

# Introduction

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## Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy of religion is currently a major field of study and the range of topics encompassed within it is considerable. Nevertheless, its scope is fairly narrow, for the philosophy of religion is simply the philosophical reflection on religious ideas. The range of those engaged in the field of the philosophy of religion is broad and diverse and includes philosophers from the analytic and continental traditions, Eastern and Western thinkers, religious believers and agnostics, skeptics and atheists. Philosophy of religion draws on all of the major areas of philosophy as well as other relevant fields, including theology, history, sociology, psychology, and the natural sciences.

The terms “philosophical reflection” and “religious ideas” need elucidation.

“Philosophical reflection” in this context includes the careful analyses of words, reasons and evidences for claims, hypotheses, and arguments. These analyses themselves include fundamental issues about the nature of reality (metaphysics) and the way in which we come to know things (epistemology).

Regarding these fundamental issues, philosophy of religion and, indeed, philosophy itself have taken new directions in recent times. While philosophical reflection on religious ideas has been occurring for centuries, even millennia, it underwent a momentous setback in the early-to—mid twentieth century through the work of the logical positivists. Logical positivists held, among other things, that for a claim to be true and meaningful it must be empirically verifiable. As religious claims were for the most part taken to be empirically unverifiable, philosophical reflection on religious themes was widely considered to be a specious endeavor and religious ideas were often taken to be meaningless.

However, due to the work of a number of leading philosophers who were responding to positivism and defending the philosophical viability of religious beliefs — philosophers such as John Hick and Alvin Plantinga by the 1970s the field began to take a significant turn. Today, philosophy of religion is flourishing and it is not uncommon to see philosophy journals, anthologies, and monographs devoted exclusively to religious themes.

By the phrase “religious ideas” it is meant the primary issues and concepts which have been discussed and debated within the religious traditions throughout the centuries, including for example the existence and nature of God or Ultimate Reality; conflicting truth claims among the different religious traditions; the relation between science and religion; creation; nirvana; and salvation, among other topics.

It is important to note that these are not just abstract and ethereal concepts discussed and debated among ivory tower theologians and philosophers. To the contrary, they are fundamental issues in the life and thought of those in living traditions - traditions which have deep, existential meaning and ongoing significance for much of contemporary humanity.

There are a variety of beliefs held by the religions or by religious people.

- The monotheistic religions, for example, assert that a personal God exists and that God is good.
- Buddhists maintain that the Four Noble Truths provide a path to enlightenment. .
- Many Hindus affirm that Brahman is the one reality.
- Taoists (also Daoists) affirm that the dao is the fundamental process of reality itself. And so on.

Most religious adherents consider the central claims of their religion to be true. But an important philosophical question is whether these religious claims are true or false in the same way that other claims, such as scientific ones, are true or false. There are two very different positions taken by philosophers of religion with respect to the concept of truth in religious discourse: realism and non-realism.

## Realism

Probably the vast majority of religious adherents are religious realists, that is, most religious adherents hold that their beliefs are about what really exists independent of the human beings who are having those beliefs.

Assertions about Allah, for example, or Brahman, or salvation, or moksha, or reincarnation-are true if there are actual referents for them. Thus, for Muslims, the claim that Allah is the one true God is true if, in fact, there is a being who exists independently of human conceptual frameworks or thoughts and beliefs about (or practices related to) Allah and is identifiable as Allah, the one true God.

The same holds for adherents of the other religions who are realists: they believe that the claims of their religion have actual referents beyond their own beliefs and practices.

## Non-realism

Although they are in the minority, there are also religious non-realists. While there are different forms of religious non-realism, in general non-realists maintain that religious claims are not about realities which transcend human language, concepts, and social forms; religious claims are not about something “out there.” The following words from a leading religious non-realist helpfully summarize the distinction between realism and non-realism: ~

“Today, a realist is the sort of person who, when his ship crosses the Equator, looks overboard, expecting to see a big black line across the ocean. Realism tries to turn cultural fictions into objective facts.

A non-realist sees the whole system of lines of latitude and longitude as a framework, imposed upon the Earth by us-, that helps us to ‘define locations and to find our way around. For a realist Truth exists ready made out there; for a non-realist we are the only makers of truth, and truth is only the current consensus amongst us. We cannot any longer suppose that our knowledge-is validated by something wholly extra-human....”

In religion, the move to non-realism implies the recognition that all religious and ethical ideas are human, with a human history. We give up the old metaphysical and cosmological way of understanding religious belief, and translate dogma into spirituality (spirituality is a religious life-style). We understand all religious doctrines in practical terms, as guiding myths to live by, in the way that Kant, Kierkegaard and Bultmann began to map out.

We abandon ideas of objective and eternal truth, and instead see all truth as a human improvisation. We should give up all ideas of a heavenly or supernatural world-beyond. Yet, despite our "seeming skepticism, we insist that non—realist religion can work very well as religion, and can deliver eternal happiness.

Among non-realists there are those who are, as it were, favorable toward religion and those who are not. Consider the words of Sigmund Freud:

"These [religious ideas], which are given out as teachings, are not precipitates of experience or end-results of thinking: they are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes."

For Freud, there are no referents for religious beliefs about transcendent entities such as God, the dao, and so forth. Rather, religion is an illusion and religious beliefs are merely manifestations of this illusion. The belief in God, for example, is simply the projection of a Father image.

More recently, Oxford geneticist Richard Dawkins (1941—) and philosopher Daniel Dennett (1942—) have advanced the notion that a Darwinian account of cultural evolution may explain religion and religious beliefs via the replication of something very much like genes. There are, they suggest, cultural replicators, what they refer to as memes, which are units of cultural transmission or imitation.

"Says Dawkins: Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via Sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain by a process which, in the broad sense of the term, can be called imitation."

He includes the following beliefs as religious memes:

- You will survive your own death.
- Belief in God is a supreme virtue.
- Faith is a virtue.
- There are some weird things (such as the Trinity, transubstantiation, incarnation) that we are not meant to understand.

For Dawkins, the widespread belief in God is not due to there actually being such an entity, or because there are good reasons for believing there are. Rather, people believe because the "god meme" has spread - in ways akin to a virus ~ throughout human populations. Religion turns about to be an "accidental by-product — a misfiring of something useful." So too with all attending religious beliefs.

Other non-realists are more favorable toward religion. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889—1951) for example - one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century - took religion very seriously, even to the point of considering the priesthood. Nevertheless, he was opposed to natural theology, the attempt

to demonstrate the existence of God from evidence in the natural world, and to the development of religious doctrines. He was more interested in religious symbol and ritual.

In his later works Wittgenstein understood language to be not a fixed structure directly corresponding to the way things actually are, but rather to be a human activity susceptible to the vicissitudes of human life and practice. Language does not offer a picture of reality, he argued, but rather it is a set of activities which he described as “language games.” The concept of a language game was “to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life. Wittgenstein uses the example of a builder to make the point:

The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words “block,” “pillar,” “slab,” “beam.” A calls them out; - B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such and-such a call.

In teaching language, one needs to be able to respond to words in certain contexts; speech and action work together. In many cases, then, the meaning of a word is its use in the language. For Wittgenstein, this is true in religious discourse as it is elsewhere. Thus in speaking of God or Brahman or nirvana or the dāu, the meanings of such words have more to do with their use than with their denotation. The language games of the religions reflect the practices and forms of life of the various religious adherents, and so religious claims should not be taken as providing literal pictures of reality which somehow lie beyond these activities. .

Religious non-realists who are favorable toward religion also make note of the alleged failure of realism to provide evidences for the objective truth of any religion, or of religion in general. Whether referring to arguments for the existence of God, or evidences for divine inspiration of sacred scriptures, for example, non- realists maintain that such apologetic projects are abject failures.

But such non-realists are convinced that since there are no conclusive reasons to believe that a religion is true, a better way of approaching religious claims and beliefs is to view them through non-realist lenses. Realists respond to this argument in various ways. For one, some agree that there are no solid reasons to believe any religion is true. Nevertheless, they claim that it does not require evidence.

Other realists respond by claiming that there are good reasons and evidences for religious faith. Another reason for holding to religious non-realism is the fact that religious claims, beliefs, and practices do in fact exist within a given social context and involve human language and concepts. Since religious claims and activities are always made within a particular human context, and since the mind structures all perception within that context, the meanings of these claims are determined and limited by that context.

One need not - indeed, one legitimately cannot, it is argued — posit objective, transcendent realities beyond human language and cognition. To do so is to simply go too far. Realists respond by noting that while much of what occurs in religious discourse (and practice) is of human origin, one need not take a reductionist stance in which all religious meanings and symbols are reducible to human language.

As already noted, some realists argue that there are reasons for believing that a particular religion is true — that there are objective referents for their claims.

# Religion, Theology, Philosophy of Religion

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## RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

Religion is a system of lived experiences. This therefore includes the first order language in which we communicate our feelings, thoughts and acts in relation to an object of devotion and commitment. For example, a theist prays to God, talks to him and uses Him in hours of his distress, elation and gratitude. With his belief in Him he never doubts the existence of God and does not feel any need of proving His existence.

But no religious believer can remain in this state of receptivity all the time. He has to take into account his non-religious activities also. He has to earn his livelihood, maintain his social life and has to undertake many other social, political, cultural and intellectual activities. Well, very few people can maintain a water-tight compartment between their religious life and non-religious experiences

Hence, the demand for an integrated life makes the believer unify the diverse and competing experiences. He has to use the intellectual categories of his time in order to integrate his religious and secular experiences into a system. This making use of intellectual categories is another name of philosophizing.

- Again, this use of the conceptual framework of one's age with a view to clarification, elucidation and systematization of one's religious beliefs and practices is known as theology.
- Theology' literally means 'discourse about God'. So in theology we do not talk to God, but about God.
- Theology is the philosophy of any one religion. There are as many theologies as there are religions, and, at times within the fold of the same religion there can be various theologies. For example, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam have various kinds of theologies.
- Theology is not simply concerned with the elucidation of concepts in use in any one religion, but very. Often it has to defend itself against the objections of sceptics, agnostics and the attacks of other religions on it.
- Therefore theology is not a disinterested study. It participates in the commitment or the religion to which it belongs. .

- However, theology is not the first-order thinking; it is a second – order thinking. It is thinking about religious thinking. This peculiarity of theology has its dangers. Because of its commitment, it may remain too much tied up with its traditional conceptual framework.
- However, it must be conceded that theologies have been changing with the change in the intellectual climate from age to age. For example, the early Christian thinkers took the help of the logos- philosophy of the Greek. Later on St. Thomas embodied a good deal of Aristotelian philosophy. Only fifty years ago a number of theologians were Hegelians and in contemporary times they tend to be existentialists.

## THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

- But no matter what theologians may do with philosophy, they are not primarily philosophers. They make use of philosophical technique for elucidating, interpreting and even for apologetic defense of their specific religious beliefs and practices.

The task of philosophy is much wider. It has to reach a conceptual frame-work of the largest number of experiences of mankind. As the most reliable and progressive experiences of man are included in science, so philosophy at present is much more concerned with scientific discourse than with any other type of talking and thinking.

- This peculiar development of current philosophy, specially analytic philosophy, poses special difficulty for theologians. Science is a disinterested pursuit of knowledge and its – subject matter is sought to be depersonalized. In contrast, religious thinking requires a good deal of self -involvement and passion and a full commitment. Naturally a philosophy which takes science seriously as the very model of knowledge proper is ill-suited to serve as the vehicle of theological thinking.

On the other hand, there is another current of philosophy known as existentialism which takes individuals in their creative moments, in the hour of crisis and personal decision as root-metaphor or its key-notion. This kind of philosophy is farthest removed from physical sciences, but is suitable for theology. Naturally the theology of Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich can hardly be made intelligible in terms of analytic philosophy which is predominant current of thought in the English- speaking world.

- Nonetheless a theologian has to take the help of current philosophy of the age with a view to making his religious thinking compatible with the largest possible segments of life. Unless he does so he will be religious on Sundays will be secular on all other days. This disintegration of Personality is neither possible nor is conducive to healthy living. So a

theologian has to build up a conceptual framework in which he can harmoniously lodge all his experiences, secular and religious.

- There is another reason too. There are many theologies and each theology fairly well seeks to become a 'world theology'. And this gives rise to encounter of religions. Hence, there is a need of a philosophical theology.
- A philosophical theology is meta-theology which tries to elucidate the concepts of various theologies. If the task be successful then as a result of the clarification of the concepts, mutual dialogue and understanding between thinkers of various faiths may result in a vast ecumenical movement. For example, 'God' is used by many forms of theistic religions, but the term is not used in the same sense.
  - The God of the Gita is more monistic than theistic and
  - That of Spinoza is more pantheistic than deistic or theistic.
  - Even the term 'religion' is full of ambiguities. Is it necessary for religion to have belief in some ontological entities higher than man, or, does it consist \_in some all – out orientation towards some object of devotion?

Theists in the west would accept the first alternative. Indian thinkers need not accept the necessity of any being higher than man as an object of worship, but they assume some kind of metaphysical commitment for religion. Only the modern secular humanist does not make any metaphysical commitment for this type of religion.

- These ambiguities with regard to 'religion' have to be clarified and their implications have to be carefully worked out for any kind of religious philosophy. Thus religious philosophy, as distinguished from theology, consists in the application of the discipline and technique of any current philosophy with a view to analysis, elucidation and clarification of religious and theological concepts and beliefs.
- True, religious philosophy is a branch of philosophy and it differs from philosophy proper only in regard to the nature of its specialized subject-matter.
- The scope of religious philosophy is much narrower than that of general philosophy. But it is neither religion nor theology.
- In religion the believer uses religious concepts and beliefs in their customary meanings without subjecting them to any critical analysis. Broadly speaking, the believer cares more for the end result which may be said to be the culture of the soul. Theology, in relation to

religion, is much more intellectual, though the whole web of thought is woven round its realm of commitment and self-involvement. Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are great theologians of the present century and yet they are all Christian thinkers par excellence.

In contrast, religious philosophy tends to be purely objective and disinterested enquiry into the concept and beliefs of various religions and their theologies.

Thus, the mutual understanding and dialogue between theologians of different camps is brought about by religious philosophy intellectual.

- Hence, a religious philosopher need not be religious though he should not be without sympathies for religion. But even as a philosopher he has his non-religious commitment and self-involvement. A religious philosopher need not be a theist or even a humanist, though the task of remaining fully neutral may prove too difficult. However, as a philosopher he must be committed to finding truth and to a rigorous analysis of religious situations, beliefs and practices. He must throw all his energies in the task of understanding religious phenomena and thought.

Again, a theologian too has to practice detached objectivity if he wants to bring out the universal validity of what he considers to be the ultimate concern of mankind.

Thus, both the philosopher and the theologian have to practice self-involvement and detachment in turn.

- A philosopher gets involved in his enquiry with regard to religious phenomena. Unless he pursues his enquiry with passion, seriousness and courage, the philosopher will not be able to achieve excellence in his performance. In the same way a theologian has to practice detachment if he has to universalize what he considers to be his ultimate concern.

Further both the philosopher and the theologian have to oscillate between detachment and involvement in the inquiry of their subject-matter. Even a philosopher has to enter into the spirit of religious phenomena and for doing this he has to put on the spectacle of a believer to see things as a theologian sees them.

- So commitment, even though induced and transitory, is necessary for a religious philosopher. In the same way, a theologian has to put himself aside for a while from the ground which he considers to be holy and has to adjudge the ground for its holiness. Thus, a philosopher of religion and a theologian have to be on talking terms and must start a dialogue between them in their mutual interest and to their mutual benefit.



RELIGION	THEOLOGY	RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY
1. Religion is a system of lived experiences in terms of self-involvement and full commitment for the object of religious devotion and focal orientation.	Theology is an interpretation of religious experiences in terms of current concepts. However, the intellectual clarification is made in the interest of one's religious commitment.	Religious philosophy analyses and elucidates religious concepts in terms of general conceptual framework with detached objective.
2. There is no one essential religion in general but there are religions.	Corresponding to various religious there are a number of theologies, with their different assumptions.	Religious philosophy is metatheology which examines the various claims and uses of theology concepts.
3. Religious statements may be, termed as first-order statements.	Theological statements are second-order statements with religious statements as their subject-matter.	Philosophical statements are third-order statements as they deal with second-order statements as their subject-matter.
4. A theist talks to God.	A theistic theologian talks God with reverence and piety.	A philosopher talks about God with disinterestedness and detachment.

# Notions of God: Attributes; Relation to Man and the World (Indian and Western)

## Concept of God

"God" is the name religions give to the supreme deity of the monotheistic worldview. A distinction can be made however between the God of Religion, the God of Philosophy, and the God of Mysticism

God of Religion	God of Philosophy	God of Mysticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Based on numinous</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Based on intellectual speculation allied with belief</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Based on mystical or Yogic experience</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Personal and anthropomorphic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Abstract</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Transpersonal and ineffable</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dualistic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dualistic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Monistic</li></ul>

## The god of religion

Most religions explain the meaning of existence and the origin of the universe in terms of a supernatural being which they call "God". "God" is usually thought of as a sort of person up in "heaven", who creates the entire universe and all beings in it out of nothing, and then reveals Himself to humankind through a sort of cosmic rule-book, a Bible or whatever. Whoever follows the dictates of this rule-book is rewarded with heaven or Eternal Life, but whoever doesn't goes to hell or eternal damnation.

Of course, since there are many religions, each with its own sacred scripture, it follows that each believer will assert that only their religion is true, and all of the others are either inferior truths or completely false. From this attitude there come about all sorts of holy wars, crusades, inquisitions, persecutions, and proselytising, that go hand in hand with religion.

Nowadays the big enemy of religion is the 'findings of science. The discoveries of science concerning the universe are so vast and amazing that they threaten the little box that believers of fundamentalistic religions keep their minds in. These believers then feel compelled to create a science of their own; i.e. they construct their own paradigm. This is what's called Creation Science which is actually a pseudo- science.

## The God of Philosophy

The god philosophers is a much more abstract principle: e.g. an abstract First Cause, or original spirit, or whatever. It developed from medieval Christian theologians who were seeking to supplement faith with reason. A lot of the arguments are pretty irrelevant - e.g. God is that next to which nothing higher can be postulated. So the God of Philosophers is often so abstract as to be meaningless, just as the God of religion is so petty as to be ridiculous.

## The God of Mysticism

Many forms of mysticism, especially theistic mysticism (e.g. Sufism, Christian mysticism, etc) retain a conception of God, but see that entity as something ultimately non-different from themselves. The ultimate goal of the mystic path therefore is "union with God". These mystical teachings have, in addition to, or as another aspect of, the personal God, an impersonal "abstract" Ultimate Reality. Unlike the "God of philosophy", this is not an unknowable principle, but rather One's own innermost Self (or "not-Self" as the case may be). This conception has been more clearly and prominently articulated in the great religio-spiritual traditions of India, but is also to be found in the "Western" and "Middle Eastern".

# Relation of God and World

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One of the major issues that has been discussed ever since man found his feet is the problem of the relation between God and the world. To accept God as the first or the primary cause of the world, for example, makes it necessary to presume that the materials with which the world is made exist outside God. This, in turn, leads to the difficulty of a duality between God and the materials of the universe, and the necessity of establishing some meaningful relation between the two.

If God is believed to be the material cause of the world responsible for creating the world out of his own self, then he become subject to the difficulty of assimilation within himself such elements as the physical nature of the world, lack of harmony, absence of uniformity etc. The problem of duality will arise again if God is believed to exist outside the world, while the notion of his omnipresence is open to objections having their origin in the world of religion where he must assume the form of a person in order to be able to answer prayer and reward, faith and devotion. Philosophers have turned their thought to the various alternatives that can be possible, and have to evolve a theory which can finally satisfy all the demands that can be made upon it.

Religious philosophy gives philosophical analyses of religious concepts and to interpret them in the existential mode of thinking. Both of these modern currents of thought are anti-

metaphysics. However, the long tradition of religious philosophy in the west has been predominantly metaphysical.

The metaphysical classification of religion is broadly done on the basis of the relation in which God stands to the world. There are four main metaphysical theories: Deism, pantheism, panentheism and theism.

All assume the existence of one God as an adequate object of worship. However, they differ from one another with regard to the relation in which God stands to the world.

## Deism

Deism rose as a philosophical form of theism that used reason as its source of knowledge of God. Deism held that God caused the universe but did not interfere thereafter. Prayer and miracles were deemed unnecessary because of God's superior engineering.

Deism is a relatively new school of thought when compared with others. It was the predominant religious philosophy of British thinking.

In general, according to deism, God is perfect, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, personal and the absolute reality.

- As God is perfect, so he has created this world as a perfect machine. As the machine, being perfect requires no supervision, so God has retired from the world as an absentee landlord.
- God has created man with freewill and has endowed him with the natural light of reason by virtue of which he can determine his moral duties.
- Deism maintains the following points and attributes following characterizes to God :

### i. Transcendence

God is transcendent to the world and as such has no logical relations with the on-goings of the world. The world has been created in the form of a perfect machine, so, it does not require any divine supervision and interference. So consistently speaking "miracles" cannot be allowed.

Implications of characteristics of transcendence:

- a) Hidden God: God being transcendent and having no concern with men 'and their affairs, remains essentially a 'hidden God'. This renders God an object beyond worship and knowledge of man.
- b) Dualism: God and world are mutually exclusive to each other as God is transcendent. The world becomes dependent on God in the sense of being created. This kind of dualism is found in Descartes

The notion of transcendence is fairly important in Christian theology. St. Thomas Aquinas have specially emphasized the transcendence of God in his theology.

## **ii. Absentee landlord**

God has been pictured as an absentee landlord.

## **iii. Personality and problems**

Transcendence of God makes him unworthy of worship, so to remove this anomaly deism ascribes personality to God But the very nature of personality is that it tends to make god finite and not in finite. This introduces inner struggle between the in finitude of God and his personality.

## **iv. Role of 'Reason' and Revelation**

The great force of deism lies in its acceptance of a natural light in man which alone is taken as the sole authority for deciding things in morality and religion. It, therefore, denies the place of revelation in religion. Fundamentally it is a religious theory of enlightenment.

Problem: God being transcendent, the need of revelation comes by the backdoor. If God be transcendent, then by implication he becomes unknowable. Therefore, revelation has to be accepted to make transcendent God intelligible and known to human beings.

However revelation does not fully solve the problem. If God in unknowable, then there is no justification for how revelation can make unknowable intelligible

## Deism and Science

The insistence of deism on the natural light of reason purified religion by banishing many superstitions which had crept into religious beliefs. It also succeeded in holding a truce between religion and science by allowing science unfettered freedom in its rational pursuits. According to deism, the whole universe has been created by an infinite intellect and as such it is fully intelligible to human reason and what it reveals is sacred.

The insistence on the light of reason as the final court of appeal in matters of God and morality in due course paved the way for rationalism, scientism, enlightenment-and humanism.

It appears now that deism was truce with science at the cost of religion.

## Problems

### 1. Creation

Deism accepts that God created the world. Deism has not been able to satisfactorily answer any question that follows:

- What was the purpose of God creating the world ?
- How did the God create it? Out of himself or pre-existing matter?
- Did God create the world in void time or did he create time along with the world?

### 2. Problem of Evil

### 3. Only a concept of God

Deism claims to be wholly rationalistic. But a purely rational system errs in religious philosophy. A fully understood God is no god at all. It only becomes a mere concept of human intellect.

## Pantheism (pan=all, theos = God)

Literally, pantheism means seeing all things in\_ God and God in all. Gita says “The one who sees me everywhere and he who sees all in Me, I am never lost to him, and he is never lost to me”.

Unlike deism, pantheism is a much older system of thought and is clearly stated in both east and west and is closely related to mystic experience and as such should not be treated as a mere intellectual system.

## Type of pantheism

- Impersonal (Spinoza, Samkarite Vedanta)
- Super-personal (Bradley, Radhakrishnan and other idealists)
- Personal (Su fism and Christian mysticism)

Key concept of pantheism

### **1. Immanence:**

Just as transcendence is the key concept in deism, so in like manner immanence is the key concept in pantheism. The term 'immanence' means that which occupies every fibre of the thing in which it is immanent.

Immanence does not mean omnipresence (as is the case with big brother)

Immanence means indwellingness and all-pervasiveness, without being transcendent at the same time. Further clarifying the point

- (i) The immanent God may be the vitalizing, sustaining; molding and indwelling power of the world in the same sense in which the indwelling vital impetus in the egg is the hormic principle within it by virtue of which the egg is transformed into a chick

Spinoza's notion of natura naturans gives this form of immanentism

- (ii) Immanence also means that God is the primordial stuff out of which everything comes and of which everything is the modification.

Spinoza's notion of Natura Naturata explains this kind of immanentism.

According to Spinoza, the sum total of all that exists is God and so he equated the world with God and God with the world.

It is to be clarified that in religious pantheism there is no room for naturalism (in which God is swallowed in the world). Though Spinoza equated God with nature, but in his case nature ceases to be nature and appears divine, an object of "amor intellectualis".

## 2. Intellectual love of Pantheism

The intellectual love of God is neither selfish nor unselfish, but is totally selfless. It is much more than the unconscious and the instinctive love of the moth for the fire. It is the love which does not require to be reciprocated and recompensed. Such a love is fully compatible with the impersonality nature of the absolute reality. It may be likened to the Buddhist compassion for the whole world.

The all pervasive absolute reality of the world may be impersonal, but it is calculated to inspire and imbue pantheist with the spirit of commitment for a life of universal, unreciprocated love.

For Samkara too, Brahman is much more than what happens on the surface. It consists in reaching a state of mind in which the narrow boundary of one's ego is lost and dissolved in the process of expansion and stretching forth of the whole personality. Samkarite pantheism asks us to go beyond customary morality of good and evil and to make this life a thing of supreme value through the process of expansion.

### 3. Open morality: discussed later

## Objections against Pantheism

1. In pantheism god is all and all is God. If God is all, then this world (all) becomes illusory. But this world is our starting premise. 'If the starting premise is illusory then the conclusion (either concerning Brahman or substance of Spinoza) is equally illusory.
2. **Unworshipful God:** It is maintained that pantheism cannot be a consistent religious philosophy, for it cannot have any room for worship. In order to worship deity, the deity has to be distinct from the worshipper, that is, it should be transcendent to the worshipper.  
In pantheism, the deity is the immanent principle of the worshipper: the deity and the worshipper 'coalesce'. So no worship is possible.
3. **Freedom of will:** It is contended that in pantheism there is no room for individual freedom of will. God is taken to be the indwelling spirit which rolls through all things and make even the most inner most decrees of man. If there is no real freedom, then there is no true morality.
4. Further, it is contended that pantheism is not capable of sustaining the fire of religious devotion and experience.



The objections made against pantheism are pointless, but are not valueless. They serve to deepen and clarify our notion of religion

1. For a theist, God has to be transcendent to be worshipful. But the problem of unworshipfulness of a transcendent God has been seen in deism
2. Worshipfulness is not the only form of becoming religious. In the Nirvanist form of religion one realizes the immanent and indwelling reality through meditation or Samadhi. So here meditation takes the place of worship
3. Open morality v/s closed morality: Theism preaches 'closed morality' no matter however enlightened it may be. As John Dewey says, the distinction of goat and sheep is essential for any super natural form of theism.

On the other hand, pantheism teaches 'open morality', which teaches duties and obligations not only to human beings, but also to the Sun and the Moon and to all things. In pantheism morality is not desired, it is purged of its grosser elements and narrowness.

### **Personalistic pantheism Mystic theism**

Consistently speaking pantheism can only be impersonal, since no personal God can be said to be the indwelling spirit of the world. Nor can God said to be the ultimate stuff which underlines all things. But pantheism is closely allied to mysticism which contains religious experience in its most concentrated form. In the mystic trance all things may appear permeated and pervaded by a personal god.

"Saint Tulsidas sees the whole world impregnated with Rama and Sita.

Other mystic theists (Muslims and Christians) have declared that in mystic trance only god is expressed as the only one essence of everything. In the words of Ghazali, the mystic becomes so much engrossed in the beloved that he perceives nothing else.

### **Existential difference between God and mystic**

The theistic mystic remains existentially distinct from God. The state of self absorption is more psychological than ontological. The mystic is conscious of god only. It is the state of 'fana', the experience of oceanic feeling as Freud described it. It is a state in which the entire personality of mystic is overwhelmed and overcome by the majesty of the Most High, but is not annihilated.

## Monotheism

### Monotheism

Theism is that form of religious belief in which god is taken to be a supernatural person and creator of a value evolving world. God is transcendent as well as it is immanent principle.

### Difference between theism and monotheism

In theism, there is a supreme personal god. But he may not be absolute.

For example, in Indian system of thought, Isvara is the supreme god who created this value-evolving world, but he is not the absolute. Above Isvara, there is a higher reality of Nirguna Brahman.

In the west, theism assumes the form of monotheism in which the worship of any other gods except one is considered aberrant. It leads to objectivist/exclusivist truth of God.

For theism, God is both a person and is also an infinite being who necessarily exists

### Difference between deism and theism

	Deism	Theism
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God is transcendent</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God is both transcendent and immanent</li></ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One absolute God</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Personal god is supreme but may not be absolute</li></ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God-creator of a perfect world as in a perfect machine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God is the creator of value evolving world</li></ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God-no logical relation with the world-absentee landlord</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>God sustaining power of the world</li></ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consistently, worship of god is not possible</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Worship central to theism</li></ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ultimate court of appeal is reason</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reason, faith, experience, revelation – all forms basis of our belief and understanding</li></ul>

## PANENTHEISM

This theory explains the relation between God and the world by presuming that God is the first as well as the material cause of the world. It states that the world exists in God but it is not identical with God. Put differently, it means that the world is a part of God, having no independent existence of its own, apart from God. God, on the other hand, is not limited either to or by the world since He is much more than the world. Just as a poet creates a number of poems out of his own consciousness but does not exhaust his complete being in doing so, God also makes the world out of his own self but remains much more than the world beyond and above it. The world does not exhaust the creativity of God.

Panentheism believes that God is the highest personality, the creator, supporter and defender of the world. He is the highest personality in spite of His being infinite, without beginning, and omnipresent. He permeates the world and yet is above it. He is omnipresent in the world as its material cause and 'above it in the form of its first cause.

**Hegel's theory:** is one example of panentheistic theory as part of the western philosophic tradition. Hegel theorizes that it is in God's nature to ensure such an existence. God is omnipresent in the world, yet at the same time He is absolute, perfect and transcendental.

### **Criticism of Panentheism**

From the philosophic standpoint panentheism is open to the following objection

#### **1. Difficulties of panentheism**

Although panentheism treats God as transcendental, difficulties can be found with its conception of God who also permeates the world. All these difficulties are common to both this theory and pantheism. To recount but one or two, such a system denies the possibility of freedom of will and God inherits all the evils of the world. This theory, too, is defeatist and dogmatic. It does not satisfy man's moral conscience.

#### **2. Religious difficulties**

Panentheism also does not invest of his religious labour. Such a God cannot be the object of devotion and love. Some philosophers who adhere to this theory have tried to argue that the world is false and that God possesses two forms, one devoid of qualities and the other with all the requisite qualities that will satisfy moral and religious requirements. But any such suggestion immediately invites questions regarding the relation between the qualitative and the unqualified, the transcendental and the worldly.

## Relation of God & world: Analysis

The philosophical analysis of religious concepts and its interpretation in the existential mode of thinking reveals the relationship which god stands to the worlds. There are mainly three metaphysical theories of religion namely Deism, pantheism and theism which elucidate this.

- Deism has been the predominant religious philosophy of British countries. The God of deism is perfect, in finite eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, personal and the absolute reality. God has created this world as \_a perfect machine and retired from it as an absentee landlord. The God of deism is transcendent to the world and as such has no logical relationship with the on goings of the world. Being transcendent, God and world become mutually exclusive. The dualism of Descartes with respect to God and world is seen in this theory. God and world are two realities in which the world in the sense of being created, is dependent on God.

The world as created by a perfect God is also perfect, wholly rational and fully intelligible. Its intricate workings can be known through reason to finite intelligence like humans. Nature can be known in terms of natural causes only and there is no room for super natural agency and miracles, and what it reveals is sacred.

- In Pantheism, God and world become one with each other. Pan means all, theos means God, so it entails seeing all thing in God and God in all things. "He who sees me everywhere and he who sees all in me, I am never lost to him, and he is never lost to me"

Just as God in transcendent in deism, God becomes immanent in pantheism. God occupies every fibre of our reality. From inanimate stone to animate humans, God is everywhere. God is imminent in this world in two ways.

Firstly, God is the vitalizing, sustaining, moulding and indwelling power of the world in the same sense in which the indwelling vital impetus in the egg is the hormic principle within it by virtue of which egg is transformed into a chick. It is akin to Spinoza's notion of natura naturans.

Secondly, God is the primordial stuff of which everything is the modification .It is similar to Spinoza's notion of natura naturata.

The non-dualistic Vedanta also speaks of everything as the modification of the one reality in the same Way in which the earth is the one underlying reality behind all pots of clay. Everything divested of its name and form is nothing but brahman or absolute reality.

However, this world when taken as modification of the primordial god or pro filer of Brahman is illusory with its varied modifications, names and forms. The things of the world with their names and form are illusory, according to Samkara and they are said to be ever-vanishing waves that never are, according to Spinoza.

Further elucidating the point of advaita vedanta, the space-time world with its distinctions between times, places, events is consequently unreal. Real causal relations are relations between two real things so Brahman is neither the cause of the space time world as a whole nor of the events -in it, and is thus neither the space time world's creator nor its ruler.

The relationship between God and world is also vividly shown in vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja. For Ramanuja, God is related to the world as soul is related to the body. According to Ramanuja, bodies are absolutely dependent upon their souls. Bodies are ontologically and epistemologically dependent on souls. The world as God's body is wholly and completely dependent on God. God is the creator, destroyer, sustainer and controller of the world, however God does not need the world. God is the soul of world, God is the soul of nature.

The world depends on God for its being as well as qualities. The relationship is termed as aprathaksiddhi i.e relation of inner inseparability. It is an inner, inseparable, vital and organic relation. God is both material and instrumental cause'-of the world. He is the immanent and transcendent ground of the world. He is immanent in the whole world as its inner controller and yet in his essence he transcends the world.

In theism, God is both transcendent and immanent to the world\_ God is a super natural person and creator of a value - evolving world. God creates, sustains, and governs the world. It depends on him both for its being and its qualities. While the world is affected by God, God is not affected by it.

## FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOD

1. Necessity — the property of existing necessarily.
2. Omnipotence — the property of being perfect in power.
3. Omniscience - the property of being perfect in knowledge.
4. Eternity — the property of having neither beginning nor end.
5. Immutability — ‘the property of being changelessness

### 1. Necessity

In Western philosophical theology, God is conceived of as a necessarily existent being. To exist as a necessary being has meant that the being's existence does not depend on anything, or anyone; it is self-existent (the Latin term is “a se”, by itself). A necessary being can be contrasted with a contingent being. A contingent ' being is a being that might not exist; if such a being does exist, it could well not have done so. In addition, a contingent being's existence is dependent on something else; it is not self-existent.

From a Western perspective, when we examine the world we find that it is filled with contingent beings. Whether we look at the very small (the particle world of quarks and gluons, for example), or the very large (planets, stars, and galaxies), or things in between (such as plants, pandas, and people), everything we find is contingent. There are different ways of understanding God's existence as being necessary. For example, some philosophers argue for God's factual necessity. On this view; since God does exist, he could not have come into existence and he can never cease to exist. But there is another way of understanding God's existence being necessary, namely that God's existence is logically necessary. If a proposition is logically necessary, then, it is impossible for it to be false, and it is true in every possible world. If God's existence is logically necessary, then it is true in every possible world that God exists, and it is logically impossible for God not to exist. Just as it is logically impossible for five plus five to equal twelve, so too it would be logically impossible for God not to exist.

But is God's existence logically necessary? Some philosophers have thought so, but many have also disagreed. Immanuel Kant, for example, has gone so far as to claim that there are no logically necessary propositions which include existence. But a number of responses have been offered to Kant's objection (and to other related objections), and in the past few decades the belief that 'God's existence is logically necessary has become respectable once again.

## 2. Omnipotence

Another property typically attributed to God is omnipotence - from the Latin *omnis* (all), and *potens* (powerful)) which is the property of being perfect in power. But what does it mean to be perfect in power? Philosophers throughout the ages have struggled with this question. Even the great Christian theologian/philosopher Thomas Aquinas labored with this one: "[even though] all confess that God is omnipotent it seems difficult to explain in what His omnipotence precisely consists.

"A common understanding of omnipotence is that he can do anything whatsoever. God can create a world; God can answer prayer; God can do miracles; and so forth. But can God really do anything? What about creating square circles or married bachelors? What about existing and not existing simultaneously? What about sinning – can God sin? A few philosophers have thought that absolutely nothing can limit God's power. Philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), for example, maintained that God is not limited by anything, including the laws of logic or mathematics. For Descartes, God could make it true that some object P both exists and does not exist at the same time, or that two plus two equals five.

Most philosophers have not agreed with Descartes on this point and have qualified the claim "God can do anything whatsoever" with a nuanced one such as "God can do anything that is logically possible" or "God possesses every power which it is logically possible to possess." Something is logically possible if it does not violate the basic laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction (which is that a proposition and its opposite cannot both be true). One representative of this view is Richard Swinburne, and he expresses the point this way:

A logically impossible action is not an action. It is what is described by a form of words which purport to describe an action, but do not describe anything which it is coherent to suppose could be done. It is no objection to A's omnipotence that he cannot make a square circle. This is because "making a square circle" does not describe anything which it is coherent to suppose could be done.

While defenders of Descartes' view might be unconvinced by rational argumentation against the claim that God is not limited by logic, they certainly could not argue the point on rational or logical grounds. To do so would be self-contradictory and thus incoherent. Furthermore, if God could perform logically contradictory actions, this would seem to have troubling moral consequences. For example, God could break his promises or lie. Most theists are reticent to affirm that God can perform such immoral actions.

Given the belief that God cannot perform certain actions (neither immoral ones nor logically impossible ones, for example), many theists have held to the traditional, Anselmian view of omnipotence as meaning perfect power rather than absolute power. On

this view, mere power itself is not praiseworthy, but perfect or excellent power is. Since it is no perfect power to be able to break promises, or lie, or violate contradictions, even though these actions cannot be performed by God, God is nonetheless omnipotent.

### 3. **Omniscience**

Historically, it has been held by most theologians that God is omniscient — from the Latin *omnis* (all), and *sciens* (knowledge). The meaning of omniscience has been widely debated, but one prominent historical view is that God is completely perfect in knowledge. On this historical view, being omniscient means knowing all things that are proper objects of knowledge, and since only true propositions are proper objects of knowledge (only true propositions can be known), God knows all true propositions. Thus, God's knowledge includes every event, whether past, present, or future.

But there have been challenges to this traditional understanding of omniscience. In recent times, one challenge has arisen from an analysis of the concepts of divine foreknowledge and human free will. If we have free will in a certain sense (what's called "libertarian" free will), then there are future contingent events - future events which do not have to happen. Some philosophers who believe that there are future contingent events argue that since they do not yet exist, and since they do have to happen, they cannot be known — even by an omniscient being. Open Theists, for example, argue that God does not know future contingencies. Nevertheless, they maintain, God is still omniscient, for he knows everything that can be known; he knows all past and present events and all future events which are determinately based on past and present ones or can be inferred from them.

Other philosophers argue that God can have knowledge of future contingent events. The means by which God could acquire such knowledge remains largely unanswered, but one approach has been to hypothesize two different models of divine cognition: a perceptualist model and a conceptualist model. On the perceptualist model, a sense perception analogy is used to describe God's knowledge in which -God "sees" or "perceives" the past, or present, or future. On this account, if God is in time (another debatable issue, as we will see below), he could not know the future since there is no existent future for God to see or perceive. On the conceptualist model, however, God does not acquire knowledge in this perception like manner. Rather, God's knowledge is self-contained, analogous to the notion of innate ideas in human minds. God simply knows all things - past, present, and future - innately.

### 4. **Eternity**

Theists are virtually unanimous in affirming that God exists eternally - that God has neither beginning nor end. But the unanimity ends when attempting to define "eternal." What does it mean to be eternal? And what is God's relationship to time and the temporal universe? We can delineate several prominent positions:



i. **Timeless:**

On one position, God exists outside of time; God has neither temporal extension nor temporal location — no before, during, or after. This position was held by most of the great classical Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas, and it has contemporary adherents as well. There are a number of reasons why many of the great theistic thinkers have held to this view of timelessness, not the least of which is that it seems to solve the problem of God's foreknowledge and human (or agent) free will. Since God is a temporal, he does not in fact foreknow events; he simply knows all events timelessly, including the actions of free agents.

Another reason offered for affirming timelessness is this. If God is a most perfect being, as the theistic traditions affirm, then it seems evident that God would have the most perfect mode of existence. Intuitively, it also seems that a perfect mode of existence would be timeless rather than temporal. A temporal being, for example, would be moving along with the passage of time and so would not be able to experience all of life at once the way a timeless being would. On the temporal view, there are episodes of God's life which are gone, lost forever — only retrievable by God's memory. Such a transitory, temporal life is not compatible with the life of god, argue defenders of the timelessness doctrine, for even a very great memory is something much less than a present reality.

Another argument in support of timelessness is based on relativity theory. According to the theory, time and space are conjoined; one does not exist without the other. Now most theists believe that God is non-spatial. If this is the case, then to be consistent with relativity theory one would need to believe that God is non-temporal (or atemporal) as well.

A number of attacks have been leveled against timelessness in recent decades. One objection is that timelessness would restrict God's knowledge to timeless truths only, such as "two plus two equals four." Suppose, for example, that it is 7:00 p.m. and I just now finished eating dinner. God could not know that I "just now" finished eating dinner, for there is no "just now" for a timeless being. All "nows" are eternally present to such a being. On this view, it seems, God could never even know what time it is.

Another objection to the timelessness view is that it appears to contradict the scriptural teachings of the monotheistic religions. The narratives of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an all point to God's having a history in which God acts, and these actions include temporal reference. God did create the

world; God is sustaining the world; God will judge the world; and so on. If God is acting in time as the traditions teach, the objection goes, then God must be in time.

ii. **Everlasting:**

This is the view that God has neither beginning nor end, yet God is temporally extended; God exists forever in time. There are a variety of reasons put forth for God's being everlasting besides those raised above to objections of timelessness.~ One argument runs this way: according to the narrative of the scriptures, God is actively involved in the world. Being actively involved in the world has meant that God has a history with the world — a history of performing \_a succession of events, including speaking to and interacting with others in the world. But in order to have a history of this sort means that God stands in certain temporal relations to the world. So, God must be temporal. It is also argued that this view is philosophically simpler, clearer and devoid of the glaring difficulties raised against timelessness. Many of the objections to timelessness such as those mentioned above can, in fact, be used as arguments for the everlasting view. Objections to the everlasting view include those reasons noted above for affirming timelessness: solving the problem of God's foreknowledge and human freedom, and timelessness being the most perfect mode of existence.

iii. **Eternal and temporal:** This is the view that God did exist without temporal duration, but at the creation of the universe God was drawn into temporal relations. There are a growing number of philosophers who affirm some form of this view, and Christian philosopher William Lane Craig has published more on the topic than anyone. He maintains that the scriptural support for God's relation to time is indecisive - supporting both the timelessness and the temporal views. He also believes that there are good theological and philosophical reasons for affirming both timelessness and divine temporality. So, rather than holding to one at the exclusion of the other, he argues "for a third way — a both/and position. God is timeless without the created world, but God becomes temporal with the creation.

There are a number of objections to this view including, of course, each of the objections noted above to the first two views. One objection particular to this view is that it is incoherent. God cannot be fully timeless, the objection goes, for God was capable of changing even in the alleged timeless state. Indeed God did change, at least relationally, at the moment of creation. Since time and change are necessarily intertwined, there cannot be one without the other. Thus since God did change, God cannot be (could not have been) fully timeless.

## 5. **Immutability** –

The traditional doctrine of divine immutability is that God has the property of being intrinsically changeless; it is logically impossible for God to change in his intrinsic qualities. One argument for the view is based on God's being absolutely perfect. Whatever is absolutely perfect cannot change, for to change is to become better or worse. Since God is an absolutely perfect being, it is not possible for God to change.

### **Thus God is immutable**

God is not extrinsically changeless. For example, after the act of creation, God had a relation to the creation which God lacked prior to the creation. But the real issue is whether God has intrinsic changes – changes the very nature of God. Some recent Christian and Jewish thinkers argue that intrinsic changes lie at the very core of God's being. For these thinkers, God is not a substance, as traditionally held, but is involved within the spatiotemporal world as an active participant - a process which is at work in and beyond the world. This is panentheism. Process philosophers, as they are called, also maintain that many of the historic attributes, which they believe are derived from ancient pagan Greek philosophy rather than scripture, cannot be rendered plausible because of intractable philosophical objections. One of these attributes is immutability. Process thinker Charles Hartshorne (1897 – 2000; pronounced "Harts-home") makes the following point:

The traditional objection to divine change was that if a being were already perfect, meaning that nothing better was possible, then change for the better must be impossible for the being. The unnoticed assumption here has been (for two thousand and more years) that it makes sense to think of a value so great or marvelous that it could in no sense whatever be excelled or surpassed. How do we know that this even makes sense? In my view it does not and is either a contradiction or mere nonsense.

Hartshorne and other process philosophers argue that God is not a static being, but divine becoming. While the abstract qualities of God, such as goodness and wisdom, are stable, God is changeable and evolves as the world does. God grows in experiencing new joys, in acquiring new knowledge of real events, and in experiencing the values created over time by free agents in the world. There are a number of other divine attributes which could be explored as well, including simplicity, incorporeality, omnipresence, divine action, and impassibility. But the five described above provide at least a sketch of some of the discussions in philosophical theology involving the nature and attributes of God.

# Proofs for the Existence of God and their Critique (Indian and Western)

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Almost from the beginning one of the most discussed issue is the existence of God. Philosophers has tried to prove his existence by various proof but equal number of philosophers have refuted their reasoning as a matter of common faith. It can be said that God's existence is infinite and hence he cannot be the subject of a limited intelligence or mind but men's intelligence refuses to give up this unequal struggle.

God is not the subject of sensory experience and is in a sense extra-sensory experience q, a fact which is forgotten by all who wants have sensory proof of his existence who actually do not realize that it is fundamentally different from of physical object.

Infact various arguments and proof offered for the existence of God vary with the levels

For eg

- A mental idea cannot be exhibited in the same manner in which a material object can be.
- Arguments preceding from feelings do not take the form of objects but only activity.

For the religious person the existence of God pose no problem because it is self-proved, on the other hand atheist is little concerned whether God exist or not. Then who is keen to prove that God does or does not exist.

Actually it is true of man's nature that he likes to have logical confirmation of his beliefs even if the beliefs have a psychological basis. It is this element in Man's nature which has compelled the philosopher to find logical proofs for the existence of God who provides the base of religious faith

At the same time philosopher rejected and defected the argument favoring the existence of God. A belief which cannot be supported by argument is treated as blind faith. Consequently philosopher have found it necessary to boost up their faith in God with logical arguments in order to avoid undermining their estimation and faith. ‘

Hence as one of the thinker has said, all proofs that God exist are pleas put forward in justification of one faith and of the particular way in which are feel that use Must apprehend this highest principle.

# Proofs for the existence of God

Proof may be either deductive or inductive.

## (a) Deductive proof

It is best exemplified in a syllogism or mathematical reasoning. In both of them the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. However, this necessity is only logical.

The mathematical reasoning is purely a priori and consists in a consistent use of stipulated definitions of symbols. Naturally such a reasoning does not refer to any actual states of affairs. Such a necessity pertains to either tautologies or consistent use of words only. Hence, if we could establish a conclusion either syllogistically or mathematically, then this would have relevance with regard to words or definitions alone and will not have any relevance with regard to facts.

Hence, if we could deductively prove the existence of God, then this conclusion will remain valid with regard to 'God' as a word or a stipulated definition of the term 'God'. But this will not establish the fact of God's existence of a personal Being.

If the existence of a personal God cannot be established deductively, then this cannot be done inductively either.

## (b) Inductive Proof

It starts from something observable and finally also applies to observables. But God is not an observable entity even in principle. The reason is that a God to be worshipful must be infinite and of surpassing excellence. However, an observable infinite and of surpassing excellence. However, an observable object can be limited to a certain span of space and time. Naturally a God who can be sensed or observed is not an infinite God of religion. Such an observable God becomes an idol. If it is so, then no inductive proof for the existence of an infinite and a personal God can be given.

Further, if somehow we could proceed from the observable to the infinite God, then how can we establish a conclusion with regard to the existence, of an infinite God from finite data? We shall find that according to the Cosmological Proof the world is contingent and God is a necessary Being. How can we prove the existence of a Necessary Being from the observed contingency of the world? The same difficulty will be raised in relation to the teleological proof for the existence of God. Of course, in the long history of religious thought many expedients have been devised.

**St. Thomas Aquinas** is one of those religious giants who did smell the difficulty of proving an infinite God from finite data. For obviating this difficulty St. Thomas Aquinas advanced the ***doctrine of analogia entis***, according to which things pertaining to God can be established on the analogy of excellence found in finite things. In the estimate of competent thinkers the expedient of analogia entis has demonstrated more the difficulty of proving an-infinite God from finite premises than solving it.

### **Existentialist thought on proof**

In recent years some powerful existential thinkers like Martin Buber (the late Jewish theologian) and Paul Tillich have shown that the world of our daily observation and science, being finite, ex-hypothesis does not contain God. Consequently no amount of observation of this world can yield any conclusion concerning God, either deductively or inductively.

### **Difficulty in proving the existence of God**

The difficulty of proving God was raised by Kierkegaard in the form of a dilemma. And this dilemma holds still for anybody who wants to prove the existence of God:

- The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to the Reason. For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it.

The real strength of the dilemma lies in the fact that God exists only for the believer. And for becoming a believer a change in the person is necessary. The unbelieving eye cannot discuss God. The arguments do not establish the factuality of God directly. But they do this indirectly. They persuade the unbeliever to change his viewpoint; they help the philosophers to have an insight into the nature and aims of religious thinking and arguments. The so-called proofs' are in reality pleas for invoking-evoking religious blik and attitudes.

### **Why there can be no experiential proof for God's existence following inductive proof**

Joshua on Mt. Carmel did try to establish the existence of Yahweh on the basis of an observable experiment. Then even in Psalms we find the statement.--O taste and see that the Lord is good'.

But proving 'the invisible things' of God by the created things of the world does not do full justice to the religious situation.

## Arguments

Ontological argument is the most important argument and is the nerve of all other arguments. The other arguments like cosmological, teleological and moral support and supplement the conclusion of ontological argument.

The main contention of ontological argument is that existence is the very essence (ontos) of the idea of God. This argument is a—priori since from the mere analysis of the idea of God or idea of perfect being, we are deducing existence. But, it being a-priori cannot establish any fact. Hence, to remove this defect, many other arguments were put forward like

**1. Cosmological argument:** It holds that world is contingent and the contingent implies a necessary ground of the world. The idea of necessary implies its existence. Hence, it repeats ontological argument by adding further step. 'But, the contingency of the world is the most abstract quality of the worldly things and can hardly be claimed to be sensible.

**2. Teleological argument:** To remove the defect of cosmological argument teleological argument has been advanced. It is based on the experienced quality of order and harmony present everywhere in the world. Here also it is assumed that harmony in nature is contingent. From the contingency of infinitely complex harmony, the necessity of designer is concluded. And again the idea of a necessary designer implies the existence of such a designer.

**3 Moral arguments:** only adds the contingency of moral existence to the presence of designer in nature. It is based on the most palpably felt experience of man.

Hence, empty content of ontological argument is progressively filled up by the cosmological, teleological and moral argument. Ultimately, all arguments rest on the efficiency of ontological arguments according to which idea of God carries, its own existence as the very implication of the idea.

## Ontological argument

The root of the argument is found in Plato (427-347 B.C.) and later on, more or less, in an explicit form it is found in the writings of St. Augustine (354-430A.D.)

In Plato, the 'ideas' were considered to be more important, more valuable and fundamental than the existing things. Further the idea of the Good, which for Plato is nothing less than God, was the supreme principle of reality that drew all things unto itself. Naturally, the idea of the Perfect Being carried with it its own self-validation and reality. For Plato, 'existence' was of not much value. However, for him, 'essence' was of

greater worth than 'existence' and in this sense he would maintain the spirit of the Ontological argument

But this argument was most clearly stated by Anselm (1033-1109). Later on it was re-stated by Rene Descartes (1596-1650). This argument was also accepted by G.F. Leibniz (1646-1716), by G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831). However, there have been powerful opponents of the Ontological argument as well, namely, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and I. Kant (1724-1804). In contemporary religious philosophy the Ontological argument has been keenly debated by Prof. A.J. Ayer.

## **St. Anselm argument:**

Anselm took recourse to the proof with a view to strengthening his faith and justifying one's belief in God. For him faith is a necessary precondition of understanding God. For he says that— "For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand"

Saint Anselm, the medieval philosopher, was the first to propound the ontological argument to prove the existence of God. (This argument was further taken up" by philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, etc. Anselm's argument is

1. God is an object of worship and to be worshipful, God must be the highest or greater than whom' nothing can be conceived.
2. Existence is a state of the highest perfection or excellence. Hence, existence is a predicate or quality like omnipotent, omniscient, all-good, etc.
3. God is necessary existent. Hence, non-existence of God cannot be thought of.

Therefore, necessary existence of God is contained in the very notion of being greater than whom nothing can be conceived.

According to Anselm, 'existence' is some quality. Anselm is trying to justify his faith in God. His God is an object worthy of worship, i.e. to whom the entire personality is unreservedly surrendered whose service is considered the highest freedom through commitment to whom the worshipper realizes his authentic being. Quite naturally such a Being cannot be imagined not to exist even for a moment.

**The necessary existence of God** is a matter of deciding to be an authentic self. The necessity of God's existence is not "a matter of logical necessity, but it expresses the involvement of the total personality---it is the cry of the whole man, the highest crescendo of the chorus, 'God exists, hallelujah; God exists, hallelujah' .Thus belief,



commitment and self-involvement spell out the real significance of the ontological argument.

Even Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza have made in the end the same symbolic statement. For Anselm God who is a Being greater than whom nothing can be conceived to be existing is a necessary Being, and a necessary Being cannot but exist. This is what Descartes tried to hold by saying that existence-follows from the idea of an infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful Being. Just as the conclusion that all the angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles follows from the definition of a triangle, so the existence of God follows from the very idea of Him. According to Descartes, we cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and hence that He really exists.

**Leibnitz** was very much influenced by the Ontological argument which is phrased like this. Each possible thing has the right to aspire to existence in proportion to the amount of perfection it contains in germ. Since God is most perfect, therefore, he necessarily exists.

The whole argument of Spinoza is geometrical. Necessarily this is not suited to prove any actuality of anything. The geo-metrical deduction is only a matter of definitions, axioms and postulates. In the same manner if we define God in a certain manner, then his existence too will follow necessarily. Now the existence of God follows necessarily, if we follow Spinoza's definitions of substance and God.

Substance, "is that which is in itself and is conceived through itself: I mean that, the conception of which does not depend on the conception of another thing from which it must be formed ..... God I understand to be a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence."

Now if substance is going to be a self-contained whole, then there can be only one substance. Again, for Spinoza, God is a substance the idea of which involves its own existence.

From the idea of all-perfect being, it is logically followed that God exists. It would be self-contradictory to say that God is all-perfect, but do not have existence. To say this, it would mean to say that red is red, but not colourful. As the colour is contained in the very idea of rose, similarly, existence is contained in the idea of perfect being. Further, as the idea of triangle necessarily contains that sum of three angles is 180 degrees, similarly the idea of perfect being necessarily contains existence. God is generally conceived to be the highest and supreme existence. If it is presumed that God does not exist, then it would mean that God is not all-perfect. Therefore, for God to be perfect, it is necessary that he should possess the quality of existence.

### Critical comments (by Kant)

1. God is called necessary being, but this is self -contradictory phrase because there is transgression of linguistic usage.

Necessary can be legitimately used with regard to stipulated definitions of symbols only or is used with reference to propositions, not with reference to things or beings. Hence, it is a-priori. Again, any existing thing can be contingent only and of anything existing, we can always imagine it to be otherwise; than what it is and even a possibility of it not existing at all.

Thus, if God exists then he can also be imagined not to be existing at any time. If he is necessary, then he is not being and if he is being, he is not necessary. To say that God is a necessary being is as self-contradictory as a square circle is.

2. A proposition is necessary if its predicate cannot be denied without involving us in self-contradiction .For example, a triangle is bounded by three straight lines.

On the other hand, a synthetic proposition is that whose predicate can be denied" without contradiction. This is true of any empirical proposition

So, if existence is a predicate of God in an empirical proposition, we can always imagine it to be different from what it is.

3. Existence is not a real predicate. The word "God is" adds no new thing. So, the words "God is" and "God exists" do not add anything.
4. By mere thought on concept, we cannot bring anything into existence. If it is so, all would be kings. Thus, the concept God remains a concept no matter how hard we think about it.

### Cosmological arguments

If God' is a real proper name with his own appropriate attributes then God would be an actual entity. But if it so, then as Hume pointed out, it is absurd to demonstrate a matter of fact by any a priori argument. For this reason we can say that the Ontological argument has failed, because it is purely a priori and analytic. Hence, one has to take recourse to actual states of affairs, which are based on some verifiable experience. And this is what is proposed to be achieved by the Cosmological argument.

In its elementary form the Cosmological argument was first formulated by Plato in *Laws* and *Phaedrus*. Later on, Aristotle stated it quite clearly. Afterwards it is held that St. Thomas Aquinas regarded it as the central argument for proving God.

The Cosmological argument is usually expressed in two forms, namely, in the form of Causal argument and in the form of argument from Contingency.

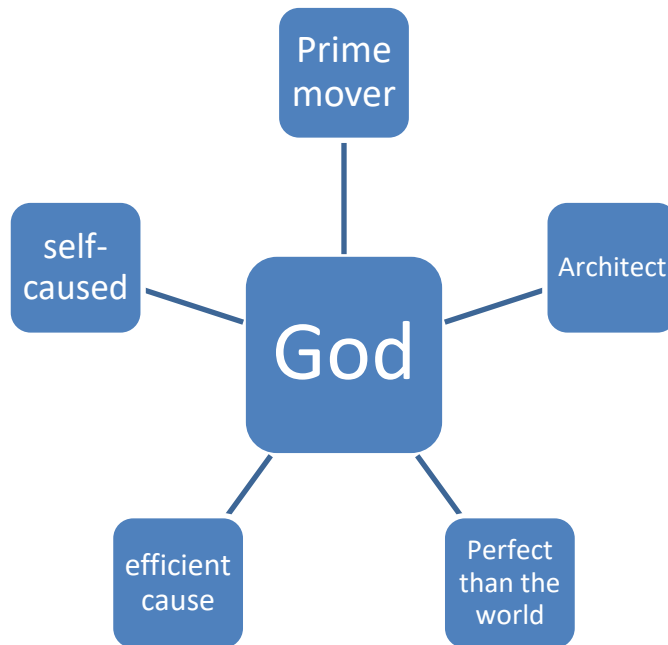
## **Causal Argument**

It has the following steps

1. Every, event has a cause, and no event in the world can be without a cause.
2. Events keep on happening. The present event 'A is caused by the previous event B, and B in turn by C, and, C in turn by D, and so on.
3. Quite obviously the causal series is interminable. But in order to understand the whole series of cause and effect, we have to posit a First Cause which in its turn does not imply its further cause.
4. This First Cause which produces the whole series of causes and effects is the Mover only and cannot be intum moved by anything else. This Prime Mover may be called God.
5. Hence, the world of causal series requires God to explain it.

Thus God exists as its own cause and in turn as the cause of the world.

St. Thomas did not use the concept of Causality in the modern scientific sense, but in the Aristotelian sense of efficient causality with some end in view. Hence this world has to be taken as an effect of an efficient First Cause which determines means and ends for the final End. Here the concept does not mean a mere mechanical antecedent of an event. Here, there is the Aristotelian concept of God as an architect having some design. Hence, the effect fully reflects the nature of design fashioned out of pre-existing matter and, the First Cause is supposed to be more perfect than the world designed by it as the Prime Mover.



## Critical Comments

Firstly, “every event must have a cause” is only a procedural assumption of science. In itself, it is neither true nor false: it is either useful or useless. This proposal has been designed to explain the series of particular events of the world. So this proposal cannot be universally accepted.

Secondly, the idea that the world can be regarded as a single event is controversial. It would be regarded as an event if there is the possibility of recording the coming into and going out of being of this world. Rather the world is the sum of all actual and possible events. Hence, the world is not an event. So the causal postulate is not applicable to the universe as a whole.

The point has been raised by Kant. According to him, the category of causality is applicable to phenomenon. The world as a whole is not a perceptible phenomenon.

Similarly, Russell holds that every event has a cause, but the totality need not have any. He tells that we can say that every human being has a parent, but certainly we cannot say that humanity too has a parent.

## The Argument from Contingency

The assumption of the cosmological argument from contingency is that existence is prior to essence or idea. Here it is maintained that essence and existence are identical. The assertion of Aquinas in this context is that the existence of God is not implied by God's essence, but that God's essence is the same as his existence.

Hence, according to this way of thinking we should not say that there must be a Perfect Being because we have an idea of Him: on the contrary, we should say that we have an idea of Him because He exists. Further, such a Being must not be a bare possibility, but an actuality. The reason is that such a Being has to explain the world as its ground and only an actuality can serve as the explanation and origin of the world, and bare possibility cannot. Both these points have been mentioned by Plato and Aristotle.

Aquinas starts with the most familiar aspect of the world, namely, things continuously come into being and pass away. Hence, there are some contingent things in the world. A thing is said to be contingent when there is nothing in the nature of the thing itself to guarantee its perpetual existence, or, more simply a thing is contingent when it does not have the ground of its own existence. It is therefore capable of non-existing, and at some time does not exist. True, the series of contingent events may continue forever. But the point is, if a contingent event cannot exist by itself, then the world as consisting by itself, then the world as consisting of contingent events requires a Necessary Being as the ground of contingent happenings.

**Here the main point of the argument** is that something contingent 'cannot' come out of nothing. Hence something called contingent events must have come out of something which is not ultimately Nothing, but Necessary Being. Further, Aquinas adds that this necessity is not dependent on any other being, but on itself. Hence, this necessary being is called God.

Here one can very easily see the influence of Plato according to whom there is a self—moved motion called soul which is the ground of every other motion but is itself its own ground. However, Aquinas took the help of Aristotle's notion of the Prime Mover or Pure Actuality which is its own ground and reason and is actual by virtue of its own essence

The supreme assumption of the Cosmological argument is that the contingent world stands in need of philosophical explanation. The problem therefore is: 'why things are as they are'.

If this be granted to be a legitimate question, then it can be satisfactorily answered, according to Aquinas, only by positing the existence of a necessary Being. The argument of Aquinas can be more simply put into the following steps

1. All the things of the world are contingent, that is one by one each of them at one time can pass away
2. In the infinite series of time, all things, one by one, at one time should have ceased to exist. Therefore, at one time, by this time, there should have been nothing. Hence, there should have been a complete Void already by this time. '

3. If there were a complete Void at any one time, then even' now there should have been a Void, for out of nothing, nothing comes.
4. But there is something. This something, therefore, is based on something which is not contingent, i.e., it is Being which at no time can cease to be in the infinite series of time.
5. This something which contains the ground of its own existence is a necessary Being. It is this necessary Being which is at the basis of all contingent things (some of which exist at one time or the other), and which does not allow things in the infinite series of time to pass into nothing.
6. This necessary Being is called God.

The whole argument may be syllogistically expressed thus

If anything exists, then an absolutely necessary Being exists

But, something exists; Therefore, an absolutely necessary Being exists.

The fundamental contention is that the 'transient implies the permanent and the intellectual apprehension of contingent being at such involves an apprehension of its being related to a self-grounded reality.

Horizontal causal series (contingent beings):  $\rightarrow a \rightarrow b \rightarrow c \rightarrow d \rightarrow e \rightarrow f \rightarrow g$

Vertical grounding uncaused cause (necessary being): A

## **Assumptions of Cosmological Argument:**

The supreme assumption of the Cosmological argument is that the contingent world stands in need of philosophical explanation. The problem therefore is: 'why things are as they are'.

The second assumption of Aquinas is that an infinite time has already elapsed and that all things not capable of existing by themselves would have come to naught in this infinite series.

But if infinite time has not already passed away, then every potentiality to be actualized in time, cannot be supposed to have been fulfilled. If time is going on, then who knows the contingent would may yet come to naught. So from the mere possibility we cannot- infer the actuality of all contingent things coming to naught, unless we

accept that an infinite series of time has already passed away. But the phrase 'infinite series of time' means that the series has not terminated and can never be said to-have passed away. Hence, the second assumption of Aquinas is Weak. But unless we accept this, we cannot proceed further.

**Thirdly,** the Cosmological argument is not merely causal. It is not merely concerned with an infinite temporal regress and in order to escape from it, it is not recommending us to accept a First Cause. The argument starts with the assumption that all things are dependent and the whole world consisting of contingent things may be compared to a chain of an infinite number of entities. But this chain requires as much explaining as finite things do. And this has to be explained in terms of something beyond, and other than itself.

**Lastly,** the Cosmological argument holds that the contingent things imply the existence of a necessary Being. Usually the term 'necessary' is used with regard to analytic necessity only.

However, Aquinas assumes the priority of Being over essence or idea. So, according to him, it is the Absolute Being which is necessary. In other words, this necessity is not logical, but factual.

We shall find that from the time of Hume-and Kant up to Russell and Ayer, it is held that statements concerning facts can be contingent only and to say that a statement concerning an absolute Being or fact is necessary is to commit self-contradiction. Now whatever may be the criticism of the notion of a necessary Being, call it ontological or meta-physical concept. As such the notion of a 'necessary being' is to be understood existentially or convictionally and not in the empirical language of science. We have already made reference to it in relation to the Ontological Argument.

## Teleological argument

The word teleological has been derived from the Greek word “teleos” which means “end” or “purpose”. So, the teleological argument holds that the order in nature points to a design of an infinite intelligence. It proves God’s existence on the basis of purpose, design, harmony and orderliness. It is an argument from the order in nature to a divine designer.

In one sense, it is simply an extension of cosmological argument because.

1. It takes recourse to the empirical features of the universe far more extensively and in a detailed manner than the cosmological argument.
2. It holds that order in the nature is contingent since there is nothing in nature to guarantee it. Hence, order in the nature has to be grounded in self-existing infinite existence.

This argument is very old as it has been hinted by Plato; According -to Him, the whole path and movement of heavenly bodies and all that is there, is akin to the movement and calculation of a mind.

According to teleological argument, a purpose or design is present everywhere and it strikes the most careless and casual lookup. For example, suppose a watch is found in forest. Then, one perceives its various parts so framed together so as to produce time. One can conclude that it- was made for a purpose. From the mere presence of mechanism, one would conclude that watch must be having its maker. Same could be concluded from order and design in nature. For example, the perfect cycle of season, day—night, movements of planets, etc. Further, climate of earth has been so made so as to make it conducive for life. Ozone layer that is life-saving zone seems to be a well-thought creation. This cannot be product of accident or by chance, but is the result of divine intention.

In fact, there are three characteristics of intention or purpose. These are: selection, combination and gradation. Theologians claim that all Lhese characteristics are present in nature. For example,

1. Various organs of the body so selected out of number of possibilities they perform their adjustive functions in relation to various environmental ‘conditions. For r example, breathing organs of each species are well-adapted to the various conditions of living.
2. By combination it is meant correlation of organ where mutual interdependence and mutual interrelation between different species and organisms function as an integrated whole. For example, human body.



3. Third mark of intention is gradation or arrangement by which a given end is attained through a chain of independent means each making provisions for the next. In general, lower life sustains and supports higher life.

All these point to an ultimate entity who has infinite knowledge, power, desire and will to realize his ends. There must be conscious power functioning behind the scene in order to move the universe. Such an ultimate entity can be only God.

## **Critical comments (by Kant)**

1. This proof is analogical. It is based on the analogy of mechanic in relation to its machines or a pot in relation to a potter. Therefore, it has no force of demonstration. In religion, we value freedom of will, moral worth and spiritual creativeness, but mechanism is quite opposed to all these. Moreover, analogy is highly anthropomorphic because we are thinking of the whole of reality in terms of human needs and ends. But, in fact, there is much more than this.
2. It fails to explain physical, mental or moral evil. There is so much disharmony and chaos in nature, but theologians have one-sidedly emphasized upon the facts of combination, selection and gradation.
3. This proof at the most shows that there is an author of the world, but does not show that there is a creator of universe. An architect is one who shapes and moulds something out of pre-existing material. For example, potter creates pot out of clay. Therefore, even an infinite architect pre-supposes the reality of matter which are fashioned into orderly universe. This means that God becomes-limited by matter. However, God must be infinite and must create matter out of Himself.
4. This proof is disguised form of cosmological argument. This assumes that order is contingent and therefore requires an external machinery to account for it. But, it may be argued that world has come out of various permutations and combinations.

Further, Charles Darwin has shown that principle of natural selection alone has contributed to the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence. Thus, 'there is no need of any supernatural entity.'



# Problem of Evil

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What is "Problem of evil"?

Evil is suffering or sorrow. Its cause may be natural or moral. Natural evil is due to natural calamities and moral evil is due to bad conduct. Natural evils are beyond human control while moral evils are within human control. For example, greed, revenge, murder, etc.

A theist accepts at least three propositions:

1. God is omnipotent.
2. God is all-good.
3. Evil exists, both natural as well as moral.

If so, then if any two be true, then third would be false. It follows that fact of evil is completely incompatible with the actuality of an omnipotent and all-good God.

1. If a deity willing to prevent evil, but not able, then he is not omnipotent.
2. If he able, but not willing, then he is not all-good.
3. Is he both able and willing, then why there is evil?

This is very discomfoting situation for a theist. Thus, the problem of evil is that how a just, omnipotent and. infinitely good God can create or permit evil. However, theists justify evil on various grounds and claim on the basis of the justification that problem of evil ceases to be a problem.

"Broadly, there are two views regarding the justification:

1. Instrumentalist view.
2. Free-willist view.

Instrumentalist view

Within this there are different arguments such as:

1. According to this view, the world is essentially evolutionary giving rise to hierarchical order of graded things. In this scheme of things, physical and moral evil are inevitable concomitance of "the best possible world". So, all things that is sum of all things taken together work together for good.
2. Evil is prophylactic, that is, it serves as a warning against danger. At times, it is punitive. These are the kind of warnings by God to human beings so that they may not rise over and above God. God makes us to realize our helplessness, weakness and smallness in relation to God.

3. Moral excellence. Suffering is necessary incidental to the evolution of moral excellence. In fact, evil is productive of good and these sufferings inculcate in us many moral virtues. For example, patience, tolerance, sympathy, honesty, etc.
4. Evil is necessary for the realization of good. This view argues that without the experience of evil in the form of suffering, we cannot appreciate goodness. Just as one cannot appreciate light if he has not seen darkness. Similarly, evil is necessary for the realization of Good.
5. Evil in the form of natural calamities are the results of human beings' sins and according to theists, sin is disobeying God's order.
6. There is, in fact, no evil at all if seen in totality. Reality in its totality is only good. There is mere illusion of evil. However, it can be argued that if it is illusion, then why God has created it. Further, such illusions are themselves evil. In that way, it is merely substitution of one evil by another.

It is often that evil produces its own kind, that is, evil is productive of more evil; For example, bodily illness produces greater susceptibility for other illness. Further, even if it is admitted that evil is necessary concomitant of good, then who can decide and who can determine the proper measure of evil just sufficient to produce the maximum good? The view that evil is instrumental to good is not only inconclusive, but also vicious. If evil is necessary to good, then evil too has to be increased in the same proportion, -that is, for more good, we need more evil.

But, such arguments are rejected by theists. According to them, evil is not something positive, it is privation of good. Hence, evil serving the cause of good ultimately disappears and is transformed into good. Spinoza pointed out that the saint and wicked both serve the purpose of God, but wicked in fulfilling the divine purpose perishes in the act.

If God makes use of evil to produce good, then God in a sense subordinates himself to a principle. In other words, if God works with the help of means, then he ceases to be omnipotent. However, theists reject this and say that working according to the law does not take away God's omnipotence.

Instrumentalists' view is criticized on the ground that nature is non-ethical and 'has no moral purpose to serve. If the creation just and creator omnipotent, then suffering and happiness would be proportionally distributed. But, in reality it is not. Rather, there are wide and glaring inequalities. Virtues are not rewarded. Even if it is not rewarded, then at least happiness should be distributed evenly. As against this, happiness and misery seem to depend much on the accident of one's own birth and on the fault of one's parents, society and other circumstances.

## Free-Willist View

According to this viewpoint, God is both infinitely good and omnipotent. However, omnipotence for him is the power of doing everything which is logically possible. They also hold that with free will goes the possibility of doing either good or evil.

According to theist, out of his abundance of creative love, God has made creatures with a view to help them to become worthy of his fellowship, that is, co-creators. For this, man has to choose the right freely by overcoming the temptation of doing wrong. This capacity of overcoming is associated with the risk of choosing evil. So, if moral agents have to evolve as the supreme end of this universe, then the possibility of sin or moral evil has to be conceded. Therefore, God is not responsible for moral evil. Man alone is responsible for moral evil because he alone creates them by exercising his wrong choice.

Further, higher virtues like forgiveness presupposes not only free will but also the actual occurrence of certain evil. In other words, forgiveness pre-supposes the prior occurrence of some evil to be forgiven.

It can be argued that free-willists defence of evil cannot be reconciled with God's omnipotence, though, God is omnipotent, but can he control the created free-will? If yes, then logically it follows that God makes rules which binds himself, then he is not omnipotent once he has made them. If no, then it should be conceded that he is not already omnipotent.

An omnipotent God could have ordered the world such that lesser chances of evil might have been possible or he could have made man less biased towards evil or could have made man only to choose right.

God is omniscient and he foreknows that many would commit sin. Therefore, his foreknowledge, infinitely goodness and omnipotence would have prevented the creation of such free will. However, such viewpoints or arguments are not acceptable to free willists. Free-willists hold that foreknowledge of free-act is self-contradictory even though God is omniscient.

According to free-willists, the supreme end of the universe is to transform the creator into co-creators with God. This can be achieved only when "free-will is made holy through obedience to the will of God even in the face of all temptations for disobedience. They want the free will of human to merge with free will of God.

If God brings about that men he creates always does what is right, then they do not do but 'God does this. Therefore, holy will cannot be created because it -is a matter of realization and attainment by overcoming the evil.

Even after all these arguments and justifications, the problem of evil remains as it is. All the justifications have one problem or another. Evil cannot be explained rationally by theologians. The problem of evil can be resolved only in the realm of faith.

# Soul: immortality; Rebirth and Liberation

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It is important to understand what the different notions of self or soul are, what personal identity consists in, for the answer to these questions significantly influences our understanding of how after-life is viewed.

There are various conceptions of the self which have been historically held in the East and the West. The four major views are:

1. Dualism
2. Materialism
3. Monistic pantheism
4. Buddhist doctrine of no-self

## Dualism

Many major western philosophers such as Plato, Aquinas and Descartes hold dualism. In East, Samkhya School of thought holds a distinction between Purusa (Soul) & Prakriti (matter). Furthermore, most dualists -both religious and non-religious - have affirmed life after death.

For some, immortality means an embodied state, and the Jews, Christian and Islamic views of the resurrection of the body, are cases in point. For other, life after death involves being reincarnated in another physical existence perhaps as an animal or another person. Yet for other, Dualism death is disembodied existence where the soul is forever separated from any future physical existence.

## Materialism

It holds that there is no immaterial aspect of the self — no soul or immaterial mind. For some materialist, there is no life after death. Once the physical body dies, the person perishes. For other, life after death is a real possibility. It is made possible by resurrection of body after death by God.

## Monistic Pantheism

This view of self is held by Advaita Vedanta — Monism (reality is one, there is no destruction of things); and, pantheism (all is divine). According to Advaita Vedanta, ultimate reality (Which is referred to as 'Brahman') is undifferentiated and beyond all qualities including personhood. The universe flows from Brahman, whose very nature is undifferentiated. Maya an illusory aspect from which apparent differentiation and individuality emerged. Selfhood is an illusion and product of maya, the true self or atma is in reality Brahman.

## No-self

Buddhists are not satisfied with dualist, materialist and Advaita view of self. Buddhist do not believe in a substantial, permanent atman or soul, their doctrine is anatman. This is based on Buddhist metaphysics of 'pratitya samudpada' according to which the being is conditioned i.e. 'this being that arises'. Similar to the Advaita vedantic view, individual self does not exist, it is a mere illusion. But contrary to Advaitin view, these are various experiences, desires, feelings and cravings which are real and in constant flux.

There is no self, rather the individual personality consists of fleeting 'skandas' called 'panchskanda'

An old Indian chariot analogy is often cited regarding the no-self view. A chariot is not the spokes, or the wheels or the frame, or the axle; it's none of the individual parts. Neither it is the individual parts taken together. Yet neither is it something other than the parts. It turns out to be merely the sound of the word "Chariot". So too with individual selves

Buddhists grant that grasping the no-self teaching may not be easy; it will require working off the negative effects of karma and multiple reincarnations to come to this realization.

## Reincarnations and karma

Reincarnation is the view that the conscious self transmigrates from one physical body to the next after death. Each human being has lived former lives, perhaps as another human being or perhaps as another kind of organism.

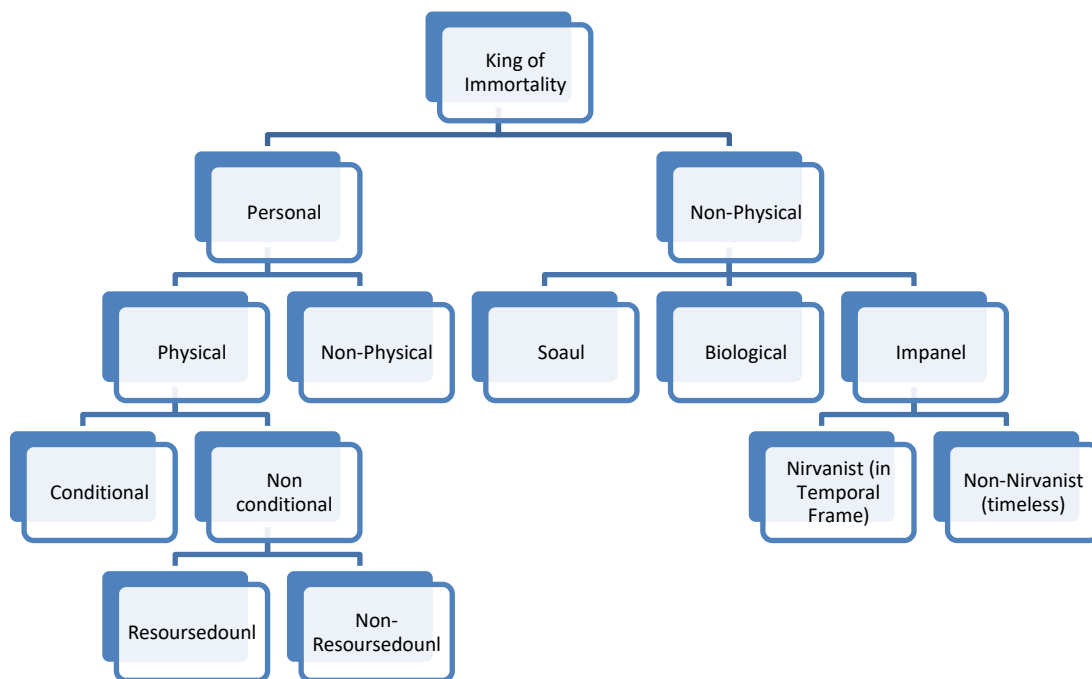
According to Buddhist conception, after the death of consciousness a new consciousness arises. The dissolution of the skandhas leads to rise of new consciousness which is not identical to the former, but neither is it completely different from it. There is a causal connection between them as they form part of the same **causal continuum**.

Of the past lives' causal links or nidanas, spiritual ignorance (nescience) and constructing activities (samskara) are karmically active states from one's past life which leads to the arising of karmically passive states in this life ; the sentient body, the sense-bases, simulation, and feeling in response to the simulation, the karmically active states of craving, grasping and becoming arise, which then determines the karmically passive states of one's future life, namely birth, and aging and death. Of course, spiritual ignorance and constructing activities are present in this life as well as in one's last life working in union with other karmically active states, and consciousness arise in one's last life, working in union with other karmically active and consciousness arise in one's next life as well as in this

Reincarnation is connected with the concept of karma, the idea that we reap the good and bad consequences on four actions, either in this life or in another. Those who affirm reincarnation and karma often point to a difficulty they see with the western view; it seems exceedingly unfair that one child is born healthy into a wealthy loving family whereas another child is born sickly into a poor, cruel environment. If there is a creator God who brought these two persons into the world, such a God seems to be unloving and unjust. However, if the two children are reaping the consequences of action they performed in previous lives, this seems to provide a justification for the inequalities. The effects of one's karma determines the circumstances of our present and future lives, "we reap what we sow"

## Immortality of soul/problem of immortality

There are many senses in which the term 'immortality is used. The sense in which the problem is in for the theist means the endless duration of the personal existence of the individual with the prospect of infinitenrichment of the personality. This meant that the individual personality with its present memory and purpose is conceived to continue, and secondly, this infinite duration offers opportunities for better realizing the higher purposes of man.





## Immortality for theism

This has been held with some accompanying doctrine of immortality. Immortality therein is concerned with conservation of individuals as substantive beings. It is agreed that relative independence of human personalities and the existence of God as living being are bound up together. The agreement of the theist can be stated briefly thus:

1. The God of theism is a creator God, who out of the abundance of his outgoing and creative love has created the whole universe with a view to give rise to creatures who ultimately would be molded into souls. Only such souls can be the fit persons deserving the fellowship of a holy God or to enter the Kingdom of God.
2. Of course, the evolution process of the creation of souls has not been smooth. After a good deal of preparation life emerged on earth. Many routes led to dead ends and many species became extinct. At last man emerged with consciousness and ideals. Now if the universe be created and its aim be the making of souls, then should they be allowed to perish after they have once emerged? The question is deepened by 2 further considerations.

**First**, no person however great and successful in his career can say that his purposeful activity has no more grounds to cover. A Newton, a Kant, a Gandhi have ample room for purposeful activity.

**Second**, the creator of this universe is supremely good and infinitely intelligent. He cannot allow a saint, a sage, a scientist or any person of value to perish. i.e. the task at the hands of man is infinite and time allowed on this earth is extremely finite.

Without the conservation of these saints and seers, God would be a sort of divine playboy or an aborted artist. Therefore God lives in the perpetual giving of himself in his finite creatures, and if his perpetual creative act is not a child play then finite persons somehow must be preserved.

## God Purpose

If the end of life, mind and spirit is taken true then the very purpose of God of them will be frustrated. If the divine purpose is, as evolution seems to indicate, that of producing free spirit as the end result of a long and tortuous process, it seems tragic that that the purpose will finally be defeated as physical death stultifies the entire undertaking. The only feasible alternative is the continuation of spiritual life with the appropriation of love and other forms of value in spite of the death of the body.

## **Kant argument for immortality of Soul**

Kantian approach of proving immortality of soul is based on moral experience. We pass from something in man's mind to the mind of the world which must be if what is in man's is due to reality. The moral requirement for immortality points out that we are impelled to seek moral ends and that the destruction of human personalities could make these moral ends unattainable. Since the moral obligation cannot be realized in this life, that obligation is a delusion unless there is a wider plane of existence on which another realization of the obligation is possible. It would be a curious world indeed if a man were obliged to do what he cannot do. But only on the hypotheses of immortality is there a possibility, of the fulfillment of the obligation. Obedience to the moral law, required endless progress but endless progress is possible only on the supposition of an endless duration of existence and personally of the same rational being. Immortality, Kant supposed, can be shown to be a necessary postulate if moral experiences to be taken seriously.

### **Problems with the notion & endless duration of personal existence**

This is a logically unique expectation, of endless survival including not only the survival of memory but also the prospect of the presence of the same earthly aims and purposes for their better realization. However there is a problem with this notion:

The presence of higher purposes and their realization are based with earthly circumstances of fear, passion hopes, socio—economic conditions. If the continuance of the earthly circumstances are necessary for pursuing purposes in the endless survival theory then it is demanding for the endless repetitive cycles.

However, religious hopes of survival in a paradise are entertained without the earthly circumstances. They refer to a state where the weary are at rest and the wicked ceases from troubling and where there are no tears and sorrows. But without the fear of - defeat and possibilities of failure there can be no inducement for energetic activities, enterprises and risky undertakings. For becoming a soul, an individual has to be free and freedom has no meaning unless there is also the possibility of choosing the wrong.

For this reason, Indian thinkers talked of release from the chains of endless births and rebirths. For them then endless chain means imperfection and the continuance" of sorrow rather than of hope.

### **Conclusion:**

The hope of personal immortality can be only by belief in a perfect, benevolent and a creator God. The whole consideration rests on accepting the thought that a perfect God creates creatures that would ultimately grow into being capable of fellowship with God. Once they emerge, how can God allow such beings to perish?

Any God who allows value-possibilities, who allows value-making and value-realizing beings to cease for no good reason, is guilty of a crime. There is a strong case that persons who would find no reason for immortality might disbelieve in God.

However, the philosophical argument has been advanced more for the eternal life of values than for the survival of personal immortality

.This is clearly envisaged by the classical writing of Plato put into the mouth of Socrates at the time of his death

**“The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that comes faster than death”.**

In there, in a subtle way immortality of individual has been combined with a **qualitative or axiological significance**. The persuasiveness of the theistic argument is derived from its existence on the high quality of life hoped for. But the quality insisted on is quite independent of everlastingness. There-the eternity of truth ,beauty and goodness is confused with the enduringness of the body. Thus, theism holds that a life of faith, obedience of God until death, a life of virtue and righteousness will be continued to the end. Thus in some places, a certain land of qualitative 'life is called immortal, including the idea of physical existence.

Pringle Pattison gathers that eternal life taught in the New testament is not a state of existence to follow upon physical death but is an all-absorbing state of experiencing the love of God in Christ. This view will be fully endorsed both by the Vedantins and Nirvanist.

When the problem of immortality is one of eternal values, it may mean the eternal which is timeless, which is above the risk of change. Or it may be eternity which has been realized through and in line by an adventure of creations thrust into open possibilities. The former may be called a **non-Nirvanist eternity** and the latter may be called **Nirvanist eternity**.

## **Metaphysical or Non-Nirvanist Immortality**

**Plato** gave many arguments in favor of the eternity of the soul. Most of these arguments are purely a priori they tend to prove the eternity of soul by means of the definition of the term included.

1. Plato tells us that soul is simple. A simple is that which cannot be decomposed, and if it cannot be decomposed, then it is eternal soul being simple is eternal.

2. Soul is self-moved. Only that thing will come to rest to which motion is imparted from I outside. As coming to rest is said to be death and as the self moved soul can never come to rest, so soul is eternal.
3. Thus, ideas of Plato suffers again from its being a priori. The whole difficulty of Plato is that he concerns the soul wholly apart from the body or “matter”, whereas the soul we know of is always an embodied soul. This bud of dualism of mind—body with mind as an unextended, non—spatial substance and body as extended, spatial substance is seen in Descartes also who believes that soul is immortal (Discussed in Paper-I)

### Pragmatic augment

It is held that the effects of believing in immortality are so salutary that they may be taken as evidences for the truth of the belief.

This is no argument. Besides, the effects of believing in eternity may be followed by the slackening of efforts for improving the world in which one lives. Indian thought generally takes the soul to be eternal and yet this thought has been understood as “world-and-life-negating” by some philosophers like Schweitzer. The belief in eternity need not be followed by salutary effects.

### Nirvanist Immortality

The state of Nirvana is attained by a person in this earthly frame. But once the Nirvana is attained, the person becomes secure from the change, i.e. from the endless chain of enduring states of births and deaths. This timelessness has been attained in time through the vicissitudes of temporal flow. Hence, in this kind of eternity, life is retained and yet transcended.

e.g. any great work of art, like the Madonna or Parssior , the starry Nights must have taken time in which it was produced. But once the work has been accomplished, it becomes a thing of beauty.

The same is true for a person who makes himself a thing of value, a co-creator of value worthiness with God.

In the case of Newton, Einstein, Gandhi, Shankar we abstract their discovering from their personalities. Yet we know that a man in flesh and blood called Newton by becoming a mathematician alone would have established what he in fact did establish. However, it also realized that which made Newton immortal was his discovering and not the fact that he lived at a certain time and place.

It is claimed that “he who knows the Brahman himself becomes the Brahman” (Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati). Christ felt that he was the very thing he was asserting ‘I am the way, the truth’, ‘the, life eternal’.

The assertions are religiously or convictionally true. In spiritual adventures, the seeker of religious truths himself becomes timelessly true, beyond the accidents of time and ever vanishing moments of change. This is what happens in the case of prophets, seers and sages.

**Spinoza:** Spinoza “amor, intellectualis dei” exemplifies that by contemplating on things changeless and timeless, one tends to become oneself a time less existence. According to Spinoza by setting our affection on things which don’t change, we are delivered from the disturbances of passions. The Spinozistic love goes beyond the personality and becomes a thing of eternity.

In religion, one does not tend to find a string of pearls rather one seeks to become a shining string of pearls’ a thing of value by following the righteous path in full earnestness. Religious truths are made true. The life of eternal values has to be won and actualized here and now in this earthly frame, by one’s free decision and commitment to it. No one can confer Nirvana to anyone. It has to be attained by one’s own ceaseless efforts and by One’s own light. ‘AppoDipoBhava’ are the last words of Lord Buddha on the subject. This Nirvana is neither selfish nor unselfish but selfless in the most literal sense of the term



# Reason, Revelation and faith

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## Religious knowledge

Knowledge concerned with supernatural entity and transcendental reality like God, soul, etc. are religious knowledge.

- There are certain criteria of knowledge. A thing to be knowledge must fulfill all these criteria. These criteria are certain, distinct, indubitable and verifiable. However, subject matter of religious knowledge is transcendental, that is, beyond human experience and reason. Hence, it lacks all the criteria of knowledge. So, from rational and philosophical point of view, we cannot call religious knowledge as knowledge. Rather it is more appropriate to call "them as religious beliefs.
- But, for religious persons, there is no doubt about such knowledge. For them, it is very much clear, distinct and indubitable. They accept it on the basis of faith which is the guarantee of truth for them.

The major sources of religious knowledge are revelation, mysticism, miracles, etc.

## Foundation of Religious Belief

It has been accepted by religious thinkers that there is religion a priori. This means that there is something in human structure which prompts man heavenward. In general it might be laid down that man is endowed with a strong predisposition towards his spiritual quest. This spiritual present in man gives rise to religious belief.

Religious beliefs are of two types: belief— in and believe — that.

1. Belief- in is an attitude to a person, whether human or divine. Believe-that refers to a proposition, a proposition for which some reason can be demanded and presented.
2. Both in belief-in and believe-that there is an element of trust. However, in belief- in this trust is strong so much so that even life can be risked.
3. Believers believe in god with whole heart and this cannot be reduced to believe-that. This is like believing in a friend.

## Belief in god

- It is highly evaluative and not merely factual, that is, the acceptance of an existential proposition
- Religious belief is not merely cognitive and cannot be assimilated to factual or scientific knowledge.

- It is both interested and disinterested.
- There is interestedness, for God is our refuge at all times and a tower of strength in times of all sound gloom. But when human beings give Him thanks for all his favors, then they do so in disinterested way.
- It is affective and contains warmth of feeling.
- The nearest analogue of belief in God would be our belief in a friend. It is a matter of absolute trust in God who is "the fundamental 'god thing' without which there would be no others".

## **The place of reason**

The function of reason is to control and guide the conative trends in man. Religion too is a matter of holistic tendency in man which drives a man in search of his ideal self. True, very often this ideal self is posited in one's religion's upbringing but the nature of the deity which embodies this ideal self gets exposed to knowledge and ever deepening sensitiveness to what he considers to be his highest concern. Hence, it is for reason in man to get him well established in his belief of the kind of deity whom he worships. Reason can and do play some functions in religion.

### **1. Selection-**

There are various trends of deities and scriptures. Naturally, one has to use reason as far as it can carry him, to make a decision about his deity. This clash between different religions may give rise to various possible results.

- i. Out of the clash may result cross, fertilization of ideas concerning ones' religion beliefs and practices.
- ii. Clash may lead to the rejection of other deities then there may be forced conversion.
- iii. Clash may lead to wholesale mass conversion, as in ancient India. Here many foreigners like the Greeks Huns, Parthians, etc. were converted to Hinduism.

Thus, reason serves as solvent of many religious issues.



## **2. Conceptualization –**

The nature of religious experience or contact with god is transient in nature. This momentary glimpse of god has to be conceptualized in words. As the experience is extraordinary, so words can never be precise. The expressions containing ordinary words are used in an extraordinary way.

## **3. Interpretation of religious scriptures**

The Upanishads and Gita come down to us as 'holy scriptures' but the scriptural statements have to be interpreted and reason has to be advanced in favor of one's interpretation

Samkara holds that Brahman, being devoid of form cannot be an object of perception and inference. But Samkara holds that inference has to be used as a means of understanding scripture.

Ramayana holds that Brahman is super-sensuous and cannot rest exclusively on arguments. Scripture is authoritative and reason is to be applied only to support of scripture.

## **4. Conviction in faith \_**

Reason by itself cannot originate faith, though it can be used either to strengthen or weaken it.

Reason remains at most merely a regulate force in all possible sources of religious beliefs. Mystic experience, revelation and faith, all in one way or there are responsible for religious beliefs, and reason remains as a helpful guide in every one of them.

## **Faith**

Faith is the most crucial, fundamental and significant tenet of the religious life and behavior. It happens to be both necessary and sufficient condition of religious life. There can be no religion without faith. There is a direct relation between the depth and gravity of religious life and the depth and gravity of faith. If one's faith is simplistic or superficial, one's religious commitment, too, will be lacking in firmness and depth. Before discussing the problem and reality of religious faith.

The Bible tells us the faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of the things not seen.

**For Kant, faith has subjective certainty sufficient for action, but insufficient for objective knowledge.**

For him faith has to do with practical reason.

### **General features of faith.**

1. Faith implies a belief in the uniqueness, superior quality and magnificence of the object of faith. This higher value may be superiority of intellect, character of leadership of a person, of the universality, inevitability and inexorableness of a cause of principle. The faith is held firm as long as the superior value ascribed to the object of faith is not proved mistaken or false.
2. The second thing we note about faith is commitment. We feel allegiance to the object of our faith we try to be loyal and attached to it both in thought and action. What we believe in we are faithful to it in deed and mind. Without a sense of loyalty, devotion and dedication, faith is nothing but cynicism.
3. Thirdly, faith implies action. William James has very beautifully defined belief as something upon which we are prepared to act, this means that faith without action is like a tree without fruits, it is barren, sterile and stagnant. There is not sufficient evidence for reasonable certainty but there is felt certainty for action or commitment to action.
4. The fact of self-surrender automatically follows from the above feature we can scarcely make any sacrifice for a thing for which we feel no sense of dedication and commitment. But, however, even a sense of dedication is not sufficiently potent to induce in man an emotional aura, under the spell of which, men are known to make supreme sacrifices. For the possibility of willing sacrifice what is required is, in addition to dedication, self-surrender. A person who has given up and forsaken his personal will and regards himself as instrument for the realization of some supreme will can joyfully sacrifice anything and everything of his. Sincere and dedicated communist: regards himself an instrument in the inevitable and inexorable march of history.
5. Another feature of faith is that it is a source of inspiration. Whether the subjective feeling of inspiration is due to auto-suggestion and self-hypnosis or due to any super-natural agency is difficult to determine and the controversy regarding its true origin cannot be finally settled. Nonetheless it is an incontrovertible fact the faith is a source of inspiration and that this inspiration plays great role in man's life.
6. Trust in unseen ~ this is the most characteristic feature of faith, religious faith undoubtedly implies a belief in the reality of the unseen, of invisible.

7. Holistic in nature— faith is the attitude of ultimate concern as well as object of ultimate concern. The object of faith in the religious sense is the ultimate concern of man, or what \_ man considers to be his object of worship, devotion and the like. Faith is the product of the whole man and it cannot be analysed into clear and precise steps of cognition alone. Faith cannot be reduced to ordinary or scientific knowledge. This is what is known as illative sense - our capacity to see a large field of evidence as a whole and to divine its significance.
8. In faith not a mind, but a person reasons and faith is the result of a global impression. Faith means the whole man at work and means all pervasive attitude to the whole reality. Society and his total relationship.

The function of faith is not to know so much as it has to do with the becoming of man. A Christian wants to become Christ himself, and, a follower of Buddha aims at becoming Buddha himself.

## **Faith and revelation**

Faith and revelation are correlative. If revelation is the work of god, then faith is the receptivity of man

### **Types of religious faith**

Religious faith is of two kinds: evidence-sensitive and evidence-insensitive. The former views faith as closely coordinated with demonstrable truths: the latter more strictly as an act of the will of the religious believer alone. The former includes evidence garnered from the testimony and works of other believer.

## **Faith and Reason**

Traditionally, faith and reason have each been considered to be sources of justification for religious belief. Because both can purportedly serve this same epistemic function, it has been a matter of much interest to philosophers and theologians how the two are related and thus how the rational agent should treat claims derived from either source.

Some have held that there can be no conflict between the two - that reason properly employed and faith properly understood will never produce contradictory or competing claims where as others have maintained that faith and reason can (or even must) be in genuine contention over certain propositions or methodologies. Those who have taken the latter view disagree as to whether faith or reason ought to prevail when the two are in conflict.

## **Kierkegaard,**

For instance, prioritizes faith even to the point that it become positively irrational, while Locke emphasized the reasonableness of faith to such an extent that a religious doctrine's irrationality ~ conflict with itself or with known fact's-is a sign that it is unsound. Some relatively recent philosopher, most notably the Logical positivists, have denied that there is a domain of thought or human existence rightly governed by faith, asserting instead that all meaningful statements and ideas are accessible to thorough rational examination.

It is, however, possible to hold a religious belief simple on the basis either of faith alone or of reason alone. Moreover, one can even lack faith in God or deny his existence, but still find solace in the practice of religion.

The basic impetus for the problem of faith and reason comes from the fact that the revelation or set of revelations on which most religions are based is usually described and interpreted in sacred pronouncements, either in an oral tradition or canonical writing, backed by some kind of divine authority; These writings or oral traditions are usually presented in the literary forms of narrative, parable, or discourse. As such, they are in some measure immune from rational critique and evaluation. In fact even the attempt to verify religious beliefs rationally can be seen as a kind of category mistake. Yet most religious traditions allow and even encourage some kind of rational examination of their beliefs. ' '

The two basis views of the interplay of faith and reason are as follows:

### ***Rational validation view of faith and reason***

The view that reason can and should be used to justify or validate religious faith comprises rational validation views of faith and reason. Looking for evidences for god's existence, or for reincarnation or life after death, or attempting to justify one's beliefs about the dharma are examples of rational validation.

### ***Non evidential view of faith and reason***

The view that reason and evidence should not be used to justify or validate religious faith comprises non-evidential views of faith and reason. The view doesn't deny the use of reason for understanding religious beliefs. Rather, they deny that holding religious beliefs is dependent upon having reasons or evidences for those beliefs being objectively true.

## **FIDEISM**

Fideist deems it inappropriate to rationally justify one's religious beliefs and faith. The well-known fideist is existential thinker Kierkegaard.

He believed there are no solid proofs for religious faith and that even if there were they would be unhelpful for developing real religious faith. He justifies his position through following mentioned points:

There are certain dogmas and paradoxes in religion which are inimical to reason and logic. For example, Christian dogma - the belief that an infinite God becoming a finite human being. It entails paradoxes which cannot be sustained by reason but requires a leap of faith;

The gulf between a transcendent God and man cannot be bridged by dialectical thinking. It can be bridged only by a leap of faith, by a voluntary act by which man relates himself to God.

Fideist can be found in all the major religious traditions. For example, -the term *Sradda* in Buddhism is the acceptance of the Buddha's teachings which comes prior to one's right understanding or right -thought. Entering the Eightfold Path involves a faith step — acquiescence (without rational argumentation or evidence) to the teachings of the Buddha.

## **CRITICISM**

In a religiously pluralistic culture, how is one to decide which religion (or set of religious beliefs) one should commit to? This may not be an issue in a culture in which there is only one religiously live option. But what about in a religiously pluralistic culture in which there are multiple live options?

# Revelation

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Revelation is a religious term that designates the disclosure of divine or sacred reality or purpose to men. Revelation refers to the uncovering or disclosure via communication from the divine, something that has been previously wholly or partially hidden or unknown. It is the process or act of making divine truths known.

It simply means bringing into light what was hidden before. Knowledge about God, cosmology, soul and all other super natural related matter are hidden and beyond the ordinary means of knowing. According to religious persons, such knowledge is revealed or directly communicated to some privileged persons (chosen ones) by God himself. In the religious view, such disclosure may come through mystical insights, historical events, or spiritual experiences that transform the lives of individuals and groups.

According to Bible, God is said to be hidden entity. According to the Upanishads, Brahman is essentially unknown and unknowable. Hence, God remains a super-sensuous entity. He can be known neither through perception nor inference. He can be known only through revelation.

God is essentially a transcendent being. But, a man has inner urge to know God. Therefore, man stands in need of some sort of prompting through God. Thus, God reveals himself through revealed scriptures, for example, bible, Koran, etc. through angels, dreams, visions, special messengers, his creation and Holy Spirit. Most religions refer to signs; such as auditory phenomena, subjective visions, dreams, and ecstasies.

## Nature & Significance

These are accepted not as a matter of logical inference but through sudden, unexpected illuminations that invade and transform the human spirit

1. In primitive religions, revelation is often associated with magical techniques of divination.
2. In the prophetic religions, revelation is primarily understood as the "Word of God," enabling the prophet to speak with certainty about God's actions and intentions. In such "prophetic" religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism), revelation is conceived as a message communicated by God to an accredited spokesman, who is charged to herald the content of that message to an entire people
3. In mystical religion (e.g., Islamic Sufism, Tantric Buddhism) revelation is viewed as an ineffable, experience of the transcendent or the divine.

4. Those religions that look upon God as a free and personal spirit distinct from the world accept revelation in the more specific sense of a divine self-disclosure, which is commonly depicted on the model of human inter-subjective relationships.
5. Indian tradition also supports the doctrine of revelation such as brahman or God is revealed through nature. Secondly, God is revealed through scriptures like the Vedas. Thirdly, through his incarnation. For example, Bhagvad Gita says, "Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, then I incarnate myself. Fourthly, through Brahma-sakshatakara, that is, there are liberated souls (jivanmukta) who are released in this very life from bondage. For example, Ramakrishna Paramahansa has the most favoured vision of Maa Kaali and brahma-realization. Hence, pure in heart shall see God. Finally, through doctrine of grace according to which God reveals himself to his devotees according to His will. God also reveals through miracles.
6. Revelation is one of the source or foundation of religious knowledge. Hence it is also important from epistemological significance. For a religious person it is certain and indubitable. It is itself apramana. It has great influence on the personality of an individual through whom revelation has occurred.
7. Revelations received on behalf of the whole community of the faithful are often called "public" (as opposed to "private" revelations, which are given for the guidance or edification of the recipient, himself).

#### 8. **General revelation**

The Eastern religions, on the whole, differ from Western religions in that they place less emphasis on a special or exclusive revelation received by a "chosen people" and rather speak of the manifestation of the Absolute through the general order of nature. The Bible and the Quran, conversely, proclaim that although God has specially manifested himself to the biblical peoples, he also makes himself known through the order of nature.

#### 9. **Special revelation: the role of history**

The Western religions differ somewhat among themselves in the ways in which they understand how special revelation occurs.

- Some focus simply on the direct inspiration of the divinely chosen prophets.
- Some look upon the prophets as witnesses and interpreters of what God is doing in history.

- Revelation through deeds is conceived to be more fundamental than revelation through words, though the words of the prophets are regarded as necessary to clarify the meaning of the events. Since the Old Testament term for "word" (davar) signifies also "deed" or "thing," there is no clear line of demarcation between word-revelation and deed-revelation in the Bible.
- The biblical authors look upon the national fortunes of Israel as revelations of God's merciful love, his fidelity to his promises, his unfailing power, his exacting justice, and his readiness to forgive the penitent sinner. The full disclosure of the meaning of history, for many of the biblical writers, will occur only at the end of time, when revelation will be given to all peoples in full clarity.

## **10. Revelation and sacred scripture**

In those religions that look for guidance to the ancient past, great importance is attached to sacred books.

- ✓ Theravada Buddhism, while it professes no doctrine of inspiration, has drawn up as strict canon (standard or authoritative scriptures) the "Pali canon" in order to keep alive what is believed to be the most original and reliable traditions concerning the Buddha.
- ✓ Mahayana Buddhism, while it has no such strict canon, considers that all its adherents must accept the authority of the sutras (basic teachings written in aphorisms). Zen Buddhism, in many ways the broadest development of Mahayana thought, sometimes goes to the point of rejecting any such written authority. Many religions view their holy books as inspired and inerrant
- ✓ According to a very ancient Hindu tradition, the sages of old composed the Vedas by means of an impersonal type of inspiration through cosmic vibrations. Judaism, on the other hand, looks upon the Bible as divinely inspired. The idea of verbal dictation from God, which occurs here and therein the Bible, was applied by some rabbis to the Pentateuch, which was believed to have been written by Moses under verbal inspiration, and even to the whole Bible. Christianity, which generally accepts both the Old and New Testaments as in some sense inspired, has at times countenanced theories of verbal dictation. According to the Mormons, the Book of Mormon was composed in heaven and delivered on tablets of gold to Joseph Smith. Islam holds that the Quran, an eternal heavenly book, was dictated verbatim to Muhammad. The Prophet's companions testified that he would often turn red or livid, sweat profusely, and fall into trances while receiving revelations



## 11. Revelation and tradition

The great religions frequently make a distinction between those scriptures that contain the initial revelation and others, at the outer fringe of the canon, that contain authoritative commentaries. In Hinduism, the four Vedas and three other ancient collections--the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanisads are Shruti ("that which has been heard"; i.e., constitutive revelation); the other sacred writings (the sutras, the law-books, Puranas, and the Bhagavadgita and the Ramayana, the two great epics) are Smrti ("that which has been remembered"; i.e., tradition). Later Judaism, while recognizing the unique place of the Bible as the written source of revelation, accords equal authority to the Talmud as traditional commentary.

## 12. Revelation and experience

In most religions nonverbal communication plays an important part in the transmission of revelation. This can occur in art (notably in icons, statues, and idols), in sacred music, in the liturgy, and in popular dramas, such as the mystery plays common in medieval Europe or those still performed in Indian villages.

- **For a deeper initiation into the revelation, it is believed necessary to live under the tutelage of a guru** (teacher), monk, or holy man.
- The spiritual preparation of the subject by prayer and asceticism is stressed.
- Among the great living religions of the world, there is wide agreement that revelation cannot be fully communicated by books and sermons but only by an ineffable, supra-rational experience.
- Emphasis on ecstatic contemplation.

## 13. Revelatory relationships

- ✚ In certain forms of mysticism, particularly prevalent in the Eastern religions, the envisioned goal is an absorption into the divine, involving the loss of individual consciousness
- ✚ In the Western religions and in Bhakti Hinduism the abiding distinctness of the individual personality is affirmed.
- ✚ Islamic orthodoxy- communion of man with God and mans obedient submission to the creator.
- ✚ Islamic sufism- aspiration for personal union with God

#### 14. Revelation and reason

The problem of the relationship between revelation and reason arises, on the one hand, because revelation transcends the categories of ordinary rational thought and, on the other hand, because revelation is commonly transmitted by means of authoritative records, the contents of which cannot be verified by the believer.

**Buddhism**, allows some scope for individual reason to criticize the authoritative writings, but, like other religions, it has to face the charge that the illumination to which it aspires may be illusory. Orthodox Hindus, giving full authority to the Veda, hold that human reason errs whenever, on the grounds of perceptual experience, it takes issue with the sacred writings.

The tension between faith and reason has been particularly acute in the 'Western religions, which find revelation not simply in holy books but in prophetic words that call for definite assent and frequently command a precise course of action. The ambiguities of scripture in these religions are frequently cleared up by creeds and dogmas of the community, calling for the assent of true-believers.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, moreover, came into close contact with Hellenistic culture; which held up the ideal of rationally certified knowledge as the basis for the good life. They, therefore, had to face the problem could assent to an authoritative revelation be justified before the bar of reason?

Some theologians took a "fideist" (faith-based) position, maintaining that reason must in all things submit to the demands of revelation. Others accepted the primacy of reason. They reinterpreted the content of revelation so as to bring it into line with science and philosophy. A third school in which Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas may be included, sought to maintain the primacy of faith without sacrificing the dignity of reason.

According to the Thomist theog, human reason can discern the credibility of revelation because of the external signs by which God has authenticated it (especially prophecies and miracles). Reason, moreover, makes it possible for the believer to understand, in some measure, the revealed mysteries. This intellectualist position continues to appeal to many Christians; but some maintain that it overlooks the qualitative differences between faith--as a trans-rational assent to mystery-and scientific knowledge, which operates within the categories of objectivizing reason.

In some theological circles the concept of revelation is rejected on the ground that it is bound up with mythological and anthropomorphic conceptions .and introduces an inassimilable element into the history of religions. It would seem, however, that the concept can be purified of these mythical elements and still be usefully employed. In the sphere of religion, wisdom is often best sought through privileged moments of ecstatic experience and through the testimony of those who have perceived the sacred or holy with unusual purity and power. The self-disclosure of the divine through

extraordinary experiences and symbols is fittingly called revelation. Because of the pervasiveness of the idea of revelation in the world's religions and because the various religions have had to cope with similar theological problems concerning revealed knowledge, revelation has become a primary theme for dialogue among the great religions of mankind.

## **15. Revelation and Faith**

If revelation is the work of God, then faith is the receptivity of man to acknowledge this revelation. Hence, revelation and faith are correlative. It is on the basis of faith that revelation is accepted. (// we can mention the example of Saint Paul — first, revelation and faith.) Faith has same place in religion which reason has in philosophy. To think of faithless religious person is merely contradiction. Faith is the very core, heart of religion. It is necessary and sufficient conditions of religion. So, faith is that indestructible belief which is accepted wholly even without any evidence. For a religious person, this is guarantee of truth. According to Kant, “Faith has subjective certainty, sufficient for action, but insufficient for objective knowledge.”

## **TYPES AND VARIATIONS**

### **1. Primitive/tribal Religions**

In such culture revelation is frequently identified with the experience of supernatural power in connection with particular physical objects, such as stones, amulets, \_bones of the dead, unusual animals, and other objects. The sacred or holy is likewise believed to be present in sacred trees, groves, shrines, and the like and in elemental realities such as earth, water, sky, and the heavenly bodies. Once specified as holy, such objects take on symbolic value and become capable of mediating numinous (spiritual) experiences to the adherents of a cult. Certain charismatic individuals, such as shamans, who are believed to be in communion with the sacred or holy, perform functions akin to those of the prophet and the -mystic in more developed religions.

### **2. Religions of the East**

Eastern religions are concerned with man's struggle to understand and cope with the predicament of his existence in the world and to achieve emancipation, enlightenment, and unity with the Absolute. Western religions, on the other hand, lay more stress on man's obedient response to the sovereign Word of God. Thenotion of revelation in the specific sense of a divine self-communication is more apparent in Western than in Eastern religions.

i. **Hinduism**

In Hinduism, revelation is generally viewed as a process whereby the religious seeker, actuating his deeper spiritual powers, escapes from the world of change and illusion and comes into contact with ultimate reality. The sacred books are held to embody revelation insofar as they reflect the eternal and necessary order of things. A major form of Hindu thought, Vedanta, includes two main tendencies: the monistic (advaita) and the theistic (bhakti).

ii. **Buddhism**

Buddhism, the other great religion originating on Indian soil, conceives of revelation not as a personal intervention of the Absolute into the worldly realm of relativities but as enlightenment gained through discipline and meditation. Gautama the Buddha (6th to 5th century BC), after a striking experience of human transitoriness and a period of ascetical contemplation, received an illumination that enabled him to become the supreme teacher for all his followers. Although Buddhists do not speak of supernatural revelation, they regard the Buddha as a uniquely eminent discoverer of liberating truth. Some venerate him, some worship him, and all Buddhists seek to imitate him as the most perfect embodiment of ideal manhood--an ideal that he in some way "reveals."

## Religions of the West

In the three great religions of the West--Judaism, Christianity, and Islam--revelation is the basic category of religious knowledge. Man knows God and his will because God has freely revealed himself--his qualities, purpose, or instructions.

iii. **Judaism**

The Israelite faith looked back the first five books of the Old Testament for its fundamental revelation of God. God was believed to have revealed himself to the patriarchs and prophets by various means not unlike those known to the primitive religions --theophanies (visible manifestations of the divine), dreams, visions, auditions, and ecstasies--and also, more significantly, by his mighty deeds, such as his bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and enabling them to conquer the Holy Land. Moses and the prophets were viewed as the chosen spokesmen who interpreted God's will and purposes to the nation. Their inspired words were to be accepted in loving obedience as the Word of God.

iv. Christianity

Accepting the Hebrew Scriptures as preparatory revelation, Christianity maintains that revelation is brought to its unsurpassable climax in the person of Jesus Christ, who is God's own Son, his eternal Word, and the perfect image of the Father. The Christian revelation is viewed as occurring primarily in the life, teaching, death, and Resurrection of Jesus, all interpreted by the apostolic witnesses under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

v. Islam

Islam, the third great prophetic religion of the West, has its basis in revelations received by Muhammad (c. 7th century AD). These were collected shortly after his death into the Quran (Koran), which is regarded by Muslims as the final, perfect revelation--a human copy of the eternal book, dictated to the Prophet. While Islam accords prophetic status to Moses and Jesus, it looks upon the Quran as-a correction and completion of all that went before. More than either Judaism or Christianity, Islam is a religion of the Book. Revelation is understood to be a declaration of God's will rather than his personal self-disclosure.

vi. Zoroastrianism

A fourth great prophetic religion experienced a revelation from Ahura Mazda (The Wise) and chose to follow him in the battle against the forces of evil. This revelation enabled Zoroaster and his followers to comprehend the difference between good (Truth) and evil (The Lie) and to know the one true God.

### Critical comments

However, there are certain philosophical problems associated with revelation. Revelation or Sruti has no meaning to a person who has no faith in God or supernatural entity. Source of knowledge, that is, God is itself a debatable issue. God and such related things are accepted solely on the basis of faith.

Secondly, it is not verifiable simply because it is unverifiable

There is great variation and even contradiction among various scriptures. Even within same religion, we can find variations and differences. Hence, it is difficult to judge which is certain and indubitable truth. And finally, there is no place for reason.

# **Religious Experience: Nature and Object (Indian & Western)**

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Countless individuals claim to have had a religious experience of one sort or another. One study indicates that at least thirty percent of the global population has had such an experience. For some, these experiences provide first-hand evidence or proof for the reality of what the experiencer (the one having the experience) believes in and perhaps even for his or her religion as a whole. For others, they are illusions or delusions, psychological experiences brought on by a number of different but purely natural factors.

Hence it becomes essential to explore the meaning and diversity of religious experience, arguments which claim that religious experience provides justification for religious beliefs and rebuttals to those arguments.

## **What is a religious experience?**

In a broad sense religious experience refers to any experience of the sacred within a religious context, including religious feelings, visions, and mystical and numinous experiences. A religious experience is intensely personal, and it often occurs in the midst of such religious practices as prayer, meditation, worship, chanting, or the performance of other religious ritual. Many times such experiences occur in a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, monastery, or other holy place.

But religious experiences have been recorded in any number of circumstances and locations. There are three general features which are common to the phenomenon of religious experience:

1. **Universality:** Religious experience is a universal phenomenon. It has been recorded across the spectrum of space and time, past and recent, including within highly secularized societies.
2. **Diversity:** There is a wide diversity of religious experiences, and each experience is in some sense unique to the individual who has it. While there are similarities among the religious experiences of adherents of the various religious traditions, there are also differences, and this adds to the richness and variety of the experiences across the religious spectrum. .
3. **Importance:** Religious experience is important in unique and momentous ways, often resulting in a transformed or reoriented life, a reevaluation of the way one thinks or lives, or even a change of world views.

## Categories of religious experience

We utilize a classification which distinguishes three categories of experience:

- Regenerative,
  - Charismatic, and
  - Mystical.
1. A regenerative religious experience is one in which the experiencer undergoes a life transformation— a conversion. It may mean change of entire worldview of an individual. In Evangelical Christian circles this is often referred to as being “born again” or being “born from above” (based on the Book of John in the New Testament in which Jesus says “... no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” [John 3:13]). Elsewhere this kind of experience is expressed as “experiencing religion,” “experiencing salvation,” or being “delivered from evil.” Through such experiences, individuals often find their lives to be changed, filled with meaning and newness, and full of love, joy, and hope.

Along with conversion and salvation, another facet of the regenerative experience is moral transformation. In this case, prior to the experience, the individual may feel a sense of sin, guilt, or the inability to do what he or she knows to be morally appropriate. Upon having the regenerative religious experience, she senses that sin and guilt have been removed and a new vision of goodness is seen and sought after; a new or renewed emphasis on moral duties ensues in one’s life.

One can find such transformational experiences in all of the major religious traditions.

2. A second category of religious experience is charismatic experience. This is a type of experience in which special abilities, gifts, or blessings are manifested.

Charismatic experiences are also observed in all major world religions. It has been reported in Judeo-Christian tradition. In Buddhism, for example, the monk is often understood to be a charismatic and holy figure — not one who has received a gift from God, but rather one who has experienced the blessings of the Dharma (teachings of the Buddha and the fundamental constituents of the world). Hinduism too has its gurus and sadhus, and Islam has its sheiks and walis. These spiritual leaders are often taken to have charismatic qualities, gifts, and powers.

3. A third category is mystical experience which, as described by James, includes four distinct characteristics:

- Ineffability: the experience cannot be adequately described, if at all.
- Noetic quality: the experiencer believes that she has learned something important from the experience.
- Transiency: the experience is temporary and the experiencer soon returns to a “normal” state of mind.
- Passivity: the experience occurs without conscious decision or control and it cannot be brought to happen at will.

Mystical experiences take different forms, but a common theme among many of them is identity or union with God in Western religion, or with Absolute Reality - Brahman or nirvana — in Eastern religion.

It is here in mystical experience that the monism of some Eastern religions is; also experienced in Western theistic religions. We find monistic mystical experiences described in Judaism (e.g. The Zohar), Christianity (e.g. Meister Eckhart and Saint John of the Cross), and Islam (e.g. Sufi school of Ibn al—‘Arabi).

While the three Western religions are broadly theistic, they have developed within them monistic streams of thought.

There is a wide range of experiences which are classified as mystical. Besides the union with God/Absolute Reality experiences noted above, another kind of mystical experience is nature mysticism. In this sense, even an atheist can have a mystical “religious” experience.

The Buddhist experiences of sunyata, or emptiness, developed in the Madhyamika (Middle Way) school of Buddhism, or enlightenment, developed in the Zen tradition, are also considered by many to be mystical experiences.

Yet another kind of mystical experience is numinous experience. Rudolf Otto describes numinous experience in the Latin as **mysterium tremendum et fascinans** (an overpowering, mysterious, luring experience). Rudolf Otto argues that there is one common factor to all religious experience, independent of the cultural background which is numinous. The “numinous” experience has two aspects:-

- **mysterium tremendum**, which is the tendency to invoke fear and trembling; an
- **mysterium fascinans**, the tendency to attract, fascinate and compel.

The numinous experience also has a personal quality to it, in that the person feels to be in communion with a holy other. Otto sees the numinous as the only possible



religious experience. Numinous experiences may be focused on some particular individual, such as Jesus or Krishna; or on some object, such as an icon or stone; or there may be no identified object whatsoever in the experience. But they commonly reflect an encounter with, presence or, meeting “Other” — a separate self or will or power which forces itself upon the consciousness of the experiencer, unexpectedly and profoundly.

Numinous experience has two aspects:

1. The raw, experience itself,
2. The experience with its interpretation by ideas.

Some of the important characteristics of numinous experience are: -

- a. Irrefutable: It is claimed that the numinous experience is irrefutable both with regard to itself and with regard to its object in relation to which the experience takes place.
- b. Object of cognition: God or "the other" is not merely the name of numinous experience rather it is the 'object to which the experience is directed in relation to which this kind of experience has arisen. Just as perceiving is a psychological act which reveals an appropriate object like a table, a chair, a rose, so the numinous experience reveals *mysterium tremendum* or a presence of a God of Love. '
- c. Self—validating: The uncanny experience is always of a deity and this cognition as a cognition of the deity is indubitable or self-validating.

Keith Yandell divides religious experiences into five categories, according to the content of the experiences:

1. Monotheistic,
2. Nirvanic (enlightenment experiences associated with Buddhism)
3. Kevalic (enlightenment experiences associated with Jainism)
4. Moksha (experiences of release from karma, associated with Hinduism)
5. Nature experiences

## DIVERSE OBJECTS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Just as there are a variety of religions, each with its own claims about the nature of reality, there are a variety of objects and states of affairs that the subjects of these experiences claim to be aware of.

In western theistic traditions, the object of religious experiences is typically God himself, understood as an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, free, and perfectly good spirit. God, for reasons of his own, reveals himself to people, some of them unbidden (like Moses, Muhammad, and Saint Paul), and some because they have undertaken a rigorous practice to draw closer to him (like the mystics). Other experiences can be of angels, demons, saints, heaven, hell, or other religiously significant objects.

In numinous experience, one feels the presence of an over-powering “other”, a separate self or will or power which forces itself upon the consciousness of the experiencer, unexpectedly and profoundly. The experience is the cognition of the deity.

In other traditions, it is not necessarily a personal being who is the object of the experience, or even a positive being at all. In Indian traditions—chiefly Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism—the object of religious experiences is some basic fact or feature of reality, rather than some entity separate from the universe. In the orthodox Hindu traditions, one may certainly have an experience of a god or some other supernatural entity (like Arjuna’s encounter with Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita), but a great many important kinds of experiences are of Brahman, and its identity with the self.

In Theravada Buddhism, the goal of meditation is to “see things as they are,” which is to see them as unsatisfactory, impermanent, and not-self. The meditator, as he or she makes progress along the way, sheds various delusions and attachments." The last one to go is the delusion that he or she is a self. To see this is to see all of reality as made up of sequences of momentary events, each causally dependent on the ones that went before. Thus, the object of religious experience is not a positive transcendent being but rather an insight "into the fundamental reality of the world that it is momentary, impermanent , always “becoming”.

The realization that everything is dependent for its origination (This being, that arises) and individual self is non-substantial in nature. There are no abiding substances, and no eternal souls. Seeing reality that way extinguishes the fires of craving, and liberates the meditator from the necessity of rebirth.

In the Mahayana Buddhist traditions, what brings enlightenment is direct realization of sunyata as a basic fact about reality.

### **Religious experience and justification**

Religious experience is typically a private matter. Someone claims to have an experience in which she senses that she is one with the divine, say. Or someone else claims to experience God or an angel speaking to him. Some of the important philosophical questions from the phenomenon of religious experience are:

Is a person justified in inferring from a religious experience (either one's own or that of another) knowledge of an objective reality which is the object of that experience? Can one be mistaken about such experiences? And how would he know?

### **Arguments from Analogy**

Argument from analogy is offered for the justification of religious experience based on sense perception which runs as follows

I experience a tree, and I believe that a tree exists. I experience God, and I believe that God exists. Even though there are dissimilarities between tree experiences and God experiences, there are enough relevant similarities to warrant belief in God if we are warranted in having tree beliefs. Both of the experiences are

- I. noetic (that is, they both have to do with the content of the mind, including beliefs, desires, values, etc) -
- II. Both have a perceptual object
- III. Both include states of affairs which can be checked or verified in some sense.

However, whether religious experiences do include a perceptual object is a debatable point. Mystical experiences, for example, are often taken by mystics to be ineffable. An ineffable experience by definition contains no expressible cognitive content. (This point is discussed in detail elsewhere)

### **Principle of Credulity**

According to this principle, when it seems (epistemologically) to someone that something is the case, then in the absence of special considerations it probably is.

When I'm walking through the forest and see a squirrel in a tree just ahead of me, for example, I am justified in believing that it is, in fact, a squirrel in the tree just ahead of me; unless, that is, I have special reasons to doubt my belief in this case.

One could be mistaken in believing that something is the way it appears, but unless there is good reason to disbelieve it, we should not do so. Swinburne claims that rejecting this principle will land one in a "skeptical bog"- in which a person must doubt everything that cannot be proven deductively.

## Misplaced Emphasis

Some view the attempt to seek justification for religious beliefs from religious experience as inappropriately emphasizing the cognitive aspect of such experience. Consider Buddhism. For the Buddhist adherent, a primary goal is to be released from a state of craving and suffering and to attain nirvana, no-self or emptiness.

The Buddhist does not ultimately seek knowledge about, or evidence or proof for, the existence of God or Ultimate Reality or nirvana. Rather, she is seeking the extinction 'of self and its attending cognitive processes. This is not to say that Buddhists cannot use individual or cumulative religious experiences within their tradition to validate their religious beliefs, but that such experiences are primarily directed toward liberation, not cognition.

Challenges to religious experience as justification for religious beliefs

### **1. Lack of verifiability**

One argument against the claim that religious experience provides justification for religious beliefs is that such experiences are not verifiable (they are not checkable as are other kinds of experiences). The experience may psychologically appear to be incorrigible\*, indubitable, and self-validating, but this feeling of certainty is not empirical certainty which ensues from the inter-subjective tests of an empirical statement by means of an agreed procedure containing a number of objective checks.

### **2. Conflicting claims within the variety of religious experience**

Another objection is that religious experiences are widely divergent, conflicting, and even contradictory. The Advaita Vedantin experience that all reality is one and undifferentiated, for example, contradicts the Islamic experience that Allah is the one true God, a divine reality who exists as a separate being from the person having the experience.

### **3. The circularity objection**

A third objection to the claim that religious experience provides justification for religious belief is that such justification is circular: it depends on assumptions which are not self-evident to everyone and yet are then utilized as controls or limitations on the experience. Thus it seems that most religious experiences reflect the beliefs and values germane to the religion, or worldview, of the experience. The experiencers are having experiences in line with what they already believe.

#### **4. Scientific explanations of religious experience.**

##### **I. A psychological understanding of religious experience.**

There are many different psychological explanations of religious experience. One of the most well known was offered by Sigmund Freud. Freud argued that feelings of helplessness and fear in childhood foster a desire for fatherly, loving protection. This desire, or wish, for a protective figure carries on into adulthood and demands a greater, more powerful being than a human father. Two further desires are prominent as well: the substantiation of universal justice and a continuation of our own existence after death. These combined wishes are satisfied through the illusion of divine providence.

##### **II. A neuro-scientific understanding of religious experience.**

Recent advances in neuroscience have given rise to the view that religious experience may be the result of purely neuro-physiological causes and thus are ultimately delusory. John Hick delineates five examples derived from recent research which cover the gamut of religious experience types:

1. Epileptic seizures and frontal lobe stimulation by the "Persinger helmet" [a transcranial magnetic stimulator] cause religious visions.
2. Psychotropic drugs cause various forms of religious experience.
3. "Pure" consciousness, consciousness of the Void, Emptiness, sunyata, is caused by consciousness continuing after the cutting off of all perceptual input.
4. The sense of unity with all reality is caused by closing down the awareness of the bodily boundaries of the individual.
5. The sense of the presence of God or of other supernatural beings is caused by 'a splitting of the "self-system" into two, one half seeing the other half as a distinct entity

#### **Differences in interpretation of religious experience**

Some philosophers of religion reject religious experience as a ground for religious belief. This is not to say that they necessarily deny that individuals have had authentic religious experiences. Rather, they deny that one can properly infer from such experiences that their cause was God, or nirvana, or Ultimate Reality, etc., or that what the experience was about (if it contained cognitive content) is true or actually exists. They conclude that a religious experience cannot establish the objective reality of the perceptual object of the experience; all it can provide is evidence for the reality of specific psychological states.

# Mysticism

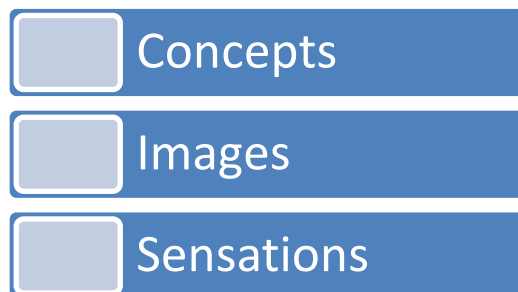
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Mysticism is the religious experience in the purest and concentrated form. It is the most acute, intense and living experience of supreme reality or God. Mystics claim to have the most direct and intimate experience of the divine presence. Both in the East and the West there have been important mystics. Mystical experiences take different forms, but a common theme among many of them is identity or union with God in Western religion or with Absolute Reality- Brahman or nirvana - in Eastern religion.

## Mystical experience as different from normal experience...

It is absolutely different from ordinary experience. It is completely devoid of all perceptions, thoughts, emotions, desires, etc. which are necessary elements of ordinary experience. It is such an experience about which nothing can be said. It is this element of indescribability which makes it a mystic experience.

The ordinary consciousness can be likened to be a building with three floors. The ground floor consists of physical sensations- sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch sensations, and organic sensations. The second floor consists of images, which we tend to think of as mental copies of sensations. The third floor is the level of the intellect, which is the faculty of concepts where abstract thinking and reasoning processes are developed. The whole structure can be called sensory-intellectual consciousness.



Structure of sensory intellectual consciousness

On the other hand, mystical consciousness is destitute of any sensations at all. Nor does it contain any concepts or thoughts. This is the reason mystics say their experience is "ineffable". All words in all languages are the products of our sensory intellectual consciousness. The mystical experience entirely transcends our sensory intellectual consciousness; there are no thoughts, no conceptions and no sensations.

In fully developed mystical experience, there is an apprehension of an ultimate non-sensuous unity in all things; a oneness or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate.

In such an experience, there is great element of subjectivity. Most often, mystic experience is understood as individual communion with supreme reality or god or

goddess. One can receive these very subjective experiences as vision, dreams, revelations, etc. Thomas Aquinas, a Christian mystic of 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, defined it as “cognitio dei experimentalis”, that is, experiential knowledge of God.

Mystical experience takes different forms such as identity or union with God or with absolute reality:

1. “If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He and He I, so that this He and this I become and are one I.” “One who knows Brahman becomes brahman.” “Flight of alone to the alone.”
2. Even an atheist can have a mystical, religious experience. For example, nature mysticism or the Buddhist experience of shunya.
3. Numinous experience. Another kind of mystical experience. Rudolph Otto describes numinous experience in the Latin as “mysterium tremendum et fascinan”, that is, an overpowering, mysterious and alluring experience. This type of experience may be focused on some particular individual such as Jesus or Krishna or on some object such as an icon or stone or there may be no identified object whatsoever in the experience. But, they commonly reflect an encounter with an “other” — a separate self, will or power which forces itself upon the consciousness of the experiencer unexpectedly and profoundly.

Both in the East and West, there have been important mystics. In West, the most celebrated name is Plotinus. However, mysticism is distinct feature of Indian religion. It is found in most undiluted form in the Upanishads, Advaitism, Bhakti cult, Kabirism, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, etc. The seeker identifies himself completely with the ultimate reality like the Brahman. There is no knower or known. Both become one. It is like one who knows Brahman becomes brahman.

Sufis subscribe to mysticism. But, they do not talk of identification so much with God as they talk of vision and communion with God. For the Muslims, God is transcendent and no mortal man can dare to identify himself with God. Jews also subscribe to such views. Hence, Jesus Christ was crucified and Al-Halaj was stoned to death because they identified themselves with God.

## Characteristics

It is characterized by four features:

### 1. **Ineffability**

It means that mystical experience defies expression because no adequate report of its content can be given in words. It is essentially extra—rational element in the religion. This numinous experience is unique and sui generis (unique of its kind) and cannot be assimilated into any other experience. It defies the use of category of thoughts. Its true nature could be understood only when individual himself experiences.

**2. Noetic quality.**

It is some sort of revelation and illumination. There is an insight into the depth of truth. In spite of subjectivity, it is cognitive for those who experience it. There is direct knowledge of certain and indubitable truth which are beyond human experience and reason.

**3. Transiency:**

It is transient because it cannot be sustained for long. But, certainly the experience may recur from time to time and recurring increases the depth and intensity. In case of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, mystic stage lasted for long periods and even for several days. His mystic trance took place most frequently and he could induce it into others as well.

**4. Passivity:**

The mystics feel that his will is in subordination and a superior will wholly grasp him in power. -In the mystic experience, mystic simply loses freedom of will. However, after the experience, V mysticism remains in fragmented memories. As a result, it leaves deep impact and impression on the personality.

## Types

**1. Extrovert.**

In such mystic experience, mystic realizes the ultimate truth of this cosmology through his sense organs. He experiences all material things. However, he could not reach to that transcendental consciousness which is different from ordinary consciousness. In that way, it cannot be called as real mysticism. But, certainly it forms the initial stage for real mysticism.

**2. Introvert.**

In this mystic experience, mystic completely becomes internal oriented, detached from external world and realizes the ultimate reality and supernatural truth within himself. All the contents of ordinary consciousness, that is, emotions, feelings, desires, etc. vanish and he reaches to the transcendental consciousness. It is real mysticism. God is there and soul is in God. There is no mystery. Problems vanish and everything is flooded with light.

3. Theist. It involves the experience of God. (11 personal God)

4. Non-theist. It involves the experience other than God. (// non-theist is not critical; atheist becomes Critical.)



Mysticism could be further classified as:

1. Incomplete mysticism. In this, mystic remains in absorption and ecstasy.
2. Complete mysticism. In this, contemplation gives rise to boundless action. Here, there is creation, action and love. There is high value to social service and action for the upliftment of downtrodden people. There is pleas to mitigate human sufferings.

### Ways and means

In almost all religions, there is description of ways and means to attain mysticism. For example, in Indian tradition, there is great emphasis on yoga practices, especially meditation. Detachment is also accepted as a means. In some culture or traditions, mind altering substances often referred as entheogens have been used while in some others, rituals, self-reflection, self-enquiry, etc. are emphasized.

### **Mysticism & religion**

It is common conception that mystical experience is a religious experience and that mysticism is necessarily a religious phenomenon. It is thought that mysticism and religious mysticism are one and the something. But this is far from being correct. It is true that there is an important connector between mysticism and religion, but it is not nearly so direct.

There are several grounds for insisting that in itself mystical experience is not a religious phenomenon and its connection with religion is subsequent.

1. Firstly of the mystical experience is stripped off its intellectual interpretations such as that which identifies it with God, or with the absolute, what is left is indifferent rated unity there seems to be nothing religious about undifferentiated unity as such. In the theist religious of the west, the experience of the undifferentiated unity is interpreted as “union with God”. But this is an interpretation and not the experience itself.
2. Secondly there are varied interpretations of the same experience given in different cultures. The undifferentiated unity is interrelated as Trinitarian conception of God by Eckhart and Roysbroeck, Unitarian God of Islam by Islamic mystics, and by atavistic realism as impersonal absolute.
3. Further, the Buddhist experience of ‘sunyata’ or nothingness is not interpreted as any land of God at all. Buddhism denies the existence of any supreme being. The Buddhist mystical experience of ‘Sunyata’ which comes with grasping the fundamental nature of reality as impermanent and through following ‘astangikamarg’ is not clothed in any religious garb whatsoever.

But it is seen that mysticism usually takes on some religious form and is usually found in connection with a definite religious culture. This may be due to following reasons.

1. First, a common thread connecting all introverted mystical experience is “melting away” of the individual into the Infinite of one’s own individuality. Phrases of “melting away”, “passes away” are found in mystical literatures of all major religions. Among Sufis, it is called fana. The individual directly experiences the disappearance of one’s own individuality, its fading away into the infinite. The Infinite is in most minds identified with the idea of God. So the experience acquires a religious meaning.
2. Second, undifferentiated unity is necessarily thought of by mystics as being beyond space and beyond time. Mystical experience transcends time and is an experience of “the Eternal Now”. But in religious minds the Eternal, like the infinite, is another name for God. Hence, the mystical experience is thought of as an experience of God.
3. Third, emotional side of experience. It is the universal testimony of the mystics that their kind of consciousness brings feeling of an exalted peace, joy. It becomes identified with peace of God. This is also why in Buddhism, though the experience is not personified or called God, it nevertheless becomes Nirvana.

### **Ethical aspects of Mysticism**

It is sometimes asserted that mysticism is merely an escape from life and from its duties and responsibilities. The mystic retreats into a private ecstasy of bliss, turns his back on the world, and forgets not only his own sorrows but the needs and sorrows of fellow men. To treat the bliss of the mystical consciousness as an end in itself is certainly a psychological possibility. But this is incomplete form of mysticism. Complete form of mysticism gives rise to boundless action and creative love for all.

St. John of the Cross condemns this state, incomplete mystical state as “spiritual gluttony”.

The Christian mystics have emphasized that mystical union with God brings with it an intense and burning love of God which must overflow into the World in the form of love for fellow-men, and one must show in deeds, show charity, mercy, and not merely in words.

The Buddhist, Vedantic, Spinoza’s views are given in Personal Pantheism section.

Some mystics claim that mysticism forms the metaphysical bases of love. Mystical consciousness is the secret fountain of love, human as well as divine, and love in the end is the only source of true moral activity. Mysticism is the source from which all ethical values flow.

True love follows from the realization that my brother and I are same, there are no distinctions between “I” and “you” and “he” and “she”. The dissolution of individuality

ego expands the personality and total, absolute, unconditional loves for all accompany it. All the barriers of superfluous distinctions are broken between “I” and “you”.

The separateness of individual's breads egoism and the war of all against all for one who had no touches of the mystical visions all men would be islands. And mysticism makes us realize that “no man is an island”.

## **Mysticism and epistemology**

Mysticism is both feeling as well as form of knowledge. Along with the characteristics of ineffability, it has a noetic quality also by virtue of which it becomes cognitive. Therefore, it forms as one of the sources or foundation of religious knowledge. Mystics claim to have knowledge of ultimate reality which are taken as certain, distinct and indubitable. In the context of epistemology, mysticism refers to using non-rational methods to arrive at beliefs and assuming these beliefs to be knowledge.

## **Neurotic...?**

Sometimes, mystic state is criticized as neurotic state. In fact, in\_ a neurotic state, two elements that is social adjustment and mental integration are lacking. But; in mystics, both of these elements are found in supreme abundance. Company of mystics is highly valuable. It results into many regenerative and positive changes, feeling of friendliness for others, sense of community, peace of mind, etc. Their company enhances the meaning of life and broadening of vision. In some mystics such as - Ramakrishna-Paramahansa, we find great humanistic thoughts when he says that service to the mankind is service to God. Thus, mystics cannot be called as neurotics. Rather, we can refer to them as supernormal states.

Late nineteenth century saw a significant increase of interest in mysticism that combined with increased interest-in occultism. Theosophy became a major movement in the popularization of these interests. At the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, books like “Conversation with God” (a series of books which describes what author claimed to be his experience of direct communication with God) hit the best-sellers list.

## **Scientific explanation**

### **1. Psychological understanding**

Psychologists, Sigmond Freud, had given the wish—fulfillment hypothesis. He argued that feelings of helplessness and fear in childhood foster a desire for fatherly loving protection. This desire or Wish for a protective figure carries into adulthood and demands a greater, more powerful being than a human being, that is, heavenly father replaces an earthly one. Thus, wish is satisfied through the illusion of divine providence.

### **2. Neuro-scientific understanding**

Recent advances in neuroscience have given rise to the views that religious experience may be the result of purely neuro-physiological causes and thus, are ultimately delusive.

- a. Epileptic seizures and frontal lobe stimulations cause religious visions.
- b. Psychotropic drugs cause various form of religious experience.
- c. Pure consciousness, consciousness of the void, emptiness is caused by consciousness continuing after the cutting of all perceptual inputs.
- d. The sense of unity with all reality is caused by closing down the awareness of the bodily boundaries of the individuals.
- e. The sense of presence of God or other supernatural beings is caused by a splitting of the self-system into two, one half seeing the other half as a distinct entity.

# Religion without God

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Non-theism is the philosophical doctrine which negates the concept of personal God, that is, negation of divine reality who is omnipotent, omniscient and the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. It simply means that the person in question does not believe in God. But, when we call a person an atheist, we show an additional feeling of criticism and contempt towards Him. Non-theism only negatively rejects the existence of God, however, does not positively assert the non-existence of God.

## Does non-theism negate religion?

Non-theism rejects the personal God. But, it does not necessarily reject other spiritual and supernatural reality. It means a non-theist may reject the existence of God, yet can accept the existence of other 'supernatural and divine powers. For example, Jainism, Buddhism and Samkhya rejects the God, but accepts other supernatural reality such as nirvana, kaivalya, tirthankar, law of karma, prakriti, purusa, etc.

The necessary requirement of religion means the belief in the supernatural beings and not necessarily in the personal God. These supernatural beings may be an object of worship and therefore, may very well become the basis of these religions. However, these supernatural entities must not be understood as God because they do not have the personal qualities which God is supposed to have.

Regarding the relationship between religion and God, there are two divergent views. While according to the majority of thinkers, there is necessary relationship between religion and God, but according to some, it is just a contingent relationship or no—relationship all

Many western thinkers maintain that God and religion are inseparably related. According to them, there is no possibility of religion without God. Similarly, many Indian thinkers also accept this view. It is maintained that religion is essentially atheistic principle. Regarding Jainism and Buddhism, it is maintained that Jainism has made tirthankaras and particularly, Mahavira, as God.

Similarly, Buddhism has made Buddha a God. It-is argued that images of Mahavira and Buddha have been enshrined in their places of worship and they are worshipped accordingly. Hence, according to this view, Jainism and Buddhism are as theistic religion as are Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. .

However, according to other view, it is maintained -that Jainism and Buddhism are non-theistic religion. It is argued that Jainism and Buddhism do not take tirthankars and Gautam Buddha as gods in tune with the theistic conception of God, that is,

personalistic notion of God. Buddha and Tirthankaras are not considered as creator, sustainer and destroyer of this world. They are accepted only as supernatural beings and are objects of worship and objects of worship need not necessarily be God. Hence, they are non-theistic religion. They are religion because they fulfill necessary requirements of religion. Similarly, there are many religions without God.

Buddhism is a non-theistic religion because various Buddhist scholars have refuted the proofs advanced by Nyaya school and others for the existence of God. Apart from that, non-theistic trend in Buddhism can also be understood by following points such as:

1. Buddha's main concern was to remove pain and miseries of the world in the form of Nirvana. He gives no place to God in the attainment of Nirvana.
2. There is no place of God in the core philosophical doctrine of Buddhism such as pratityasamutpada which is nothing but the theory of dependent causation. There is no need of God to guide the operation of causal principle. Moreover, pratityasamutpada itself negates the possibility of uncaused cause, God. Similarly, ksanikavada or theory of momentariness eliminates the possibilities of unchanging eternal God.
  - a. Various Buddhist thinkers like Ashvaghosh have argued against the existence of God such as by relying upon the identity of cause and effect (God and world).
  - b. Ashvaghosh rejects the possibility of creator God. If both virtue and vice originates from God, there should be no distinction between merits and demerits and therefore, there would be no possibility of morality as such.
  - c. Ashvaghosh questions the motive of creation. He argues that perfect God can have no motive of its own. If creation is considered as purposeless, God would become unintelligent. If it maintained that God is created for the well-being of jivas, then it will be self-contradictory because jiva itself is the result of creation.
  - d. If God is creator and omnipotent, then why are there atheists? And if God is one, why are there polytheists?
  - e. Ashvaghosh rejects the moral argument for the existence of God. According to him, omnipotent God cannot be bound by the law of karma and in fact, there is no need of God because law of karma functions autonomously on the basis of pratityasamutpada, that is, theory of dependent causation.

# Religion and morality

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Religion is a holistic response of man to what he considers as his ultimate concern. As such, religion contains all the three aspects of human life, namely, cognition, conative and the affection. Cognition is most prominent in scientific pursuits; conation is well expressed in morality, and the affective aspect is most clearly manifested in the artistic pursuits of man. As all these three mental aspects are found inseparably together, so religion too is found together with morality and art and also science. In the early stage of civilization religion, art and science were found inextricably together. But with the development of thought, they became relatively independent of one another. At the present time they tend to become autonomous discipline with the cry 'Art for the sake of art', and 'Morality for the sake of morality'.

## RELIGION AND MORALITY

Different views have been taken with regard to be the relation of religion to morality:

1. Religion and morality are inseparable and interdependent.
2. Religion is independent of Morality.
3. Morality is independent of religion as an autonomous discipline.

In contemporary thinking, morality is taken to be an autonomous discipline. But at one point the involvement of God in morality is widely discussed. 'Free will' is said to be an important postulate of morality. Some contemporary philosophical analysts like A. Flew and J .L. Mackie hold that God could have created man with free will and yet could have so fully determined his free act that he might not have fallen into any moral lapse. However, Alvin Plantinga challenges this claim of A. Flew and LL. Mackie. According to Alvin Plantinga, the very linguistic convention maintains that no free act can be totally determined. Hence, God the creator could not have granted free will to man and at the same time could not have totally determined free acts so as to preclude his moral lapse.

## INTERDEPENDENCE OF RELIGION AND MORALITY

Higher religions have remained inseparably related to morality. For example, Judaism and Christianity have accepted the Ten Commandments. Yahwe gave the following ten commands:

1. I am Lord your God. You shall have no other God before me.
2. You shall not have any image of me.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord, your God.
4. Observe the Sabbath day as holy.
5. Honour your father and mother.....Panca Mahavrata.
6. You shall not murder..... Ahimsa.

7. You shall not commit adultery .....Brahmacarya.
8. You shall not steal ..... Asteya
9. You shall not give false witness ..... .. Satya.
10. You shall not covet..... Aparigraha.

The last five commandments are virtually the same as the panca mahavrata of Jainism which five moral vows have been accepted by all the Indian religions. Thus, religion and morality are inseparable and interdependent at least in the traditional higher religions of the world.

By 'Interdependent' is meant that religion helps morality and morality, in turn, keeps on refining religious demands. In general, according to Freud, man has been able to give up many cruel and aggressive impulses within him in the name of God and Khasi hills after their embracing Christianity. Now they respect their neighbours. Thus, religion does help in cultivating the life of morality. The very religion necessity of the Ten Commandments and panca mahavrata shows that religion helps the growth of morality. Even when morality is regarded as independent of religion and wholly autonomous, religion does not remain-wholly discarded. Both Kant and R.B. Braithwaite bring in God as the psychological booster of morality. The performance of One's duty is not an easy task. Therefore, Kant recommends that duties should be regarded as 'divine commands'.

Further, religions development has been greatly helped by the deepening of moral insight. For example the later growth of Judaism did not emphasize the cruel rite of animal- sacrifice. The Lord was said to be better pleased with the practice of justice, mercy and with a contrite heart. In the same way the Rigvedic Aryans were persuaded to give up animal- sacrifice and accept the doctrine of Brahman which taught the conquest of one's own animal desires. .

Religion with its derivative of 'religare' means to bind its adherents together and also to bind the loose ends of lower impulses within each man himself. Hence morality includes both the external and interiorized rules of conduct. The more morality is interiorized, the purer it becomes. Both in Christianity and Hinduism the emphasis is laid on the interiorization of morality in the direction of self-conquest and the self-culture of the soul. For example in Christianity it is not enough to refrain from adultery, for whosoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Similarly, in Indian religious thought people are taught to overcome desires like sexual passion, anger, infatuation, greed etc. Hence, higher the religion the stricter is the demand for higher morality. In general morality is the purifier of religion and religion is said to be the perfection of morality, for God is said to be the conservator of all values, especially morality. In other words, God is the embodiment of morality and its chief guardian. However, at times religion is said to be independent of morality.



## RELIGION AS INDEPENDENT OF MORALITY

In primitive religion there is more of magic than morality. In early forms of religion there is more of tabu than moral code. Even in totem-Cult cannibalism was practiced without any moral considerations. Even children were sacrificed, a trace of which is visible in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac to please Yahwe.

Again, Ajivikism and other heretical sects mentioned in Brahma-jala-sutta, practiced and believed in antinomianism which is opposed to the obligation of observing morality. For example, Purana Kassapa is an akriyavadi (inactionist) who held that any action has no effect on the soul.

In later times, both in Christianity and Indian thought, there is the teaching of being saved by the Grace of God alone.

“This soul (Atman) is not to be obtained by instruction, Nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He is to be obtained only by one whom he (Atman) chooses; To such a one that soul (Atman) reveals his own person (Kath,2.33; Mundaka 3.23).

In the same manner Calvin taught that men are saved by the grace of God. This can be traced even to Pauline teaching. In the same vein, Karl Barth has taught that God's word can be understood only through the divine grace. In these religion teachings, moral excellence is discounted, for no man can be counted righteous before God.

In both Advaitism and Bhakti cult of the Alvars, it is taught that after the final attainment of spiritual ascent, the seeker goes beyond 'good and evil'. This has several nuances of meanings. In the first instance, the action whether good or evil belongs to Prakriti. Once this illumination dawns on the seeker that Prakriti alone is the doer, then this knowledge releases a man from all actions, good or bad.

Secondly, it also means that in reaching the state of prapatti, it is realized that not the prapanna works but God alone. Thus the prapanna is not the doer of any work whether good or bad. According to Sri Ramakrishna, the released soul feels,

“I am the machine, and Thou, O Lord art the Operator.

I am the house and Thou art the Indweller. I am the chariot and Thou art the Driver  
“Again,

‘He is truly free, even in this life, who knows that God does all and he does nothing’

It also means that the devotee becomes so holy that he can commit no sin. Only holy acts flow from him;

Thirdly, the phrase ‘Beyond good and evil’ means that morality remains. Valid at the Dualistic stage when; however, one becomes one with Brahman, then action ceases, for there is none to whom one can do either good or bad.

Thus, there are religious thoughts where morality is either not invoked as in certain primitive forms of religion, or, where one goes beyond the stage of morality.

### **AUTONOMY OF MORALITY**

Kant has powerfully advocated the case of the autonomy of morals. According to this way of thinking morality is good not because God wills it, but God wills it because it is good. The memorable words of Kant are that Good Will is good, not because of the consequences which can be frustrated by the niggardly provision of a step motherly nature, but good will is good in itself. Nothing in the world, nay, even beyond the world is good categorically as is good will. Health, wealth, honor, learning and so on, all can be misused, but not the good will. Hence, it is a jewel which shines by its own light.

Since the time of Kant the autonomy of moral of morals has become an accepted creed for the philosophers. They have been regarding religion as a set of moral principles, either with emotion (Matthew Arnold), or, backed by stories (R.B Braithwaite). For Braithwaite, a religious assertion is a statement of an intention to carry out a certain behavior policy, subsumable under a sufficiently general policy to be a moral one, together with a story as a psychological energizer. There is hardly any analytic philosopher at present who studies morality with any reference to religion. Even the ideologies of communism and democracy denounce religion. The Communists have always been critical of religion, but even a philosopher like John Dewey denounces religion, but even a philosopher like John Dewey denounce religion and teaches the self-sufficiency of democracy. The words of John Dewey are remarkable:

“The ideal ends to which we attach our faith are not shadowy and wavering. They assume concrete form in understanding of our relations. We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that has reacted with nature. The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by the grace of the doing and suffering of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicit and militant”

In spite of the good which religion has done in the past, even at present to the development of morality, according to Freud, morality must be made independent of religion now, Why? Because religion is largely mythological and myths are bound to disappear in the white light of science. If, therefore, religion and morality are kept together, then with the disappearance. But can man live without religion?

We have maintained the doctrine of religion a priori. Much of the scaffolding of mythology in religion is bound to disappear, but a purified and refined form of religion along the path of Advaitism of Shankara, Kabir, Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda will continue to guide men towards the higher goal of struggling humanity in which caste and communal riots and international cold wars will become things of the past. But morals without religion remain a hoax. Even Kant, the father of the doctrine of the autonomy of religion, recommended the psychological booster of the religion myth. He recommended that duties should be performed as divine commands, because Kant felt that the performance of duties is difficult for men without such a booster. Hence religion and morality have to go together by refining, criticizing and sublimation of one with another.

### **Further reading religion & morality**

The moral choices people make, and the values they express through them, depend (consciously or unconsciously) on their understanding of the nature of the world and the place of humanity within it. But these are also things with which religions are concerned. Each religion

- presents a particular view of the world
- promotes a set of values by which its followers should live
- Gives specific advice on how to live - in terms of either rules to be followed or attitudes to be taken.

Religious rules or values may be based on:

- the authority of a religious leader or holy book
- the cumulative experience of that religious community
- Rational thought, or an understanding of what is 'natural'.

Religious values may influence society in general, not just practicing members of that religion. For example, many of the ethical arguments are based on ideas and values that have been promoted by the Christian religion. This does not mean that every ethical thinker is Christian, but that everyone who lives within Western culture is liable to be influenced by Christian ideas, simply because they have come to pervade so much habitual thinking. The same would be true for someone living in a predominantly Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist society. The assumptions people make about the nature and of life often reflect their religious background, or a deliberate reaction against it.

How are religion and morality related?

There are three possibilities:

1. Autonomy — morality may be autonomous if it is based on reason alone, without any reference to religious ideas. If its values are the same as a particular religion, that is seen as purely coincidental.
2. Heteronomy - morality may be said to be heteronomous (i.e. rules coming from outside itself) if it depends directly on religious belief or on a set of values given by religion.
3. Theonomy — morality is theonomous (i.e. comes from God) if both it and religion are thought to come from a common source of inspiration and knowledge, a source that religion may refer to as 'God'.

## AUTONOMY

- Responsible moral choice depends on freedom and the ability to choose rationally. But some religions speak of rewards and punishments offered after death — in terms of heaven or hell, or rebirth into higher or lower forms of life. Are you behaving morally if you obey religious rules for fear of punishment?
- Different religions (or even different sects within a single religion) may take different approaches to moral issue. In order to choose between conflicting religious views, a person has to use his or her reason as the ultimate deciding factor which is autonomy
- If I subscribe to one of the theistic religions (e.g I believe in God), then I will believe that God already knows what I will choose to do before I do it. If he is all-powerful, he should be able to prevent me from doing what is wrong. If he does not do so, 'he is responsible for the consequences of my action, aiding and abetting me through divine negligence! In which case, I lose my moral responsibility.

## HETERONOMY

- People cannot escape from the influence of religious values and attitudes. They have an unconscious effect, even for those who reject religion. Better, then, to acknowledge that influence than try to deny it.
- As soon as you try to define moral terms (such as 'goodness' or 'justice') you are using language that has been shaped by the prevailing religions. Natural law, for example, may have come originally from Aristotle, but today it is understood largely through the use made of it by Aquinas and the Catholic Church. Religion has largely supplied the language of ethical debate.

- It is one thing to understand what is right, quite another to have the courage or conviction to put it into effect. It can be argued that religion is the source of such courage and conviction, and that it provides a community within which values and moral attitudes can be shared and reinforced.
- Philosophers often assume that everyone is reasonable. Religions, by contrast, are well aware of human selfishness and unreasonableness. Religion is likely to offer a more realistic view of human nature than philosophy, and therefore be better able to guide moral choice.

## **THEONOMY –**

- Intuitionism was right in saying that there are certain things that are known, but cannot be described. We have an intuitive sense of the meaning of the word 'good'. This intuition lies behind both religion and morality.
- It can be argued that religion and morality have a common source in 'mystical' experience — moments of intuitive awareness of a sense of meaning, purpose or wholeness in life, of well-being and acceptance. This is a basic feature of religious experience, and gives the impetus to act in a purposeful and moral way.
- Metaphysics (the rational exploration of meaning and purpose in the world) can be seen as a basis for morality (as in Greek thought, in the "natural law" tradition, and as explored today by, for example, Iris Murdoch in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*) and as fundamental to religion.

## **THE EUTHYPHRO DILEMMA**

Named after one of Plato's dialogues, the Euthyphro Dilemma poses the question of the relationship between autonomous morality and religion in a most succinct way. It asks: Is something right because the gods command it? Or do the gods command it because it is right?

If you take the first option, you have to ask yourself whether it would be right to obey any divine command, however much it went against your personal sense of right and wrong. Take the example of Abraham, in the Old Testament, who was commanded by God to sacrifice his only son. Reprieved at the last minute, Abraham is praised for being prepared to kill his son at God's command. There have been many atrocities (judging by autonomous morality) carried out in the name of religion. If it is believed that God did indeed command them, does that make them right?

If you take the second option, you acknowledge a sense of right and wrong that is independent of God — and hence the priority and autonomous nature of morality. In effect, you assess the morality of God's commands against your own reason.

## The basis for religious ethics

### **Judaism**

Jewish morality is based on the Torah, which means 'teaching' or 'law'. It is found in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, and includes many rules for ethical and social matters. The most famous of these rules are the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), and the Torah was famously summed up by Rabbi Hillel in the first century BCE in one of the various forms of the 'golden rule': 'What is hateful to you do not do to another.'

### **Christianity**

Because it developed out of Judaism (Jesus was a Jew, and his first followers formed a sect within Judaism rather than a separate religion), Christianity accepts the moral basis of the Ten Commandments and the Jewish Torah as part of its scriptures.

Christianity interprets the rules of the Torah in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, a significant feature of this is that Jesus was prepared to set aside the detailed requirements of the Law, but insisted that in doing so he was not setting the Law aside, but rather fulfilling and completing it. This has allowed Christian morality a measure of interpretative flexibility.

Christianity emphasizes faith in God and in Jesus Christ, rather than obedience to religion rules as the basis of its way of life. It is therefore less rule-based than Judaism, even where it shares the same values.

Source of authority for Christian morality vary from one Christian denomination to another, but they include:

- the authority of the Church (believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit), including the Pope, the Bishop of Rome
- the authority of the Scriptures –
- human reason (used in applying a 'natural law' basis for morality)
- conscience '
- the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

The fact that there are a number of different sources of authority is significant. Thus, at the time of the Reformation, the authority of the Church was challenged on the basis of the authority of the Scriptures. Reason and conscience are significant in re-examining the relevance of particular teaching to changing cultural and social circumstances.

## **Islam**

The word 'Islam' means 'submission'. Muslims believe that most things in the world submit naturally to God, the source of life. Humans are the exception, for people can either choose to submit to God, living in a natural way, or refuse to do so.

Fundamental to Muslim ethics is the universe. Indeed, Muslims believed that every child is born a Muslim, and only later may adopt another religion or decided to have no religion at all.

Muslims believed that Allah (the Arabic term for God, the source of life) revealed his will for humankind through various prophets, but that his final revelation was given through the prophet Muhammad.

Muslims have two written source of authority:

- The Qur'an- this is believed by Muslim to be the revelation of the will of God, given to Muhammad, in a series of visionary experiences. It is traditionally thought that Muhammad was illiterate, but that he was told to recite what he heard. The Qur'an is the written record of that recitation. .
- The Hadith- this is a collection of the saying and deeds of the prophet Muhammad.

These form the basis of Shariah. This term, which means 'path', describes a natural law, created by God, which determines everything in the universe, from the movement of planets to the details of how people should act. It seeks to give expression to the fundamental Muslim belief in the unity of God (Allah), and forms not only an ethical system and legal framework, but effectively a whole way of life.

As they apply Shariah to present-day situations, Muslims use the principle of analogy — linking a present issue to a decision found in the Hadith or Qur'an. Where there is doubt about what is right, a gathering of Muslim scholars (called the ulama) is called together to reach a decision on a point of law. Muslims believe that their community can never agree together on something that is wrong, and therefore decisions by the ulama are authoritative.

One particular feature of Muslim moral thinking is the requirement that Muslims should defend the faith of Islam and of the community of Muslims. The term used for this is jihad, and it takes two forms. The greater jihad is the internal struggle that every Muslim is required to undertake to overcome his or her personal faults. The lesser jihad, however, is the requirement to defend both the faith and the worldwide community of Muslim against external threats.

## **Hinduism**

Hinduism is the name used for a variety of religion traditions that originated in the Indian sub-continent. There are scriptures that are used by a large number of them- the Ramayana or the Bhagavad Gita, for example!— but there is no set way of interpreting them, and some Hindus do not read scripture, but depend on oral traditions for understanding their religion.

Nevertheless, there are certain features that apply widely, and concepts that may be used in understanding the personal and social values of Hindu society.

- **Dharma:** This is the term used for ‘right conduct’ or ‘duty’, and it is this that determines what is morally right. Your particular Dharma depends on who you are, and what stage of life you have reached. .
- **Ashramas:** The Ashramas are the four stages in life. Each of them has certain duties, and each implies certain moral choices:
  - **1. Student** - at this stage a person is expected to work hard, to show respect to parents and teachers and to develop self- discipline. Students are expected to abstain from sex, alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
  - **2. Householder-** during the middle years of life a person is expected to be involved with marriage, family and carrer. The social rules for this stage are the most lenient. .
  - **3. Retired-** traditionally, from the time of the arrival of grandchild, it is expected that both husband and wife may start back from family and business concerns. At this point they can choose to hand over control of a family business, for example, to the next generation.
  - **4. Ascetic-** a few Hindus, in the last years of their life, choose to divest themselves of all possessions and devote themselves to the practice of their religion. Most remain in the retired stage however, and continue to live with their families.

Hinduism recognizes that different people have different abilities and are able to take on different responsibilities.

## **Buddhism**

Unlike most other religious traditions, Buddhism is not actually based on a belief in God but offers a practical set of guidelines for spiritual development.



A Buddhist may say that his or her aim in life is to overcome the suffering caused by greed, hatred and illusion while developing in a way that leads to peace, joy and insight. Buddhists believe that all ethically significant actions (karma) have their consequences. What you do today will affect the sort of person you become tomorrow not in the sense that there is any externally imposed law to that effect, but just because actions have their natural consequences. Those who are foolish remained trapped in a cycle of craving and un-satisfactoriness.

Buddhists are encouraged to cultivate qualities of compassion, gentleness and serenity, and to overcome the 'poisons' of hatred, greed and ignorance.

Buddhist moral guidelines are summed up in the five basic precepts, undertaken by all committed Buddhists.

1. **Not to destroy life.** This means avoiding killing other humans, and also (for many Buddhists) keeping to a vegetarian diet, so as to minimize the-suffering of other species. It also implies that Buddhists should avoid a negative attitude towards —denigrating people or situations - but should cultivate an attitude of metta (lovin, kindness).
2. **Not to take what is not given.** This requires avoidance of dishonesty and grasping for material goods in a way that may be honest, but implies craving. Buddhists should cultivate an attitude of generosity.
3. **Not to indulge in harmful sexual activity.** There is the general principle that sexuality should not be used in such a way as to harm people. Although many Buddhist attitudes are shaped by the cultures within which it has developed, in general, Buddhism takes a liberal and positive attitude to sex - although those who aspire to follow the spiritual path seriously may find that they are able to find Personal fulfillment without sexual activity. This precept is sometimes taken in a broader sense of not harmfully over-indulging any of the senses.
4. **Not to speak falsely.** This is a general rule against lying, but also against anything that deliberately gives a false impression.
5. **Not to take those things that clouds the mind.** In order to increase their awareness, it is important that Buddhists should stay alert and be sensitive to their own and other people's feelings and responses. This cannot happen if the mind is dulled by alcohol or drugs, and so it is recommended to avoid them. Unlike in Islam, however, there is no absolute prohibition.

As well as these principles, Buddhists are required to cultivate four mental states, known as the Brahma Viharas, which may be translated as 'the places of the divine spirit':

- love-towards all creatures, and including oneself,
- Pity- compassion for all who suffer.
- Joy- an unselfish sharing in the happiness of others
- Serenity—freeing oneself from anxieties of success or failure, and being equal minded in dealing with other people.

Buddhists do not refer to actions as 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', but as 'skillful'. This implies that an action is assessed by the intention of the person who does it rather than by any external absolutes. An action is skillful if it is the result of insight and loving kindness, it is un-skillful if it is the result of ignorance, greed or hatred. That unskillfulness is shown both in the action itself and in the results that come from it.

Like Christianity; Buddhism is a religion that has been very free to adapt itself as it has moved from one culture to another. The oldest forms of Buddhism, as found now in the Theravada traditions of Thailand and Sri Lanka, for example, are very different from those found in Tibet or Japan. The basic teaching of the Buddha common factor, but it is considered wise to use skillful means to adapt and apply teachings to the particular society and situation in which people find themselves.

Although it does have its cultural traditions and ceremonies, and many Buddhists place great importance of the lineage of the teachings (the list of teachers who have handed down traditions from one generation to the next), Buddhism is essentially a process of self-examination, within broadly defined parameters. Hence it produces general moral principles and virtues, but does not generally offer narrowly defined moral rules. The main exception to this is the voluntary acceptance of numerous rules and traditions by those who choose to spend part of their life as a monk or nun.

But even then, monastic discipline is not an end in itself, but a means to create an environment in which people can practice the Buddhist dharma.

## **Sikhism**

Sikhs believe that, without the inspiration that comes from devotion to God, people live in illusion, and are dominated by the five evil impulses: lust, anger, greed, attachment to worldly things and pride. Sikhs are therefore required to cultivate their opposites: Self-control, forgiveness, contentment, love of God and humility.

In practical terms, the guidelines for the Sikh way of life are set out in a book called the 'Rehat Maryada: A Guide to the Sikh Way of Life', a translation of a Punjabi work of 1945 produced by a group of Sikh scholars and regarded as authoritative for giving a summary of the Sikh way of life and the teachings of the ten Gurus on which the Sikh faith is based.

The Sikh community is concerned to emphasize equality. Every Gurdwara (a place of Sikh worship) has a kitchen and a place where worshippers can sit and eat together. This is a way of demonstrating the unity and equality of Sikhs.

Sikhs who belong to the Khalsa (those who have committed themselves in a ceremony to follow the Sikh way of life the word itself means pure) are required to carry a sword (kirpan), to be used in self-defense. It should be used only when all peaceful means of resolving a dispute have failed, and only to re-establish justice Where there has been a wrong for example, to defend the Sikh community), or in a direct act of self-defence.

## **Religious values and society**

The moral choices that a person makes, and the attitude of a society as a whole to accepted moral norms, will depend to some extent on the vitality of the ethical life of that society. Some societies are clearly defined by a single religious and cultural matrix, but in today's world they are becoming the exception rather than the rule. It is more normal these days to encounter societies in which there is a mixture of religious and ethnic groups. What is more, it might have been assumed at one time that the ethical views of a particular religion would be the same wherever it was practiced. This again is now in question. Members of a single religion, bound together by a shared religious tradition, are nevertheless divided by the lifestyle and expectations of the societies within which they live.

Hence, there is real scope for problems of commitment and the acknowledgement of ethical norms. Someone who belongs to a religion, but lives in a largely secular, is likely to respond to that situation in one of two ways:

- By-making a clear distinction between the lifestyle and ethics of his or her religious community and that of the rest of society. The temptation then is to define by difference, and to emphasize those - things in which the religion differs from the accepted secular norm.
- By compromising on, or re-interpreting, religious rules in a way that brings them into line with the prevailing lifestyle. Once that happens, members of the same religion, living in different societies, start to disagree about their religious ethics.

Making a responsible moral choice involves weighing up all the factors that influence your self-understanding. Are you basically a member of a religion, who just happens to be living in this secular society? Or a secular person and an atheist, who happens to live in a society dominated by religion? Or are you a member of this society, who happens to find the teachings of a particular religion helpful? How you weigh up such conflicts (or potential conflicts) in interest and commitment, will determine the way in which you balance secular and religious moral arguments.

Sometimes the moral principles of a faith community coincide with those of secular society, but the authority behind those principles and the way in which moral rules are justified may still be quite different.

In the case of Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism, the religion tends to promote its own culture, and is therefore less influenced by the secular or cultural context within which it finds itself. Traditions of prayer, or the observation of Ramjan in Islam, for example, will be the same wherever in the world Muslims find themselves.

Buddhists and Christians, however, have tended to adapt their presentation of their fundamental beliefs to take into account prevailing attitudes and philosophies of the societies within which they have found themselves. Consequently, there is great variety within these religions to moral issues. Where the religion is established as the historical norm within a culture (e.g Christianity in Europe or the United States, Buddhism in Thailand) it is sometimes difficult to distinguish what is an expression of secular culture and what has religious roots. Minority religious groups tend to stand out against their cultural background, and their ethical position may be more sharply defined.

### **Is Intention enough?**

The American philosopher, Daniel Dennett, writing in “Philosophers without Gods” reflects on the help given during a life-threatening illness. He contrasts the assumption of many religious people that what matters is a person's intention to do the right thing, not necessarily their success in it, with the ethical demand made by medicine to make sure that, within human limits, everything possible is done. He concludes by saying:

“I applaud you for your loyalty to your own position - but remember: loyalty to tradition is not enough. You're got to keep asking yourself What if I'm wrong? In the long run, I think religious people can be asked to live up to the same moral standards as secular people in science and medicine.”

Although many religious people also find themselves following the demands of, say, the medical profession, what Dennett reminds us is that, without religion, medicine and science make strict moral and intellectual demands on their practitioners. In secular morality, as much as religious, it is not simply a matter of obeying rules, but

of using all that is within one's power to do what is right. Good intentions alone are not enough.

### Should religious freedom restricted?

There are situations where religious beliefs lead to actions that go against the prevailing norms of the society within which they operate.

The dilemma here is whether it is right, in the name of one set of moral values, to deprive any individual or group of the freedom to live by a different set of moral values

- Does the value of allowing individuals or group's freedom to act according to their own moral or religious views outweigh any potential harm (from society's point of view) that such freedom might entail?
- **Which is better for society overall:** freedom, with the risk of minorities doing things that the majority regard as wrong, an enforced moral code?

## Religious Pluralism and the Problem of Absolute Truth

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### The diversity of religions

There is an abounding plurality and rich diversity of religions in the contemporary world — both in terms of religious beliefs and practices - and globalization is creating a widespread awareness of this fact. Perhaps not surprisingly, along with the plethora of religious diversity, conflict in the name of religion is also pervasive and multifarious. From religious wars to individual acts of violence to verbal assault, discord among religions is an unfortunate reality of the past and present.

The current Dalai Lama — has recently suggested that interreligious harmony can be achieved by developing understanding of other traditions and appreciating the value inherent within each of them.

The current examination is the issue of how one should understand and interpret the claims made by the various religions. And lest it be missed, religions do make claims — claims about reality and our place in it. As philosopher of religion Keith Yandell notes:

"Of course religions make claims — if they asserted nothing, there would be no religions.... It is in the very nature of a religion to offer an account of our situation, our problem, and its solution, \_

Some of these claims offered by the various religions are similar, if not identical. Others, however, directly contradict one another. And it is generally the contradictions which cause the most difficulty and lead to conflict. Consider the following views from several major world religions regarding a fundamental concern of religion — the soteriological (salvation) goal as typically understood in the respective traditions:

- **Hinduism:** the ultimate soteriological goal is Moksha, release from the cycle of death and rebirth (samsara), and absorption into Brahman. This can be accomplished by following one of the three paths (margas): (1) the path of knowledge (Jnana marga), (2) the path of devotion (bhaktimarga), or (3) the path of action (karmamarga).
- **Buddhism:** the soteriological goal is nirvana, liberation from the wheel of samsara and extinction of all desires, cravings, and suffering. This is accomplished by understanding the four noble truths and practicing the final one: (1) all existence is suffering (dukkha), (2) all suffering is caused by craving

(trishna), (3) all suffering can be ended (nirvana), and (4) the way to end suffering and achieve nirvana is by practicing the noble eightfold path (astangika-marga) of right views, right resolution or aspiration, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right thoughts, and right concentration.

- **Judaism:** the soteriological goal is blessedness with God --here and perhaps in the hereafter. This may be accomplished by fulfilling the divine commandments (mitzvot) which include engaging in the following practices (sim chat Torah “the joy of the Torah”): (1) observance of the Sabbath, (2) regular attendance at synagogue, (3) celebration of the annual festivals, and (4) strict obedience to Jewish Law.
- **Christianity:** the soteriological goal is spiritual transformation and spending eternity with God in the kingdom of heaven. This is accomplished by (1) God’s grace (charis) manifested through Christ’s atonement(hilasterion) for sin (hamartion), (2) receiving ‘divine grace through faith (pislis) in Christ and the sacraments, and (3) following the law (nomos) of God out of appreciation for the gift of grace.
- **Islam:** the soteriological goal is blessedness in paradise through submission to the laws of Allah and by His mercy. This may be accomplished by following the five pillars: (1) faith in Allah and his prophet Muhammad (shahada), (2) five daily prayers (salah), (3) almsgiving (zakah), (4) fasting (sawm), and (5) the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj).

## Philosophical approaches to religious diversity:

There are a number of philosophical approaches to religious diversity —specifically regarding the conflicting truth claims of the various religions.

- 1) **Atheism:** all religions are false; there is no religion whose central claims are true.
- 2) **Agnosticism:** there is no way to determine which, if any, of the religions is most likely to be true, and thus the best response is to remain agnostic about the claims of any religion.
- 3) **Religious relativism:** while each religion can be regarded as “true” and “effective” for its adherents, there is no objective or tradition-transcending sense in which we can speak of religious truth.

- 4) **Religious pluralism**: ultimately all world religions are correct, each offering a different path and partial perspective vis-a-vis the one Ultimate Reality.
- 5) **Religious inclusivism**: only one world religion is fully correct, but other world religions participate in or partially reveal some of the truth of the one correct religion; it is possible, however, to obtain salvation (or nirvana, or moksha, etc.) through other religions.
- 6) **Religious exclusivism**: one world religion is correct and all others are mistaken; salvation (or nirvana, moksha, etc.) is found only through this one religion.

## **Religious inclusivism and exclusivism**

Religious inclusivists and exclusivists are in agreement on a number of issues related to religious diversity, including the belief that there is an objective reality to which religious truth claims point or correspond. They agree that one religion is, in some sense, closer to the truth about matters of God/Ultimate reality and salvation liberation than the other religions. They emphasize the fact that the different religions contain within them seemingly incompatible truth-claims.

Issues on which inclusivists and exclusivists agree:

- (1) one objective reality to which religious truth-claims correspond
- (2) one religion conceptions are truer than others
- (3) different religions contain seemingly incompatible truth-claims

While inclusivists and exclusivists agree that the different traditions contain incompatible truth-claims, they disagree about whether those religions outside their own also contain fundamental truths, and whether adherents of the other religions can obtain salvation/liberation.

For exclusivists, fundamental truth is found in only one religion, and salvation/liberation is also exclusive to that one true religion. Religious exclusivists argue that religious differences are real and that there are intractable disagreements among religious traditions. Religious exclusivism (of which Alvin Plantinga is one prominent example) has been the most widely held position among the adherents of the major world religions. For inclusivists, while they maintain that only one religion is privileged, they affirm that other religions also contain important truths. And they typically hold that true religious seekers - from whatever tradition — will find salvation/liberation.



Theistic inclusivists affirm that God is present and working in and among all of the religions, even though God is most clearly manifested in one religion. They maintain that other theistic religions are right about there being a personal God (unlike Buddhists, say), but they disagree with other religions on different issues, such as the means for obtaining salvation/liberation.

Non-theistic inclusivists affirm that Ultimate Reality is found by truth seekers from all of the world religions, but it is most clearly understood and articulated in the one privileged religion.

## Objection to inclusivism and exclusivism:

### 1. **The “myth of neutrality”**

One prominent objection to religious exclusivism and inclusivism is sometimes dubbed the “myth of neutrality,” and it has been expressed in many forms. The basic idea is that there are no religiously neutral or objective criteria by which to determine whether one religion or worldview is true and others false, or whether one has more truth or falsity than another. So to claim that one religion is true, or offers the only way of salvation, is inappropriate and perhaps even morally offensive.

In reply, some exclusivists and inclusivists have argued that it doesn't matter if there are no 'criteria for such assessment, for religious beliefs are not the kinds of things which should be subject to rational assessment and that doing so perhaps reflects a lack of faith. This view is known as fideism (discussed elsewhere).

### 2. **The justice objection**

It is sometimes argued that exclusivists are committed to a position which is unjust. The problem is multifaceted, but one aspect of it is that there are billions of people, currently and historically, completely unaware of religions beyond their own. For the exclusivist, they are held morally and/or epistemically responsible for affirming religious truths of which they are not even aware. This objection is typically leveled against monotheistic religions which include a final judgment in the afterlife. How, for example, could the God of Christianity (if such a God exists) deny salvation to the countless people who have never even heard about the Christian faith? It seems unjust that God would condemn people to “eternal perdition simply due to their lack of knowledge. And certainly there are good, sincere, devoted people in all of the major world religions. This is not so much a problem for inclusivists, for they do not agree that there is no salvation/liberation for those who haven't encountered the one true religion in this life.

## RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

### The pluralistic hypothesis

John Hick has developed one of the most impressive approaches to religious pluralism to date. He argues that there is a plurality of paths to salvation, and each of the great world religions offers such a path. He denies the view (widely held by atheists and others) that religion is only a human projection. However, utilizing Immanuel Kant's distinctions of noumena (things as they really are in themselves) and phenomena (things as they are experienced by us given the categories of our minds), Hick argues that one's experiences and descriptions do depend on the interpretive concepts through which one sees, structures, and understands them.

So, while some experience and understand Ultimate Reality, or "the Real," in personal, theistic categories (e.g. as Allah or Yahweh), others do so in impersonal, pantheistic ways (e. g, as nirguna Brahman). Yet others experience and understand Ultimate Reality as completely non personal (e.g. as nirvana). The Hindu parable of the blind men and the elephant poignantly reflects this point.

For Hick, in our groping for the Real we are very much like the blind men — our viewpoints are constricted by our enculturated concepts.

#### **The Blind Men and the Elephant:**

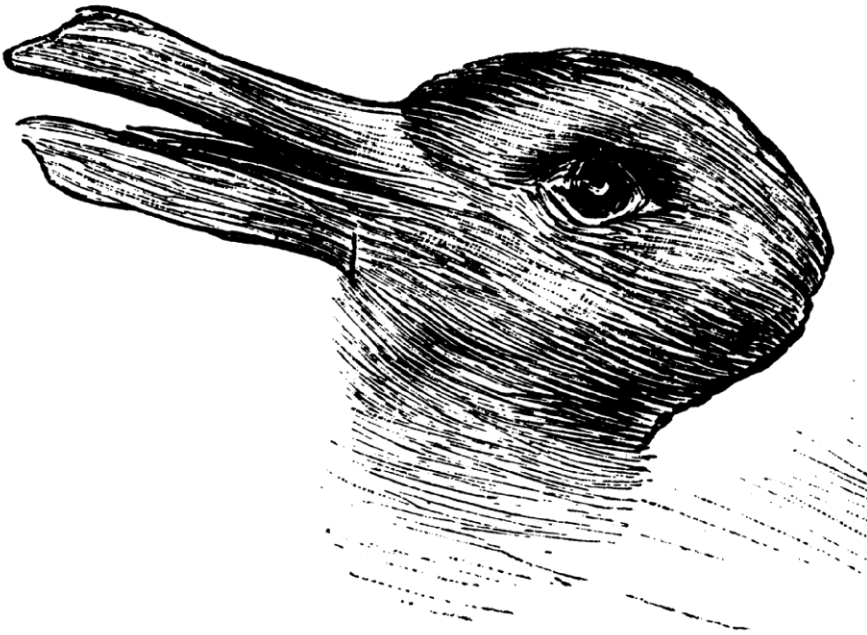
- God is like a large elephant surrounded by several blind men. One man touches the elephant's tail and thinks it is a rope. Other touches the trunk and thinks it is a snake. Another touches a leg and thinks it is a tree. Yet another touch the elephants side and thinks it is a wall. They are all experiencing the same elephant but in very different ways. The same goes for God and the various religions.

Religious doctrines and dogmas are important for Hick, but what is fundamental in religion is the personal transformation that occurs within the religion. Further, the nature of the Ultimate Reality is that it is "ineffable" (discussed in mystical experience chapter indetail).

### Example to prove pluralistic hypothesis

Hick uses several analogies to describe the pluralistic hypothesis with respect to different aspects of religion. One of the most interesting is the duck-rabbit picture which Ludwig Wittgenstein used in his influential work entitled the Philosophical Investigations. A culture which has plenty of ducks but no familiarity with rabbits would see this ambiguous diagram as being a picture of a duck. Persons in this culture would not even be aware of the ambiguity. So too with the culture which has plenty of rabbits but no familiarity with ducks. Persons in this culture would see it as a picture of a rabbit.

Hick's analogy is that the ineffable Real ("ineffable" means that its nature is beyond the scope of human concepts) is capable of being experienced — authentically experienced in the different religions, as Yahweh, or as Allah, or as Vishnu, or as shunayata , depending on one's religious concepts through which the individual experiences occur.



### **OBJECTIONS:**

A number of objections have been raised against the pluralistic hypothesis:

### **PLURALISM IS LOGICALLY CONTRADICTORY**

Logical pluralism seems to make an exclusive (non-pluralistic!) claim about the Real and salvation/liberation; namely, that the Real is experienced equally validly among the various religions and that they each offer valid expressions of the soteriological goal. But this appears to be self-contradictory. For in asserting that no religious position in reference to the Real and the soteriological goal is superior to or truer than another, Hick has in fact done just that --he has asserted that his own view is truer than and superior to all others.

### **PLURALISM LEADS TO SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE REAL:**

The pluralistic view of the Real leads to another objection. The position that religious truth claims are entirely contextually bound and only about the phenomena (rather

than the noumena) leads to a knowledge block (epistemic opacity) which arguably lands one in skepticism or agnosticism about the Real. For if it is impossible to think or speak about the Real, and if attributes such as being good, loving, powerful, just (or impersonal, non-dual, etc.) don't actually apply to the Real since it is beyond our human conceptual field, how then can we be sure that the Real isn't merely a human psychological projection or wish fulfillment.

Hick's response, in good Kantian fashion, is that given the historically rich and broad religious experiences within the faith traditions, we must posit an objective Real to account for the rich experiences and transformations. However, the Real as construed by Hick is "beyond characterizations" and "neither personal nor non-personal." As such one wonders what it is that is posited and how such an "ineffable" posit can lead to the personal, moral transformation so integral to Hick's position.

### **ASPECTUAL PLURALISM:**

A second version of religious pluralism attempts to avoid some of the philosophical and other pitfalls of the pluralistic hypothesis.

'For the aspectual pluralist, there is an objective Ultimate Reality, and this Reality is knowable to us. Thus, unlike the pluralistic hypothesis, and in very non-Kantian fashion, we can offer valid descriptions of the noumenal – we can "get at" the Real. The notion of natural kinds is used in order to clarify the position.

Just as the natural kind gold has an unobservable essence as well as observable properties or qualities — being yellow, lustrous, and hard — so too the Real has an essence with different experienced manifestations. The Real manifests different aspects of itself in the different religions given their own unique conceptual schemes, religious structures, and practices.

### **OBJECTIONS:**

#### **Aspectual pluralism leads to syncretism**

One alleged problem with this view is that since each of the religions is capturing only an aspect of the Real, it seems that one would obtain a better grasp of the Real essence by creating a new syncretistic religion in order to glean more aspects of the Real.

#### **Aspectual pluralism leads to skepticism.**

A related problem is that, on the aspectual view, since religious adherents are only glimpsing the Real through properties which are themselves encultured within the various traditions, descriptions of the Real cannot be adequate knowledge claims about the Real. So, one is left with religious skepticism.

## RELIGIOUS RELATIVISM

A third way of responding to the conflicting truth claims of the different faith traditions is to remain committed to the truth of one's religious teachings while at the same time agreeing with some of the central concerns raised by pluralism. This can be accomplished by positing a view known as religious relativism.

Relativism grants that different religions are constituted by different experiences and mutually incompatible sets of truth claims, and that the different religions and experiences are themselves rooted in distinct worldviews which are incompatible with, if not contradictory to, the other religions and worldviews. But he maintains that these differing experiences and incompatible worldviews emerge from the plurality of phenomenal divine realities experienced by the adherents of the religions.

“On this view; it is understood that a person's worldview (that is, “the total cognitive web of our interrelated concepts, beliefs, and processes of rational thought”) determines how one comprehends and experiences Ultimate Reality.

Furthermore, corresponding to differences of worldview, there are mutually incompatible, yet individually adequate, sets of conceptual-schema-relative truths. In other words, the truth of a religion is determined by its adequacy to appropriately correspond to the worldview of which it is a part.

Religious relativism has several advantages over Hick's pluralistic hypothesis:

- (1) It offers a better account of the actual cognitive beliefs held by the adherents of the great world religions, for it affirms that each of the religions are making hue fundamental claims,
- (2) It maintains the dignity of the various religions by accepting their differences as real and significant,
- (3) It does not reduce the sense of the reality of the Real to a mere “image” as pluralism unintentionally does. Rather, it keeps the Real as the direct object of religious faith.

## OBJECTIONS:

### Relativism is incoherent

Religious relativism is logically incoherent since it cannot be consistently maintained that truth is individualistic — a position entailed by relativism. However, it can be argued that while this is perhaps a fair assessment of what's referred to as “subjectivism” (a position in which truth is relative to each person's idiosyncratic

worldview), this does not apply to this account, truth is relativized to the worldview of a culture rather than relativized individually.

### **An inadequate description of actual religious beliefs**

While relativism seems to offer a better account than pluralism of the actual cognitive beliefs of the adherents of the religions, it nevertheless falls short of their actual beliefs. For example, Muslim adherents haven't historically held, nor do their scholars and teachers (imams) typically hold, that Allah is the true God only with respect to the worldview of Islam. To the contrary, for Muslims the truth of Allah as described in the Quran is taken to be unequivocally and objectively true. For the Islamic believer, Allah is the one and only true God for everyone regardless of what one's worldview happens to be. So too among the other faith traditions; their beliefs are typically understood to be true in an objective and absolute sense. In effect, adherents of the religions have historically been exclusivists rather than relativists.

## **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS**

1. **Logical consistency:** the fundamental, defining propositions of the religious system must be logically consistent with one another and not self-defeating.
2. **Coherence of overall system:** the fundamental, defining propositions of the religious system must be related to one another such that they offer a unified understanding of the world and One's place in it.
3. **Consistency with knowledge in other fields:** the fundamental, defining propositions of the religious system should not contradict well-established knowledge in other fields, such as science, history, psychology, and archaeology;
4. **Reasonable answers to fundamental human questions:** the religious system should be able to account for and explain fundamental human questions.;
5. **Existential plausibility:** the religious system must be livable based on its own fundamental beliefs and should not require borrowing such beliefs from another religious system which contradict it.

## RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

A number of philosophers have recently turned their attention to the relationship between religious diversity and religious tolerance, with the main focus on whether acknowledgement of, and subsequent reflection on, religious diversity might lead to greater religious tolerance.

### Philip Quinn

'The main argument supporting the claim that acknowledged diversity can foster tolerance was proposed by Philip Quinn. He maintained that

- (1) Serious reflection on the undeniable reality of religious diversity will necessarily weaken an individual justification for believing that her religious perspective is superior to the perspectives of others and that
- (2) this weakened justification can, and hopefully will for some, lead to greater religious tolerance — for example, will lead to a more accepting, less confrontational attitude toward others.

Both of Quinn's contentions have been challenged. The claim that reflection of the acknowledged reality of religious diversity reduces an individuals justified confidence in the superiority of her position has been subject to at least two types of criticism.

1. Some philosophers maintain that the proponent of a given religious perspective need not grant that his competitors are actually on equal epistemic footing and are thus justified in continuing to maintain that his perspective is superior without further reflection.
2. Other philosophers do not deny that proponents of differing religious perspectives are on equal epistemic footing or that reflection on these diversity perspectives might in some cases actually cause an individual to become less certain that her perspective is superior. But they deny that there is any necessary epistemic connection between acknowledged diversity and a weakening of justified personal commitment.

Quinn's second contention — that weakened justification in the superiority of one's perspective has the promising potential for fostering religious tolerance —has also been challenged.

1. Some have argued that the weakening of a person's conviction that the specific teachings of her religion, including the relevant moral teachings that prohibit intolerance, are correct might in turn actually make it more likely that this person will engage in intolerant behavior as it may well



deflate, the very confidence in the relevant beliefs needed for inspiring tolerance.

2. Others have contended that there is possibility that the exact opposite of desired result might happen. A religious person acknowledging diversity with resultant weakening in one's belief in superiority of one's religion might feel threatened and insecure and indulge in more intolerant behavior as a response.

### **Dalai Lama on religious tolerance**

As encounters with religious “others” become commonplace, conflicts concerning doctrinal, cultural, and practical differences will also increase. In response to this conflict, the Dalai Lama proposes inter religious harmony that appreciates the value of other faith traditions. He notes that an important first step in accomplishing this harmony is developing an understanding of other faith traditions and appreciating the value inherent within each of them.

The answer to the question of religious tolerance partly depends on what we mean by “tolerance” and “intolerance.” If by “tolerance” we mean affirming that all traditions are equally true and “intolerance” denying that they are all equally true, then of course any evaluation would be an intolerant endeavor. However, if by “tolerance” we mean recognizing and respecting the beliefs and practices of others; then evaluation and tolerance need not be at odds. In the coming decades and centuries, if we are going to flourish together as human beings, and as religious human beings, we must take seriously this proposal. We must advance in tolerance, and this will involve learning about religious others — what they believe and why and how they practice their beliefs — and striving to understand. This need not entail a capitulation to an “everyone’s right” attitude, but it could be argued that it should become an “everyone’s significant” attitude



## **Nature of Religious Language:** **Analogical and Symbolic; Cognitivist and Non cognitive**

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Language is a chief tool for effective communication, be it science, politics or religion. It is the language that plays critical role in the propagation of axioms and ideas. There are different kinds of language and social science. But whether there is any specific language in the discourse of religion is a question that needs to be discussed and analyzed.

If we undertake a comparative study of different religion of the world over it becomes quite clear that there is no specific or universal language of religion. This is because unlike other sciences which are purely empirical in this nature religion is fundamentally an experience and awareness involving trans-“empirical element.

### **What is the debate?**

The basic question behind the religious language debate is

“What can be said about God?”

The religious language debate is not concerned with whether or not God exists, or what God is like or why there is evil in the world. It is solely concerned with working out whether or not religious language means anything. On the one side of the debate, you have the centuries old tradition of religious believers who believe that you can speak and write about God, because God is a reality. On the other side, are the Logical Positivists and those that they influenced who claim that statements about God have no meaning because they don't relate to anything that is real.

### **Religious language is meaningless.**

In the debate about religious language, it is important that broadly speaking, there are two types of language, cognitive and non-cognitive. Cognitive language conveys facts i.e. things that we can know or be cognizant of. Non-cognitive language, predictably, conveys information that is not factual; emotions, feelings and metaphysical claims.

*The Lord is faithful in all his words,  
And gracious in all his deeds.  
The Lord upholds all who are falling,  
And rises up all who are bowed down.  
The Lord is near to all who call upon him,  
To all who call upon him in truth  
He fulfills the desire of all who fear him  
He also hears their cry and saves them*

Badgers have black and white fur  
Squirrels are agile  
Coal and crude Oil are black  
2+2=4

Above you have examples of two very different types of language. On the left hand side is an excerpt from the Psalms, which talks about God and what he is supposed to be like. On the right hand side are statements of fact about things in the world. These two types of language are important for understanding the problems raised by the religious language debate.

He also hears their cry and saves them. We need to begin by looking at exactly what cannot be said about God according to some philosophers.

## **COGNITIVE**

According to these philosophers religious statements are factually significant. Through them we come to know special knowledge about God.

According to John Hick religious knowledge is based on faith. However, faith is factual and cognitive according to him. A believer's awareness of God is based on direct experience. He directly apprehends God and through his material and social environment. The moments of ordinary life possess in varying degrees religion significance. In fact religious experience is the "whole experience of religious person". A believer feels in this conscience the presence of and pressure of divine command. He apprehends divine grace in the hands of God in the beauty of nature.

In short, it is not apart from the course of mundane life, but in it and through it claims to experience the divine presence and its activity. The experience of God is further objectively reflected in the life of the believer. However, John Hick concedes that through this experience we cannot demonstrate that God exist, but he argues that as we experience the real world whose existence and existence of God is a matter of faith.

### **John Hicks Theory of Eschatology of verification**

He states that at the end of time all the pans of religious belief that require faith will be made clear by God. Just because they cannot be verified now they will be verified in the future. John Hick in a way using weak verification principle in reverse.

### **Speaking meaningfully about God and religion**

There are a number of philosophers and theologians who claim that it is possible to speak meaningfully about God. We will start with St Thomas Aquinas and his theory of analogy.

## The theory of Analogy

An analogy is an attempt to explain the meaning of something which is difficult to understand in the light of a comparison with something else which is within our frame of reference. One of the most famous theological analogies is Paley's analogy of the watch, where he tries to explain the role of God as creator. We have no direct experience of God as a creator, but Paley claimed it is analogical to a watchmaker who designs an intricate timepiece for a purpose.

The most famous early proponent of speaking about God in analogical terms, was St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). It is important to note before we look at his theory, that Aquinas' theories start from confirmed religious belief and- work backwards from that in justifying it. Most of you will be starting from the opposite point; unconfirmed attitudes and look to test whether or not religious theories are sufficient proof.

Aquinas was a religious man who believed in God. He assumed both that God existed and that God had created the universe: remember, there was no Big Bang theory or evolution to test the claims made by Genesis. Aquinas believed that religious belief was reasonable to hold, i.e. that one can use reason to assert God's existence.

Aquinas rejected univocal and equivocal language when talking about God. These are as follows:

- **Univocal language:** This is where words are used to mean the same things in all the situations where they are used e.g. black board, black hat, black car. In each case, the word black is being used to refer to the colour black.
- **Equivocal language:** This is where words are used to mean different things in different contexts e.g. 'gay' can be taken to mean 'jolly', 'homosexual' or more recently 'rubbish'. Problematically, once a word is used to mean a different thing, it is robbed of its original meaning because of the new application.

What do these two terms have to do with religious language or God-talk? Religious language often attempts to describe the attributes or qualities of God. This is difficult as God is generally not something we have direct experience of, whereas most of the things language refers to are things that we can experience e.g. love, rabbits, hair, walking.

Thus when we say 'God is good' we need to know how we are using the word 'good' in that sentence. If we are speaking univocally, we are claiming that God is good in the same way humans are. Aquinas rejected this as he believed God to be perfect. Because of this, imperfect humans cannot be good in the same way that God is.

Alternatively, if we are speaking equivocally, we mean that God is good in a totally different way to humans. Aquinas rejected this too. He argued that if we speak equivocally about God, we cannot profess to know anything about him as we are

saying that the language we use to describe humans or the experienced world around us, does not apply to God.

Aquinas believed that there was a 'middle way', a way of talking meaningfully about God. This middle way, was analogy. Aquinas described three types of analogy: analogy of attribution, analogy of proper proportion and analogy of improper proportion.

### **The analogy of attribution**

Aquinas believed it was possible to work out the nature of God by examining his creation. Aquinas took it for granted that the world was created by God and for him, the link between creator and created order was clear. In the analogy of attribution, Aquinas takes as his starting points the idea that God is the source of all things in the universe and that God is universally perfect. He then goes on to argue that all beings in the universe in some way imitate God according to their mode of existence:

Thus, therefore, God is called wise not only insofar as He produces wisdom, but also because, in so far as we are wise, we imitate to some extent the power by which He makes us wise. On the other hand, God is not called a stone, even though He has made stones, because in the name stone there is understood a determinate mode of being according to which a stone is distinguished from God. But the stone imitates God as its cause in being and goodness.

Aquinas uses the example of a bull to illustrate this point. It is possible to determine the health of an animal by examining its urine. Aquinas said that if a bull's urine is healthy, then we can determine that the bull will be healthy. Obviously however, the health of the bull is more completely and perfectly within the bull itself and is only reflected in the urine produced by the bull. In the same way God is the source of qualities in the universe and God possesses these qualities first and most perfectly. This sets up an order of reference, meaning that these qualities apply to God first and foremost, then to other things secondarily and analogically. Because we are created in the image of God, it is possible to say that we have these attributes (wisdom, goodness etc) analogically: these qualities are attributed to us analogically, whilst God has them perfectly.

### **The analogy of proper proportion**

John Hick has given a useful example to help to illustrate this idea:

Consider the term 'faithful'. A man or a woman can be faithful, and this shows in particular patterns of speech, behavior and so on. We can also say that a dog is faithful. Clearly there is a great difference between the faithfulness of a man or woman and that of a dog, yet there is a recognizable similarity or analogy - otherwise, we would not think of the dog as faithful. Further, in the case of the analogy between the human

beings and the dog true faithfulness is something we know in ourselves, and a dim and imperfect likeness of this in the dog is known by analogy.'

The theory is not John Hick's, it was developed by Aquinas, but Hick's example helps to explain it. The basic idea is that we possess qualities like those of God (goodness, wisdom, faithfulness etc) because we were created in his image and likeness, but because we are inferior to God, we possess those qualities in lesser proportion to God.

### Strengths and weaknesses of analogy

So, analogy is one suggested way of being able to speak about God, but does it work?

1. Aquinas based his work upon a number of assumptions that came from his religious belief. Obviously,--he believed that God was ultimately responsible for the creation of the earth (as shown in his 5 Ways)and he also believed that humans were created in the image and likeness of God' as is stated in Genesis. The idea that we were created has been refuted implicitly by Darwin and explicitly by Richard Dawkins. If one doesn't accept his assumptions, one doesn't have to accept the idea that we can work out what God is like by examining a creation that may or may not be his.
2. Another criticism is that analogy picks some qualities, but not others i.e. the good qualities. The world also comprises evil, does God possess these qualities as well? This criticism would appear to have been refuted by Augustine, who argues that there is no such thing as evil, just a falling away from or privation of the good.
3. Also, analogy can tell us nothing new about God, as it is based upon things that are already in existence, it is rather like saying that we can work out everything about a car designer from the car that he has designed.
4. The bridge that Aquinas attempts to create between things known and unknown is built of imaginary blocks. However, some scholars would argue that it is possible to speak of life on Mars meaningfully without having had empirical experience of it; also, eschatological verification can be suggested against this criticism.
5. Analogy does not stand up to verification, because the object one is trying to illustrate by use of analogy cannot be empirically verified.
6. Another criticism, is that of Richard Swinburne, who argues that we don't really need analogy at all. When we say 'God is good' and 'humans are good', we may be using 'good' to apply to different things, but we are using it to mean the same thing: i.e. we are using the word good univocally.

Obviously, the criticisms of people like AJ Ayer are difficult to reject and of course, an analogical statement referring to God is impossible to verify. However, analogy is incredibly valuable for people who are already in the religious language game, that is, people who already believe. It can help them to make sense of a concept that really is beyond human comprehension and would work as a great aid to faith. This was the perspective that Aquinas was working from.

## **Paul Tillich and language as symbol**

Paul Tillich was a theologian who believed that it is possible to speak meaningfully about metaphysical concepts and came up with the theory that religious language, because it is symbolic in nature, has a profound effect upon humans.

Paul Tillich starts by making a distinction between signs and symbols. Both point to something beyond themselves, i.e. they mean something else. But there is a crucial difference.

Tillich said that signs do not participate in what they symbolize. This means that without knowing what the signs mean, they would make no sense. Also, all these signs do is point to a statement such as 'you can now travel at the national speed limit' they have no other effect.

Symbols on the other hand are powerful and they actually take part in the power and meaning of what they symbolize, if you look at the cross in the second row, this is the symbol of Christianity. Not only does it stand as a marker for that religion, but it also makes a powerful statement. It immediately reminds Christians of the sacrifice they believe Jesus to have made on the cross for them. It also reminds them of their beliefs about God and his plan for the salvation of human beings. In this way, a symbol communicates much more powerfully with us.-Tillich believed that religious language operates as a symbol.

Tillich outlined four main functions that symbols perform:

1. They point to something beyond themselves.
2. They participate in that to which they point.
3. Symbols open up levels of reality that otherwise are closed to us.
4. They also open up the levels and dimensions of the soul that correspond to those levels of reality.

Tillich argued that symbolic language operates in much the same way that a piece of music or a work of art or poetry might. They can have a deep and profound effect upon us that we can only explain in a limited way, and the explanation would only really be understood by someone else who has seen that same work of art. Also, symbols, like works of art, can open up new levels of reality for us -and offer a new perspective on life.

## **Being-Itself**

Tillich maintained that religious language is a symbolic way of pointing towards the ultimate reality, the vision of God which he called “Being—itself”. Being-Itself is that upon which everything else depends for its being and Tillich believed that we came to knowledge of this through symbols which direct us to it.

### **Religious language as moral assertion**

R.B. Braithwaite was concerned not with what religious statements are, but with how they are used. Braithwaite believed that religious statements are moral in content and intention and can therefore be verified, because they result in a change of behavior. Religious statements are:

“...declarations of adherence to a policy of action, declarations of commitment to a way of life.’

Correspondingly, moral assertions are described as follows:

- It makes the primary use of a moral assertion that of expressing the intention of the asserter to act in a particular sort of way specified in the assertion.

Braithwaite argued that because religious statements such as ‘God is the almighty father’ result in action, they have meaning. Braithwaite also argued that religious belief and hence religious moral assertions, are based upon

- a) a commitment to live a particular life as we have seen, and
- b) Religious stories such as the life of Jesus, or the life of the Buddha. What is interesting about this, is that Braithwaite claims religious people do not have to rely upon these stories as being empirically verifiable, i.e. a Christian does not have to produce Jesus’ certificate of death, they can just use these stories as an influence.

“It is completely untrue, as a matter of psychological fact,‘ to think that the only intellectual considerations which affect action are beliefs: it is all the thoughts of a man that determine his behavior; and these include his fantasies, imaginations, ideas of what he would wish to be and do, as well as the propositions which he believes to be true...”

So, for Braithwaite, religious assertions are meaningful because they result in particular action and a particular way of life that can be verified.



## Non- Cognitive: Logical Positivists

They hold that non cognitive, metaphysical statements (i.e. statements about things beyond reality such as God, heaven, angels) are completely meaningless (as are meaningless statements like 'square circles are green'), as we have no way of verifying whether or not these statements are meaningful. As A J Ayer puts it:

'The term 'god' is a metaphysical term. And if 'god' is a metaphysical term, then it cannot even be probable that God exists. For to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance.

A.J.Ayer does not just deny God's existence, he denies the possibility of God's existence altogether on the grounds that there is no way of empirically verifying his existence. Needless to say, Ayer would disagree with all of the traditional arguments for the existence of God, as none of them conclusively and empirically prove the existence of God.

## Later Wittgenstein and Religious Language

Ludwig Wittgenstein took religion very seriously, even to the point of considering the priesthood. Nevertheless, he was opposed to natural theology, the attempt to demonstrate the existence of God from evidence in the natural world, and to the development of religious doctrines. He was more interested in religious symbol and ritual.

In his later works Wittgenstein understood language to be not a fixed structure directly corresponding to the way things actually are, but rather to be a human activity susceptible to the vicissitudes of human life and practice. Language does not offer a picture of reality, he argued, but rather it is a set of activities which he described as "language games." The concept of a language game was "to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life." Wittgenstein uses the example of a builder to make the point:

"The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams; B has to pass the stones, in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block," "pillar," "slab," "beam." A calls them out; - B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call."

In teaching language, one needs to be able to respond to words in certain contexts; speech and action work together. In many cases, then, the meaning of a word is its use in the language. For Wittgenstein, this is true in religious discourse as it is elsewhere. Thus in speaking of God or Brahman or nirvana or the dao, the meanings of such words have more to do with their use than with their denotation; The language



games of the religions reflect the practices and forms of life of the various religious adherents, and so religious claims should not be taken as providing literal pictures of reality which somehow lie beyond these activities.

### **Blik Theory: R.M.Hare**

The philosopher RM Hare came up with the theory of 'bliks'. As did many other philosophers, Hare used a parable to illustrate his point.

*"A certain lunatic is convinced that all dons want to murder him. His friends introduce him to all the mildest and most respectable dons that they can find, and after each of them has retired, they say, "You see, he doesn't really want to murder you; he spoke to you in a most cordial manner; surely you are convinced now?"*

*But the lunatic replies "Yes, but that was only his diabolical cunning; he's really plotting against me the whole time, like the rest of them; I know it I tell you." However many kindly dons are produced, the reaction is the same.'*

Thus a 'blik' is a particular view about the world that may not be based upon reason or fact and that cannot be verified or falsified; it just is and we don't need to explain why we hold our 'blik'. Hare talked about trusting in the metal of a car; this blik about the car meant that we would quite happily drive or be driven in a car, because we have the 'blik' that the metal is strong and that it is safe to drive at high speed in the car. Hare said that people either have the right or sane 'blik' or the wrong or insane 'blik'; the lunatic above has the wrong 'blik' about dons, whereas his friends have the right 'blik'.

Hare's theory has been criticized, notably by John Hick who provides two objections. First of all, Hick argues that religious beliefs or religious 'blik' are based upon reason; people believe in God because they may have had a religious experience, or they feel the words of the Bible/Qur'an are true or a variety of other reasons. Secondly, he claims there is an inconsistency: Hare claims that there is a distinction between sane and insane bliks. However, he also claims that bliks are unverifiable and unfalsifiable. If we cannot either prove or disprove religious 'bliks', we cannot call them right or wrong, sane or insane either.

### **Basil Mitchell**

Mitchell disagreed with the theory of 'bliks' and suggested another way, using another parable. Mitchell claimed that religious belief and therefore religious language was based upon fact, although they are not straight forwardly verifiable or falsifiable. He used the idea of a resistance fighter to make his point-

*“A member of the resistance movement is met one day by a man claiming to be the leader ‘of the resistance movement. The fighter is suitably impressed and pledges his loyalty to the stranger. As time goes on, the fighter sees the ‘leader’ helping out the resistance, but at other times he is apparently helping out the enemy. The fighter nevertheless carries on in his belief that the stranger is in fact the leader of the resistance movement.”*

Mitchell’s parable is different to Hare’s, as Hare’s lunatic

- has no reason for mistrusting dons and
- Will allow nothing to count against his belief. Mitchell’s fighter however, is willing to admit that things count against his belief in the leader (a symbol of God) and
- Grounds his belief in reason and fact: he trusts this man who claims to be leader and has examples of him fighting for the resistance.

Mitchell’s point is that religious belief is based upon facts, but that belief cannot be verified/ falsified in the simplistic way demanded by the logical positivists. Of course, the stranger in the story will be able to reveal his true allegiance after the war and explain his mysterious behavior, in the same way that all the peculiar and problematic parts of religious belief will be revealed at the end of time according to traditional religious belief.

This is similar to John Hick’s theory of Eschatological Verification. This states that at the end of time (eschaton, hence eschatological) all the parts of religious belief that require faith will be made clear by God: just because they cannot be verified now, they will be verified in the future. Hick is, in a way, using the weak verification principle in reverse.