
1346–1353	The Black Plague
c. 1400–1464	Nicholas of Cusa
1433–1499	Marsilio Ficino
1440	Guttenberg invents the printing press
1452–1519	Leonardo da Vinci
1453	Constantinople falls to the Ottomans, ending the Byzantine era
1466–1536	Desiderius Erasmus
1469–1527	Niccolò Machiavelli
1478–1535	Thomas More
1483–1546	Martin Luther
1492	Columbus' Voyage; expulsion of the Jews from Spain

1509–1564	John Calvin
1517	Luther nails his 95 Theses to the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany
1517–1648	The Reformation
1529	Siege of Vienna
1533–1592	Michel de Montaigne
1548–1600	Giordano Bruno; accused of heresy and burned by Inquisition
1548–1607	Francisco Suárez
1561–1626	Francis Bacon
1565	Siege of Malta
1571	Battle of Lepanto
1575–1624	Jakob Böhme
1588–1679	Thomas Hobbes
1588	Defeat of the Spanish Armada
1592–1655	Pierre Gassendi
1596–1650	René Descartes
1599–1658	Oliver Cromwell
1609–1683	Benjamin Whichcote
1614–1687	Henry More
1617–1688	Ralph Cudworth
1618–1648	Thirty Years War
1623–1662	Blaise Pascal
1632–1704	John Locke
1633	Catholic Church’s condemnation of Galileo
1638–1715	Nicolas Malebranche
1641–1651	English Civil War
1646–1716	Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
1668–1744	Giovanni Battista Vico
1671–1713	Lord Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper)
1685–1753	George Berkeley
1694–1778	Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet)
1703–1758	Jonathan Edwards
1710–1796	Thomas Reid
1711–1776	David Hume
1712–1778	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
1713–1784	Denis Diderot
1723–1790	Adam Smith
1724–1804	Immanuel Kant
1729–1797	Edmund Burke

1741	Roman Catholic Church condemns slavery
1748–1832	Jeremy Bentham
1755	Great Lisbon Earthquake
1765–1783	American Revolution
1768–1834	Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher
1770–1831	Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
1775–1854	Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling
1788–1860	Arthur Schopenhauer
1789–1799	French Revolution
1804–1872	Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach
1806–1873	John Stuart Mill
1806	The Holy Roman Empire dissolves
1809–1882	Charles Darwin
1812–1892	Bahá'u'lláh
1813–1855	Søren Kierkegaard
1815	End of the Napoleonic Wars
1817–1892	Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í faith
1818–1883	Karl Marx
1819–1850	The Báb, preached the coming of Bahá'u'lláh the prophet
1833	Slavery abolished in the British Empire
1838–1900	Henry Sidgwick
1839–1914	Charles Peirce
1842–1910	William James
1844–1900	Friedrich Nietzsche
1844–1921	'Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh, consolidated the foundation of the Bahá'í faith
1846–1924	F. H. Bradley
1856–1939	Sigmund Freud
1859–1941	Henri Bergson
1859–1952	John Dewey
1861–1865	American Civil War
1861–1947	Alfred North Whitehead
1861	Serfdom abolished in Russia
1863	Emancipation Proclamation
1868	End of Feudal Rule in Japan
1869–1937	Rudolf Otto
1873–1970	Bertrand Russell
1874–1948	Nikolai Berdyaev
1884–1976	Rudolph Bultmann

1886–1965	Paul Tillich
1889–1951	Ludwig Wittgenstein
1889–1966	Emil Brunner
1889–1976	Martin Heidegger
1892–1971	Reinhold Niebuhr
1900-1990	Keiji Nishitani
1904–1984	Karl Rahner
1905–1980	Jean-Paul Sartre
1906–1945	Dietrich Bonhoeffer
1909–1943	Simone Weil
1910–1989	A. J. Ayer
1914–1918	First World War
1917	Russian Revolution
1921–2002	John Rawls
1926–1984	Michel Foucault
1929–1939	Great Depression
1930–2004	Jacques Derrida
1933–1945	The Holocaust
1939–1945	Second World War
1945	Founding of the United Nations
1947	India gains independence
1948	Gandhi assassinated
1950–1953	Korean War
1955–1975	Vietnam War
1963	John F. Kennedy assassinated
1968	Martin Luther King Jr., Robert F. Kennedy assassinated
1989	Collapse of Berlin Wall
1990–1991	Gulf War
1991	Dissolution of USSR
1994	Rwandan Genocide
2001	Attack on World Trade Center, Destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas by Taliban
2003	American invasion of Iraq

A

A POSTERIORI. Latin, “from later.” A posteriori knowledge stems from experience or observation and so cannot be known beforehand by pure reason or conceptual analysis. We know a posteriori, for example, that Socrates was executed in 399 BCE. Some traditional arguments for God’s existence such as the teleological and design arguments are developed a posteriori.

A PRIORI. Latin, “from earlier.” A proposition is known a priori when it is known without employing empirical observations or experience. Arguably, one may know a priori that there cannot be a square circle. Some philosophers contend that God can and should be known a priori (as in the ontological argument), as God’s existence is necessary and not dependent on contingent states of affairs.

ABDUCTION. From the Latin *ab* + *ducere,* meaning “to lead away.” Abductive reasoning explains phenomena on the grounds of prior probability or reasonability. For example, one might argue for theism on the grounds that if theism is true, it is more probable that there would be an ordered cosmos with conscious, valuable life, than if a nontheistic alternative is assumed to be true, such as secular naturalism. Abductive reasoning is most often employed in comparing a limited number of alternative theories. The earliest theistic design arguments in English were abductive in structure as opposed to inductive. Henry More reasoned that the cosmos was akin to what appears to be language; if we assume there is a creator, the cosmos is (as it seems) intelligible, whereas it does not seem intelligible if there is no creator.

ABELARD, PETER (1079–1142). Abelard is best known for his metaphysics, ethics, and understanding of atonement. In metaphysics, he adopted a form of conceptualism, a position midway between Platonism and nominalism. In ethics, he greatly stressed the role of intentions and desires. He thereby put stress on the moral relevance of our interior life. If Abelard is correct, then an ethic that focuses exclusively on external action is inadequate. In theology, he is attributed with what is sometimes called a subjective theory of the atonement, wherein the saving work of Christ is accomplished by sinners being subjectively transformed by Christ's heroic, loving self-sacrifice. Abelard did emphasize such subjective transformation, but there is reason to think he also accepted a traditional Anselmian account of the atonement. Abelard carried out an extensive correspondence with Héloïse, which reflected on their love affair and its tragic end. The correspondence includes debate over marriage, romantic love, and the vocation of a philosopher. His principal works are: *On the Divine Unity and Trinity* (1121), *Yes and No* (1122), *Christian Theology* (1124), *Theology of the "Supreme Good"* (1120–1140), and *Know Thyself* (1125–1138).

ABJURATION. An act of renunciation, for example, the repudiation of an opinion or a vow now deemed spurious.

ABORTION. Intentional termination of pregnancy. Religious and moral arguments against abortion tend to stress the value of the fetus or unborn child as a person, potential person, human being, or sacred form of life. Some religious denominations and traditions contend that the decision to abort in the early stages of pregnancy should be a matter left to individual conscience and not subject to strict prohibition.

ABRAHAMIC FAITHS. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are called Abrahamic because they trace their history back to the Hebrew patriarch Abraham (often dated in the twentieth or twenty-first century BCE). Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each see themselves as rooted in Abrahamic faith, as displayed in the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Old Testament (essentially the Hebrew Bible) and New Testament, and the Qur'an.

Since the seventeenth century, "theism" has been the common term used in English to refer to the central concept of God in the Abrahamic faiths. According to the classical forms of these faiths, God is the one and sole God (they are monotheistic as opposed to polytheistic) who both created and sustains the cosmos. God either created the cosmos out of nothing, that is, *ex nihilo*, or else it has always existed but depends for its existence upon God's conserving, creative will (some Islamic philosophers have claimed that the cosmos has always existed as God's sustained creation, but the great majority of philosophers in these three traditions have held that the cosmos had a beginning). Creation out of nothing means that God did not use or require anything external from God in creating everything. The cosmos depends upon God's conserving, continuous will in the same way light depends on a source or a song depends on a singer. If the source of the light goes out or the singer stops singing, the light and song cease. Traditionally, creation by God is not thought of as an inventor who might make something that is then ignored. The idea of God creating everything and then neglecting it—the way a person might make a machine and then abandon it—is utterly foreign to theism.

In these religions, God is said to exist necessarily, not contingently. God exists in God's self, not as the creation of some greater being (a super-God) or force of nature. God is also not a mode of something more fundamental, the way a wave is a mode of the sea or a movement is a mode of the dance. The cosmos, in contrast to God, exists contingently but not necessarily—it might not have existed at all; God's existence is unconditional insofar as it does not depend upon any external conditions, whereas the cosmos is conditional. Theists hold that God is, rather, a substantial reality: a being not explainable in terms that are more fundamental than itself. God is without parts, that is, not an aggregate or compilation of things. Theists describe God as holy or sacred, a reality that is of unsurpassable greatness. God is therefore also thought of as perfectly good, beautiful, all-powerful (omnipotent), present everywhere (omnipresent), and all-knowing (omniscient). God is without origin and without end, everlasting or eternal. Because of all this, God is worthy of worship and morally sovereign (worthy of obedience). Finally, God is manifest in human history; God's nature and will are displayed in the tradition's sacred scriptures.

Arguably, the most central attribute of God in the Abrahamic traditions is goodness. The idea that God is not good or the fundamental source of goodness would be akin to the idea of a square circle: an utter contradiction.

Theists in these traditions differ on some of the divine attributes. Some, for example, claim that God knows all future events with certainty, whereas others argue that no being (including God) can have such knowledge. Some theists believe that God transcends both space and time altogether, while other theists hold that God pervades the spatial world and is temporal (there is a before, a during, and an after for God). The Abrahamic traditions include figures who so stress the transcendental "otherness" of God that any positive theistic claims are hedged by an insistence upon the incomprehensibility and indescribability of God. *See also* APOPHATIC THEOLOGY.

ABSOLUTE, THE. From the Latin *absolutus*, meaning "the perfect" or "completed" (as opposed to the relative). "The absolute" is often used to refer to God as the ultimate, independent reality from which all life flows. Although philosophers and theologians as far back as Nicholas of Cusa have used the term in reference to God (e.g., Nicholas of Cusa argued that God is both the Absolute Maximum and the Absolute Minimum), today the term is primarily associated with idealist philosophers of the nineteenth century such as Ferrier, Bradley, Bosanquet, and Royce. The term—in its modern idealist sense—originated in the late eighteenth century in the writings of Schelling and Hegel and was transmitted to the English through Samuel Coleridge's *The Friend* (1809–1810). Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev used the term to refer to reality, which he conceived of as a living organism. The term has also been embraced by some Eastern philosophers, such as Sri Aurobindo, who considered "the absolute" as an appropriate alternative to the name *Brahman*. It is most commonly used in the fields of metaphysics, value theory, and natural philosophy.

ABSOLUTION. From the Latin *absolvo*, meaning "set free." Absolution is the forgiveness of sins and the removal of any connected penalties. It refers primarily to a Christian practice in which a priest or minister absolves the sins of people in the name of God following their confession, but it may also be used simply to refer to God's direct forgiveness without any human intermediary.

ABSURD. That which is untenable or beyond the limits of rationality. When associated with existentialism, the absurd refers to there being a lack of any meaning inherent within the real world or in our actions. It gained currency in popular culture via Samuel Beckett's theater of the absurd and works by Sartre and Camus. A phrase famously (and erroneously) attributed to Tertullian claimed that faith in an incarnate God was absurd: *credo quia absurdum est*—"I believe because it is absurd." The actual quotation from Tertullian is: *credibile est, quia ineptum est*—"It is credible because it is silly." (*De carne Christi* 5.4). Tertullian is sometimes taken to thereby valorize irrationality, but his thesis was instead that the truth of Christianity was absurd only in relation to Stoic, non-Christian philosophy. If Tertullian is correct, the tenability of Christianity is not contingent upon external, philosophical inspection.

ACADEMY. The name of the educational, philosophical community founded by Plato in 387 BCE. Its name is derived from the location in northwest Athens, which was named after the hero Academus, where Plato met with other philosophers and students. There have been various academies that have played a role in the history of philosophy of religion and theology. The most well known is the Florentine Academy, a fifteenth-century center for Christian Platonism.

ACCESSIBILITY. In analytic philosophy in the twentieth century, much attention was given to accessibility relations. Is our access to the surrounding world immediate and direct, or indirect and mediated by sensations? Bertrand Russell identified two significant modes of accessibility: one may have access to something either by *acquaintance* (experiential awareness) or *description*. In philosophy of religion, the question often addressed is whether God or the sacred may be directly experienced or perceived or may only be known descriptively or via metaphorical and analogical descriptions.

ACCIDIE. Also written as *acedia*. A state that inhibits pleasure and causes one to reject life. One of the Seven Deadly Sins. Often translated as sloth, *accidie* historically refers to a very different concept. Athanasius called it the "noon day demon" (cf. Ps. 91:6), and Thomas Aquinas referred to it as the torpor of spirit that prevents one from doing any good works (*Summa Theologiae*, IIa 35.1). According to Aquinas and other medieval Christians, we are surrounded by abundant reasons for joy. Thus, *accidie* is the intentional refusal of joy as opposed to "sloth," which today may refer simply to being lazy or negligent.

ACOSMISM. From the Greek *a* + *kosmos*, meaning "not world." Hegel coined the term in referring to Spinoza's thought, which in Hegel's (erroneous) interpretation is that the world is unreal and only God exists. This interpretation, however, would fit better as a description of the pantheism of the Hindu philosopher Śankara.

ACTION AT A DISTANCE. A causal relationship between two objects or events that are not contiguous or in spatial contact. The denial of action at a distance vexed modern accounts of the mind-body relationship, for if the mind is not spatial, it cannot causally affect spatial objects like the body, for the two are not in spatial proximity. Contemporary physics no longer posits spatial contiguity as a necessary condition for causation. Classical theism posits God as omnipresent and thus not distant from the cosmos with respect to causation. While God is thereby believed to be present at all places in terms of causally sustaining all spatial objects, God is not thereby considered to be spatial.

ACTS AND OMISSIONS DOCTRINE. At the heart of deontological ethics and in contrast to act-consequentialism, the acts and omissions doctrine asserts that an act has a greater moral significance than a failure to act (that is, an omission). Hence, killing someone would be worse than letting someone die. Those upholding a form of utilitarianism tend to discount such a distinction. For utilitarians, it is often the case that failing to rescue someone is the moral equivalent of killing that person.

ACTUAL. Some philosophers use the term "possible worlds" to refer to alternative, maximal states of affairs that are not impossible. So, there is a possible world in which there are unicorns. The actual world is not merely possible, but the world in which we live.

ACTUALITY AND POTENTIALITY. A dichotomy originally introduced in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* concerning topics of substance and matter that was later adopted into theology by thinkers such as St. Thomas Aquinas. In Thomism, God is described as pure act: an eternal, immutable, supremely excellent being. God has no unrealized potentiality. Other forms of theism that see God as temporal and subject to change allow for divine potentiality. Some attention is given to potentiality and actuality in the moral debate over abortion. Some philosophers contend that at early stages of fetal development there is a potential but not actual person.

ACTUALIZATION. Sometimes used to refer to the bringing about of what was potential. A person might actualize her powers. Self-actualization in psychology is sometimes referred to as a state of self-fulfillment. In religious traditions, self-actualization is sometimes articulated in terms of religious fulfillment.

ACTUS PURUS. For Thomists, God is *actus purus*, in the sense that God is pure act, fully complete, and without potentiality. On this view, God's action in creation and revelation unfolds temporally and successively, but this is due to God's supreme, nontemporal will and nature

AD INFINITUM. Latin for "to infinity," a series is *ad infinitum* if it is without end. The concept of the infinite plays an important role in arguments for the existence of God. Cosmological arguments frequently assert the impossibility of there being an infinite, actual series, but allow for potential, yet never complete infinites. In the latter case, there could be, in principle, a calculator that begins adding numbers, one per second, from now on *ad infinitum*, but it would never complete the series and reach the greatest possible number. Some philosophers believe there could never be such a complete, infinite series as in the children's limerick:

> Big fleas have little fleas,
> Upon their backs to bite 'em.
> While little fleas have lesser fleas,
> And so on *ad infinitum*.

ADIAPHORON. Greek for "indifferent." That which is morally indifferent, neither morally required nor prohibited, or, more specifically, that which is not explicitly required for the maintenance of orthodox faith but arguably could be permissible. During the Reformation, the Adiaphorists were the Protestants who sided with Melanchthon in believing that the Catholic sacraments of confirmation and veneration of saints, although without scriptural warrant, should be allowed for the sake of maintaining the unity of the church and would not endanger the believer's soul. The Adiaphorists were opposed by the Flacianists, stricter Protestants who sided with Matthias Flacius in believing that anything that was not explicitly allowed in the scriptures was forbidden.

ADOPTIONISM. Rather than considering Jesus Christ to be the human incarnation of the second member of the trinity, adoptionists believe that Jesus was a human being who was designated by God as a divine agent or presence on earth. In this unorthodox theology, Jesus' sonship with God the Father has been seen in terms of Jesus' development of "God consciousness," a moral and spiritual unity with God. Functional Christologies resemble adoptionism; Christ is human and divine insofar as Christ functions as God in the world, revealing to all followers God the Father. On this view, Jesus' human person and life is adopted by God to represent or embody the Father's love and character in creation.

ADVAITA VEDĀNTA. Sanskrit, "not-two" + "end of the Vedas." One of the main schools of thought within orthodox Hinduism, Advaita Vedānta draws upon the Upaniṣads (which are at the end of the Vedas) to teach that *Brahman* (God or the ultimate reality) and *ātman* (the soul) are "not two." In other words, the *ātman* is *Brahman*. Ignorance (*avidya*) of this truth keeps the *ātman* in bondage to *māyā* (the illusory world). Liberation (*Mokṣa*) is attained within this life by the knowledge (*vidya*) that there is no distinction (*bheda*) between the *ātman* and *Brahman*. The most famous proponent of Advaita Vedānta was Śankara (c. 788–820). *See also* ŚANKARA.

ADVENTITIOUS. An idea or concept is adventitious when it comes to a person from an external source. Descartes argued that his idea of God as a perfect reality had to have its source in God rather than for it to have been created by him, an imperfect, finite being. If Descartes is correct, then some concepts derive their meaning and origin from an external reality. If the concept of God is adventitious, it would be akin to the concept of sunburn: you cannot have a sunburn unless the burn was somehow caused by the sun.

AENESIDEMUS OF CNOSSOS (1st century BCE). A Greek skeptical philosopher, Aenesidemus is most famous for his Ten Tropes (*tropoi*) or Modes of Skepticism. These ten tropes consist of equally defensible but inconsistent claims about facts. Aenesidemus broke from the Academy (while it was under Philo of Larissa) and defended Pyrrhonism.