



# Logoi

a publication of the  
Center for Philosophy of Religion

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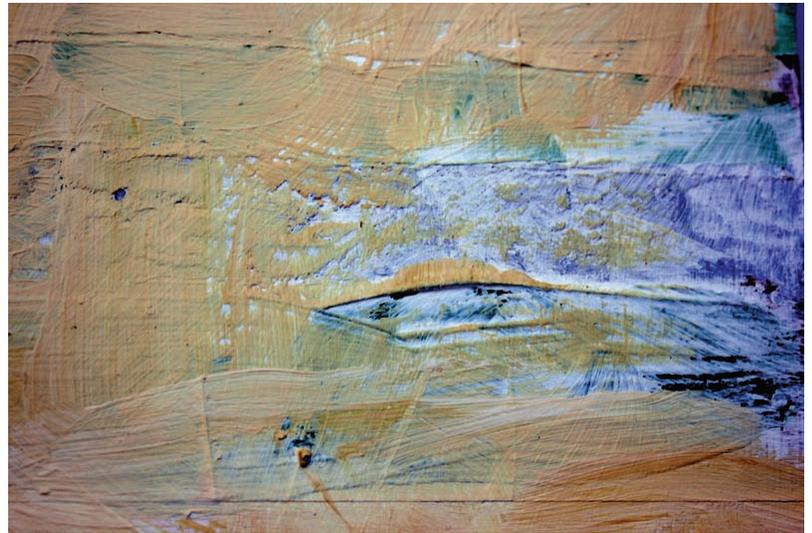
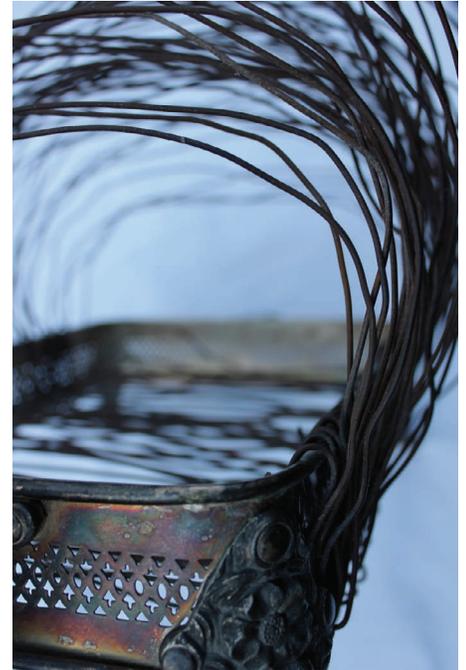
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**About logoi:**

The Center for Philosophy of Religion is proud to introduce *logoi*, a publication of high quality articles and interviews about the field of philosophy of religion and the Center's activities.

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## AROUND THE CENTER

THE CENTER CONTINUES to thrive intellectually and relationally. Whether it is our Friday morning discussion group, Thursday pub night, activities associated with our grants, events that engage the Notre Dame undergraduate community, or Center fellows and staff simply sharing lunch together, there is nearly always something happening in the Center.

### Video

Over the past year, we have worked hard to expand the Center's vision and public presence. We are exploring creative ways to bring important topics in philosophy of religion to a wider audience through a series of short video interviews with philosophers. Every month, we feature one of those interviews on our homepage ([philreligion.nd.edu](http://philreligion.nd.edu)). In addition to these, we have filmed three roundtable discussions, the most recent on feminist philosophy of religion ([philreligion.nd.edu/videos/round-table-discussions](http://philreligion.nd.edu/videos/round-table-discussions)). In the coming years, we plan to build a substantial library filled with creative video content, all of which can be found on our new video page ([philreligion.nd.edu/videos](http://philreligion.nd.edu/videos)).

### Global Calendar

In addition to expanding our vision for disseminating important ideas in philosophy of religion to a wider audience, we have created a *Global Philosophy of Religion Calendar* as a way of helping those interested in philosophy of religion stay informed about upcoming events and opportunities in the discipline. With this new calendar, we aim to consolidate opportunities in philosophy of religion in a user-friendly format. If you are aware of opportunities not already on our calendar, **please send relevant**



information to: [philreligion@nd.edu](mailto:philreligion@nd.edu).

### Events

The Friday morning paper-in-progress discussion group continues to be a staple activity at the Center, during which we read and discuss papers from faculty and Center fellows. Topics discussed this year include God and time, freedom and foreknowledge, religious fictionalism, religious sacrifice, perfect being theology, and doctrines of Scripture. The engaging conversations often continue over a pint at our weekly pub night, which takes place at rotating locations.

We hosted the annual Baylor-Georgetown-Notre Dame Philosophy of Religion conference on October 3 – 5. This annual conference provides an important forum for philosophers to present and discuss fresh work in the philosophy of religion.

On October 9, Stephen Wykstra, Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, delivered the Twelfth Annual

Alvin Plantinga Fellow Lecture, titled "Resurrecting Faith: Facts, Feelings, and Finding Our Religious Way." Professor Wykstra explored the roles for facts and feelings in faith in the midst of struggle with doubt.

We continue to provide a venue (and a catered meal!) for the Notre Dame undergraduate community to engage with important philosophical ideas in our popular *Food for Thought* series. On November 7, Stephen Laumakis, Professor of Philosophy at the University of St. Thomas, presented, "Plato, Confucius, Golf, and the Good Human Life." On March 20, Christina Van Dyke, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, will present "Catching Fire: Discipline and Docile Bodies in the Hunger Games."

The Sixth Annual Logos Workshop in Philosophical Theology will be held on May 8-10 at Notre Dame. The theme of this year's workshop is The Atonement. The aim of the annual Logos Workshop is to foster interaction between analytic

philosophers and theologians on topics of common interest. Registration is required for the conference, but is open to anyone who would like to attend. Please visit our website to register and to find further details.

### Research Initiatives

2013 marked the conclusion of our *Problem of Evil in Modern and Contemporary Thought* grant project. Over the past three years, this grant funded important new work on Leibniz's *Theodicy*, skeptical theism, and pain and the nature of minds. We held several major conferences and workshops, hosted a number of fellows, and funded important new translation projects. To date, the project has resulted in over 100 publications and presentations. We are grateful to the John Templeton Foundation for their generous support of this project.

Our other multi-year, Templeton-funded project, the *Analytic Theology Project* is set to conclude later this year. This project funds activities ranging from summer stipends and course grants to workshops and a residential fellowship program. One goal of the project is to promote analytic theology within broader theological and religious studies circles. To this end, the annual Analytic Theology Lecture in conjunction with AAR and SBL has been established. Over the past three years, Eleonore Stump (2011), Alan Torrance (2012), and Marilyn McCord Adams (2013) have delivered the lecture. Also, the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Analytic Theology* was published in 2013 ([journalofanalytictheology.com/jat/index.php/jat/index](http://journalofanalytictheology.com/jat/index.php/jat/index)). Along with our Center fellowship program, our research initiatives keep us at the forefront of research in philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. 

### New Major Grant on Hope and Optimism Awarded

WE ARE DELIGHTED to announce a new \$4.5 million dollar research initiative, *Hope and Optimism: Conceptual and Empirical Investigations*, with generous support from the John Templeton Foundation and additional support from Notre Dame and Cornell University. This three-year, interdisciplinary venture will bring together philosophers, theologians, and social scientists to deepen our understanding of hope and optimism. It will fund residential and non-residential fellowships, empirical research, two major conferences, writing projects by the Project Directors, and stage and screen competitions, among other activities. Project Directors are Samuel Newlands (Notre Dame) and Andrew Chignell (Cornell), a former fellow in the Center.

## Interdisciplinary Analytic Theology: An Interview with Trent Dougherty

UNDER THE AUSPICES of the Analytic Theology Cluster Grant program, interdisciplinary groups of philosophers and theologians convened to explore important topics at the intersection of analytic philosophy and theology. We are delighted to have one of our cluster group grant winners, Dr. Trent Dougherty (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Baylor University), discuss his group that was formed to explore the Atonement.

**Q: What was the topic of your cluster grant, what prominent themes did you discuss, and what sources did you consult?**

**A:** The topic was the doctrine of the Atonement. We chose this topic because it is a central doctrine of the Christian faith, and because it is one that can affect the way people live and worship. For my own part, forming my view of the Atonement—essentially that of Richard Swinburne—made the Liturgy mean so much more, as I re-enacted the Passover with Christ the Lamb.

We discussed theological texts from such disparate sources as Saint Thomas Aquinas and John Milbank, Saint Anselm, and Eleonore Stump. Reading sources from different eras and methods proved both



challenging and enlightening. Though of course much of what we discussed was the content of the readings, it is unsurprising that the

conversation of a group comprised of philosophers, theologians, and seminarians often turned to matters of method. Thus, we had many conversations on the ways of doing theology and how they are related.

**Q: The program aimed to bring analytic philosophers and theologians together in order to facilitate discussion on topics in Analytic Theology. Were there any challenges created by the interdisciplinary nature of these groups?**

A: The biggest challenge was that there are many different languages in which theology is practiced. This is a separate point from the observation that theology is done in different styles. Two individuals can do something in the same style and yet talk about it very differently. This can mislead the individuals into thinking they are doing something much more different from each other than they really are.

**Q: The program aimed to bring analytic philosophers and theologians together in order to facilitate discussion on topics in Analytic Theology. What were the benefits resulting from the interdisciplinary nature of these groups?**

A: The greatest benefit was simply that we were able to get theologians from the Religion department, the Philosophy department, and the Seminary all round one table on a regular basis. We were able to make strides in learning the dialects and practices of various academic sub-disciplines which all have significantly intersecting ambitions.

**Q: What kind of feedback have you received from group participants?**

A: It varied by user, of course. Some were unconvinced of the viability of analytic theology and made that

known. Others said they had come to see analytic theology in a new, more positive light. But to return to the theme from above, everyone said they valued the experiment, and most were ready to participate in more cross-departmental dialogue.

**Q: Have any publications resulted from group discussions?**

A: None to date, but there are at least three manuscripts that are in preparation. There is no question that ideas were fostered. I hope to encourage these manuscripts through to publication, and I certainly hope to continue the conversations from which they sprang.

**Q: Where can we go from here in order to encourage future interaction between analytic philosophers and theologians on topics in Analytic Theology?**

A: That is a key question. In my experience both in the seminar and at similar forums, there still needs to be considerable dialogue about method in theology. I have met a number of

theologians in Religion departments who think the analytic theologians think that analytic theology is the only worthwhile kind of theology. On the contrary, we are really only trying to get a place at the table among other methods, to be recognized by the wider theological community as a legitimate option. We tend to think that this option is importantly related to medieval ways of doing theology. In addition to continuing to talk explicitly about theological method, I think we need to continue to read texts together. This is also different than doing theology as such. I think doing theology is subsequent to reading texts, though of course we bring our philosophical and theological commitments to the reading of a text, and our thoughts are affected as we read. Still, the way we, say, "work through" a text, is work we do in preparation for doing theology, and people do this in very different ways. We would benefit, I think, from learning to be able to read the same text in different ways. 🙌





# Religion for Atheists

Natalja Deng

BEING AT THE Center for Philosophy of Religion as a Research Fellow this year has been a wonderful and unique opportunity. Here, I'll share with you some of the questions that have occupied me and that continue to occupy me. In particular, I've wondered how one might make sense of a position called religious fictionalism, as well as related approaches to religious language.

Fictionalism is a position with interesting historical roots in figures and movements as diverse as Renaissance, astronomy, Kant, Bentham, Nietzsche and Vaihinger. The form in which fictionalism is currently thriving across different areas of philosophy emerged in 1980 with the publication of Bas van Fraassen's *The Scientific Image* and Hartry Field's *Science Without Numbers*. Field held that mathematics doesn't have to be true to be good, and van Fraassen held that science doesn't aim at truth but at empirical adequacy. The thought they share is that a particular domain of enquiry does not or need not aim at truth, but only at producing theories with certain 'virtues' that are independent of truth and falsity. Could something like this be applied to religion? Can we think of religion as a domain of enquiry that need not aim at truth, but only at producing claims with truth-independent virtues?

One might think that it's not clear whether religion can be thought of as a domain of enquiry. But then again, religious claims are put forth as objects suited to refinement and criticism. They are not usually thought of as mere stories, representations that aren't subject to truth-based

norms. Often, they are used as reasons for theoretical and practical decisions.

Can we think of religion as a domain of enquiry that need not aim at truth, but only at producing claims with truth-independent virtues?

One might even doubt whether it makes sense to speak of religious claims, and to enquire into the meaning of religious language. Wittgenstein famously claimed that a religious believer who asserts, "There will be a Last Judgment," is not contradicted by a non-believer who denies it. Of course it is very plausible that context matters to meaning. But it does seem as if we can identify sentences with a religious subject matter, and in fact it is just such sentences that Wittgenstein focuses on when discussing religious discourse. Moreover, if the meaning of religious sentences varied widely from context to context, it is hard to see how they could be used to communicate at all.

Even if it makes sense to enquire into the meaning of religious language, one might hold, contra fictionalists, that religious claims don't aim to describe the world. Rather, religious utterances are more like commands or practical recommendations than descriptions of the world. Or they might express desire-like mental states towards non-religious contents.

But suppose that at least some religious claims aim to describe the world. Are some of them claims about a supernatural reality, such as a divine being? This, too has been denied, and in interesting ways. Theologians such as Rudolf Bultmann have offered anthropological re-interpretations of theological discourse. However, what motivates the fictionalist is the sense that this may not be applicable across the board. What are the naturalistic truth conditions for 'he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end'? Perhaps at least some religious claims say just what they seem to – they describe the world



IMAGE: DAN CALLIS



IMAGE: TUDOR REBENGUIC

as being just the way they seem to describe it as being.

Suppose you agree with this. Moreover, suppose that you feel a certain affinity with some religious tradition, but that you don't believe, and even disbelieve, that religion's claims. Then you will be attracted to fictionalism. Peter Lipton has made a suggestion along fictionalist lines, which he calls 'the immersion solution'. He suggests that one can commit oneself to using a religious text like the Bible as a tool for thought, a way of thinking about the world, one's life and one's attitudes. He admits that this amounts to treating the Bible as something like a novel. But doing so, he thinks, can offer more benefits than even the most enthusiastic book club. He thinks that much of the value of religion lies in intense and communal engagement with

religious texts and religious practices and in a kind of identification and solidarity with members of one's religious community.

This is, I think, an intriguing position, but it raises as many questions as it answers. Can there really be solidarity between fictionalists and non-fictionalist members of religious communities? If the fictionalist doesn't make his disbelief known, others will reasonably take him to be a believer. That looks like deception. Moreover, insofar as the benefits the fictionalist wants to reap depend on the unity of the community, the fictionalist has a strong motive not to make his disbelief known.

Furthermore, what exactly goes through the fictionalist's mind when he engages in religious practice? Suppose he reads a passage whose metaphysical presuppositions, as an

atheist, he rejects. Can he 'struggle' with the material in the way a believer might? Can he learn from it in the way one might learn from literature? Or suppose he takes part in a religious ritual. Does he have to deceive himself in order to fully 'immerse' himself in an illusion? Or is this no more puzzling than deliberately engaging in a 'game' of make-believe, like children do?

What exactly goes through the fictionalist's mind when he engages in religious practice? ... [I]s this no more puzzling than deliberately engaging in a 'game' of make-believe, like children do?

These questions connect philosophy of religion with lots of other areas of philosophy, including not only metaphysics but also philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, meta-ethics, and aesthetics. I'll close with a remark by Simon Blackburn on the potential benefits of religion without ontology. He's pessimistic about the prospects of actually effecting such a change, and he's probably right, but still: "This might leave the best parts: the social solidarity, the ritual, the confronting of human verities, the communions with the self, piety towards passed generations, resignation or humility in the face of the cosmos, the music and the poetry, celebrations of human reason and science, engagement in the here and now of human life and experience." 



# Of Cats, Values, and Cognition

Stephen Wykstra



IMAGE: RENEE BOLINGER

I'M AMAZED at the group of scholars at the Center this year, and very glad to be one of them. The ways our projects intersect, and our different ways of approaching the issues, are stimulating and illuminating. Our personal interactions—in daily encounters at the Center, in the Friday morning seminar, and in our spirited “Pub Night” gatherings—bring both warmth and light.

My research proposal for the year

had the somewhat inscrutable title “*Probability, Personhood, and Mystery: Diffident Theism and the Probability of Versioning*.” If that puts you off, it probably won’t immediately help to quote from my first sentence:

*My aim is . . . to bring into more explicit relationship the role of ‘personhood’ in holding together the poles of ‘probability’ and ‘mystery’ in human cognition.*

Let me try to explain this to *myself* again! Over the past thirty-five years, my work has been—about equally—in philosophy (and history) of science, philosophy of religion, and epistemology. My underlying concern has been to understand the relation between “cognition” in science and in religion. Perhaps I can put the concern this way: In both science and religion, we form hunches, guesses, hopes, beliefs, and convictions about how reality is. Let’s

lump all these under the heading of “cognition.” When reflecting on cognition in science and in religion, many of us find ourselves thinking two things. First, we’d like cognition in both domains to move us toward important truths—toward having progressively truer beliefs about things that matter. In part, that means learning to form beliefs in a way that is “reasonable” or “rational”—a way that takes appropriate evidence seriously. This is the “probabilistic” (or “evidential”) pole of human cognition.”

But we also (many of us) find a compelling “*mystery*” pole to reckon with. We’re struck by how reality tends to elude our best efforts to conceptually corral it in, how it regularly tends to shatter the best theoretical boxes we devise for it. So probability and mystery are like two magnetic poles: there is a strong tension between them. Within this tension the challenge, individually and communally, is to work out our questions and beliefs without getting stuck to either pole and without getting pulled apart, torn asunder . . . *polarized*.

But how? What holds the two poles together—or more precisely, what holds us, caught between them, together? The hunch I’m trying to pursue is that personhood—ours and God’s—is what holds things together.

And what is “personhood”—what is it to be a person? C.S. Lewis touches on this in *Mere Christianity*. He suggests that a person (or “mind”) is something that has awareness, forms intentions, and has values—that is, something that “can prefer one thing over another.” To this, the late Richard Jeffrey, drawing on Harry Frankfurt, adds this: persons—human persons, he means—have “higher-order preferences,” or *meta*-preferences. For example, one might (like Jeffrey) strongly prefer smoking cigarettes to



IMAGE: REBECCA HENRIKSEN

chewing gum, but wish one didn’t, and so also have a strong higher order meta-preference to prefer chewing gum over smoking cigarettes. Jeffrey thought that only humans have such second-order preferences: “My late cat,” he wrote, “clearly preferred milk to water on various occasions, but that was surely the end of it.”

Now Jeffrey—specializing in decision theory—puts all this in terms of preferences. But to *prefer*, I’m thinking, is not quite the same as to *value*. Jeffrey, as cancer took its toll, wrote of “dying of a surfeit of Pall Malls.” Even then it’s possible (it’s true of some persons; whether for him I have no idea) that a preference for one more Pall Mall steamrolled his wiser meta-preference. If so, should we say that he *valued* smoking those cigarettes? I don’t think so. Valuing—the *deep* valuing that is essential to *human* personhood—engages our capacity to reflect on our preferences, to grope our way to meta-preferences, and to wrestle, as Jacob wrestled with that angel of God, with the stubborn dissonances that result. When preference and meta-preference conflict, either (or both) may have gone wrong; what we *value* reflects some measure of harmony wrested out of the conflict. From this we may in God’s grace get some notes right, but even so we—like Jacob—often walk away limping.

Jeffrey’s cat, I imagine, knows nothing of this. She prefers, but she does not *value*. She never limps.

So my project this year is to explore how human personhood—with its capacity for valuing—is central to those cognitive journeys that, in science and religion, evolve within the tension between probability and mystery. This central role of personhood is intimated by the personal dimension that enriches our communal research together at the Center. In many small ways, our interactions are graced with intimations of that *perechories*—that divine dance of mutual valuing among the Persons of the Triune God—which is the foundation of all personhood, all community, and all cognition. 🙏



# WHY FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION?



## FEATURE INTERVIEW

*Pamela Sue Anderson talks with us about her work in feminist philosophy of religion*

**Q: What is feminist philosophy of religion?**

A: In the past sixteen years 'feminist' has been adopted by the mass media to describe a problematic group of women (and some men) who are accused of, for example, 'trying to destroy the family'. Such a pejorative connotation has been unfair both to self-confessed feminists and to those women who are struggling with genuine issues in philosophy, which are most accurately identified as feminist. Because of this ambiguity, I have thought of referring instead to 'gender in philosophy of religion' for what these women have in mind. And yet, prior to its pejorative use, feminist had been positively employed to describe a new field within contemporary philosophy of religion. Along with other women philosophers like Grace M. Jantzen in 1998, I helped to break new philosophical ground, publishing *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion: the Rationality and Myths of Religious Belief*. So, I would never want to jettison the term which enabled philosophers to identify significant questions for women. Feminism in philosophy of religion has made real philosophical achievements, notably new ways of looking at philosophy that unearths gender bias.

**Q: What first made you interested in feminist philosophy of religion?**

A: A passion for seeking truth and preserving rationality generated my initial interest in feminist philosophy. It quickly became clear that a philosophical question concerning

Why shouldn't rationality apply to women who do not try to get away from their bodies?

the rationality of belief was shared by feminist epistemologists and philosophy of religion in the 1980s: but the two gave very different answers. Christian philosophy of religion assumed a narrow definition

of what is 'rational': rationality was defined by what it excluded; and these were things largely associated with women such as bodily life and desire. In contrast, the 'man of reason' had the attributes of clarity, logical rigour and dispassionate thinking. The feminist critique of the 'man of reason' reveals the attributes which restricted the role and use of reason to superior, white, Christian (Protestant) men: that is, to patriarchs! The initial response of philosophers to such criticism was to assert categorically that the attributes of men in analytic philosophy were gender neutral. Feminist critiques of the man of reason were followed by attempts to expand reason's domain to include the messy dimensions of bodily life. Why shouldn't rationality apply to women who do not try to get away from their bodies?

**Q: Why has philosophy of religion been particularly male dominant?**

A: Because the hard core of this branch is patriarchal. Giving supreme perfection, and so authority, to the ideal of reason ensures the man has his ultimate gender ideal: the omni-perfect Father/God. Often there is still *no* awareness among philosophers of religion that their ideal is problematic; and this is re-enforced



IMAGE: JONATHAN ANDERSON

by divine, omni-perfect attributes; the latter serve as the core concepts and central topics in philosophy of religion. So, this patriarchal ideal ensures the dominant authority of men who remain blinded by their vision of perfection, unaware of the implications for the 'rationality' of their beliefs concerning women, as well as non-patriarchal men.

**Q: What do you think is feminist philosophy of religion's most important contribution to philosophy of religion?**

A: Its most important contribution is raising awareness of ethical and political issues in philosophy of religion. This contribution was and is ground-breaking because previously philosophers had no rational means to recognize their own gender and sexual biases. From what I have already said, you will realize that overconfidence in the man of reason, in his rationality and truth, is a form of collective self-deception in the field.

**Q: What is a topic you see in a new way because of feminist philosophy of religion?**

A: The problem of evil is a topic I have seen in a new way because of feminist philosophy of religion. One of the biggest issues for 'the' problem of evil in Anglo-American philosophy of religion has been the ease with which it overlooked the evil that allowed men to treat women as lesser beings, across the whole of human history, simply because they were not men. Feminist philosophy of religion makes this obvious and evils far more concrete. Innocent suffering and its ratification by theodicies and other philosophical defenses have been given decisive critiques by feminist philosophers – many of whom called themselves post-Christian feminist philosophers.

If God is omni-perfect, why has half of the human race been treated unequally? Whether we think of female fetuses being aborted precisely because they are female, not male, or think of any sex crime, the legacy of patriarchal rule over women and non-patriarchal men leaves a wake of inexplicable injustice. 'Why do the innocent suffer' might be given a philosophical justification, but when it comes to females who suffer for no other reason than they are born female, any 'rational' defence gives an additional reason for patriarchal man to justify his gratuitous violence against innocent women which, in light of human history, will always be out of proportion to the rest of humanity.

**Q: Does philosophy of religion have room for new minority perspectives?**

A: Yes, and I think that queer theory has a particular role to play in transforming the field. Today feminist philosophers religion

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embrace perspectives which have been excluded by the dominant. This is obvious in contributions of gay men to feminist philosophy of religion, helping to unearth hard-core sexism in Christian philosophy. Mixing patriarchal conceptions of philosophical reason and masculine exclusions of bodily life is apparent in the devaluation of non-heterosexual bodies. Like female bodies, gay bodies are bracketed off from philosophical rationality as if abject and defiled and so, failing to achieve the patriarchal ideal of an omni-perfect being. It is as if sex and

gender mire their subjects in irrationality.

To be fair, the deliberate sex-blindness of Christian philosophy of religion may have been assumed as the way to be unbiased. However, this can no longer be a valid assumption in philosophy with the intervention by feminist and queer theorists. In excluding from 'reason' questions of bodily matters and of non-straight categories, traditional philosophy of religion turned gay philosophers to feminist philosophy of religion. Today women, whether heterosexual or lesbian, gain a great deal of new insight for feminist philosophy of religion from gay men and other male feminists!

**Q: What, for you, is the most interesting question that feminist philosophers of religion think about?**

A: A most interesting question is epistemic injustice. Wrongful treatment of women is apparent in their exclusions as subjects of knowledge and as subjects of their own experiences: social markers and meanings have left women in spheres of unintelligibility. This influences the way that we practice philosophy. Who is treated as intelligible in philosophy of religion? Those who fail to find the words to express themselves as women in philosophy recognize that their social experiences are unintelligible because of the dominant philosophical norms and concepts. This is how and why feminist philosophers (of religion) seek new ways to make sense of our epistemic practices. 🙌



## MEET THE CENTER: 2013-2014 Center Fellows



### **William J. Abraham** — *Templeton Analytic Theology Research Fellow*

William J. Abraham is the Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies at Southern Methodist University. From the beginning his work in theology has been deeply informed by his formation in the analytic tradition of Anglo-American philosophy. He is currently embarked on a multi-volume work on divine agency and divine action. His present focus is on taking soundings across the history of Christian theology which examine how various theologians and philosophers presented their views on divine agency and divine action.



### **Natalja Deng** — *Research Fellow*

Natalja Deng originally studied natural sciences at Cambridge, and later philosophy at Oxford. In her PhD thesis ('Time, Experience, and the A versus B-debate'), directed by Oliver Pooley, she defends the view that B-theorists of time can allow for passage by identifying it with succession. Before coming to Notre Dame, she was a postdoc at Eidos, the Genevan Centre for Metaphysics. Her interests include philosophy of religion, metaphysics, philosophy of science, and aesthetics.



### **Evan Fales** — *Research Fellow*

Evan Fales comes to the Center to work on a book concerning interpretation of sacred texts. It will address problems in the justification of interpretive methods, discuss the contributions anthropology can make, and use those methods to interpret illustrative texts. His previous work in philosophy of religion includes articles on the problem of evil, divine command theory, divine freedom, Reformed epistemology, the evidential import of mystical experiences, and a book, *Divine Intervention: Metaphysical and Epistemological Puzzles*.



### **Ross Inman** — *Templeton Analytic Theology Research Fellow*

Ross Inman recently completed his Ph.D. in philosophy at Trinity College, Dublin. His dissertation is titled *Substantial Priority: An Essay in Fundamental Mereology* and broadly serves to explicate and defend a metaphysical grounding-based conception of the part-whole structure of substances. His research to date has focused primarily on themes in metaphysics and has appeared in *Philosophical Studies*, *Metaphysica*, and *Philosophia Christi*. Ross and his wife Suzanne, who are high school sweethearts, will celebrate their eighth year of marriage this summer.



### **Samuel Lebens** — *Research Fellow*

Samuel Lebens wrote his Ph.D. thesis on Bertrand Russell's *Multiple Relation Theory of Judgement* at Birkbeck College in the University of London and received Orthodox Rabbinic ordination in Israel. He is working on a project that examines how popular approaches in the metaphysics of content would react to the presence of irreducible metaphor as can be found, he argues, in religious language. Besides this project, he is working on hassidic metaphysics, and the nature of revelation.

### **Carl Mosser — *Visitor***

Carl Mosser is on leave from Eastern University where he is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies. Last year he was an Analytic Theology Research Fellow and is staying on as a visiting scholar to continue work on the epistemology of biblical scholarship and the possibility of a distinctively Christian approach to historical criticism. His other research interests include the Second Temple Jewish context of the New Testament, the epistle to the Hebrews, Christian doctrines of deification, and Mormonism.



### **Ryan Mullins — *Templeton Analytic Theology Research Fellow***

Ryan Mullins (Ph.D. University of St Andrews) has expertise in philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, and systematic theology. His research primarily focuses on the nature of God and the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. He is currently writing a monograph on God, time, and eternity. He has published on topics such as disability theology and the resurrection, divine eternity, divine simplicity, and the philosophy of time.



### **Bertrand Rickenbacher — *Visitor***

Bertrand Rickenbacher comes from Switzerland where he teaches Philosophy and French Literature. He is interested in questions that articulate philosophy and theology, and his research is aimed at exploring the possibility of developing a theological and philosophical case for a realist conception of theological discourse.



### **Philip Swenson — *Visiting Graduate Fellow***

Philip Swenson is a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at the University of California-Riverside. He does research in Ethics (including applied), Metaphysics, Agency, Philosophy of Religion and Political Philosophy. He is currently completing a dissertation on free will and moral responsibility in which he defends incompatibilism about responsibility and determinism. His research in philosophy of religion includes work on the existence of God and on the freedom and foreknowledge problem.



### **Stephen Wykstra — *Alvin Plantinga Fellow***

After studying physics and philosophy at Hope College, Steve did his Ph.D. at Pittsburgh in History and Philosophy of Science. After five years at the University of Tulsa, he was hired at Calvin—as (he jokes) their “token evidentialist.” This year he is drawing on history of science, social epistemology, and theology of personhood so as to develop and integrate his versions of sensible communitarian evidentialism and skeptical theism. Steve’s hobbies include chess, blues harp, tai chi, Chinese cooking, and windsurfing.



## MEET THE CENTER: 2013-2014 Center Staff



**Robin Dembroff**

**Graduate Student  
Research Assistant**



**Kate Finley**

**Graduate Student  
Research Assistant**



**Samuel Newlands**

**Director of Research;  
William J. and Dorothy K.  
O'Neill Associate Professor  
of Philosophy**



**Michael Rea**

**Director; Professor of Philosophy**



**Joshua Seachris**

**Program Director**



**Joyce Zurawski**

**Administrative Assistant**

### Center Announcements

- *May 8-10, 2014: Logos 2014 "The Atonement"*
- *\$4.5 million awarded for research initiative: "Hope and Optimism: Conceptual and Empirical Investigations"*
- *New - Center Video Content [philreligion.nd.edu/videos](http://philreligion.nd.edu/videos)*
- *New - Philosophy of Religion Global Calendar*
- *Journal of Analytic Theology launches [www.journalofanalytictheology.com](http://www.journalofanalytictheology.com)*
- *February 1, 2015: Application Deadline for Center Fellowships*

*For more information about these and other Center announcements, please visit: [philreligion.nd.edu](http://philreligion.nd.edu)*

# God and Time

Ryan Mullins

MY DESIRE as an analytic theologian is to use the best philosophical tools available today to defend, articulate, and explore the historic Christian faith. In particular, I wish to examine the classical understanding of God and the God-world relationship. This involves a deep engagement with the Christian tradition's understanding of God, creation, and incarnation. During my time at the Center for Philosophy of Religion, I will be developing a book length examination, and refutation, of the classical understanding of the Christian God as timeless, simple, immutable, and impassible.

By way of a sneak peek, here are some of the highlights. To say that God is timeless is to say that God exists without beginning, without end, and without succession or change. Classical Christian theology was historically, by and large, committed to a relational theory of time. If there is a change, there is a time. If a thing undergoes any intrinsic or extrinsic change, that thing is temporal. According to classical Christian theology, God is strongly immutable in that He does not undergo any intrinsic or extrinsic changes. As such, God does not undergo any succession. So God is timeless.

There is an interesting feature of classical Christian theology that has often been overlooked in contemporary discussions. Classical theology was, historically, committed to a presentist ontology of time, and an endurantist theory of identity through time. On presentism, only the present moment of time exists. The past no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist. On endurantism, objects persist through time

by existing as a whole, or all at once. When classical theology came to articulate God's eternity, theologians would often say that God exists as a whole, or all at once, in a timeless present. Our present is fleeting and temporal in that it has a before and after. God's present, they would say, is timeless since it lacks a before and after.

Classical Christian theologians were aware of a whole host of problems that arose from their commitment to presentism combined with various Christian doctrines like creation *ex nihilo*, divine sustaining of the universe, providence, omniscience, the incarnation, and divine grace. Focus on creation *ex nihilo* for the moment. Classical Christians held that the universe was not co-eternal with God. There was a state of affairs where God existed without creation, and a state of affairs where God existed with creation. It looks as if God goes from not creating to creating. How does God not change in the act of creating the universe? This problem for the combination of divine timelessness with creation

*ex nihilo* was so obvious that pagan philosophers like Proclus would criticize Christians for having a mutable and temporal God. For Proclus, Christians should give up the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* in order to maintain divine timelessness.

The contemporary debate over God and time has come to a similar worry. In the recent discussions it is widely assumed that if presentism is true, God cannot be timeless. For Proclus and classical Christian theology, a mutable and temporal God is seen to be less than perfect. This intuition about perfection is no longer widely assumed. Divine temporalists wish to say that the perfect God is mutable and temporal. However, not all Christian theologians agree. There are a significant number of theologians who wish to maintain the belief that only the timeless God can be perfect. So what is the proponent of divine timelessness to do?

The standard move now is to abandon presentism, and adopt eternalism. If eternalism is true, so the argument goes, God can be



timeless. On eternalism, the past, present and future equally exist. Further, God and the universe are co-eternal. There is never a state of affairs where God exists without the universe. Hence, the problem from creation *ex nihilo* does not arise.

Within the contemporary dialectic, the temporalists will concede that God can be timeless if eternalism is true. However, she will go on to argue that eternalism is false, and that presentism is true. The defender of divine timelessness will then seek to refute presentism, and defend eternalism. This is where most of the contemporary work is being done.

I wish to mention two things that I find lacking in the contemporary debate. One, what are the consequences of eternalism for systematic theology? Philosophers of religion who defend eternalism and divine timelessness have not done enough work to develop Christian

doctrine on an eternalist picture. Analytic theologians cannot be content to merely defend divine timelessness. If they wish to defend divine timelessness, they must develop a thoroughgoing Christian theology on an eternalist ontology of time. It is not clear to me that eternalism is desirable for Christian theology, but that conversation must be had another day. Second, given this lack of well-developed Christian theology on eternalism, it is not clear to me that eternalism is compatible with divine timelessness. On eternalism, the Christian God is still intimately related to, and actively involved in, the temporal universe. What seems to have been overlooked by contemporary philosophers of religion is that eternalism is still a theory on time, and typically includes a particular understanding of change. So the question, "How can a timeless God interact with a temporal and changing universe?" is still a live question on eternalism. As I see it, if

eternalism is true, God will be temporal as understood on eternalism.

A lot more needs to be said about how to fill out this picture, but that is precisely the sort of work that analytic theologians are cut out for. The future of analytic theology, it seems to me, depends on being able to bridge the gap between contemporary philosophy of religion, on the one hand, and systematic and historical theology on the other. What is needed is a deep understanding of the systematic connections between various Christian doctrines, and how to use the best conceptual tools available to sort out these doctrines. 



## Moral and Political Philosophy Comes to Philosophy of Religion

Jim Sterba

IN RECENT YEARS, discussion of the problem of evil has been advanced by utilizing resources of contemporary metaphysics and epistemology, for example, Alvin Plantinga's application of modal logic to the logical problem of evil and William Rowe and Stephen Wykstra's application of probabilistic epistemology to the evidential problem of evil. The results have been impressive. What is a bit surprising, however, is that philosophers currently working on the problem of evil have yet to avail themselves of relevant resources from contemporary moral theory that could similarly advance the discussion of the problem.

That was the assessment I reached

when I was looking for a new research project after the publication of my last book in moral and political philosophy, *From Rationality to Equality* (Oxford, 2013). About the same time, I discovered that the John Templeton Foundation was interested in funding research that encouraged experts in one area of knowledge to take into account the relevant work of experts in another area of knowledge. Happily, that was exactly what my project proposed to do.

Yet what work in contemporary moral theory were philosophers of religion failing to take into account? Well, among contemporary philosophers of religion working on the problem of evil, there is no discussion of the

doctrine of double effect, or whether the ends justify the means, or how to resolve hypothetical trolley cases

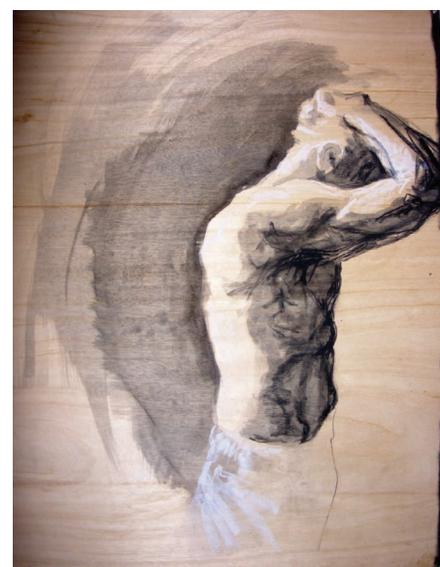


IMAGE: RENEE BOLINGER

that have become the grist for moral philosophers ever since they were introduced by Judith Thompson and Philippa Foot. Even though contemporary cognitive psychologists now regularly employ hypothetical trolley cases to determine what parts of the brain are involved in the making of moral judgments, contemporary philosophers of religion have yet to recognize the relevance of such cases to the problem of evil.

What is particularly surprising, given that most of the defenders of theism in this debate are self-identified Christian philosophers, is that the central underlying element in the doctrine of double effect, what has been called the Pauline principle – ‘Never do evil that good may come of it’ – has been virtually ignored by contemporary philosophers of religion despite its relevance to the problem of evil. Thus, while the principle has been a mainstay of religious ethics at least since the time of Aquinas, (notice, for example, the fundamental role it plays in the natural law ethics of Notre Dame’s John Finnis) contemporary philosophers of religion have simply ignored it when evaluating the goods and evils that are at stake with regard to the argument from evil. Rather, they have focused on the total amount of good or evil in the world or on particular horrendous evils and whether those evils can be compensated for. There is also an intertwining discussion of trolley cases with the Pauline principle, which underlies the doctrine of double effect in contemporary moral theory, and which is ignored by contemporary philosophers of religion when they seek to morally evaluate the problem of evil. Even more recently, I discovered that there is relevant work in contemporary political philosophy, in particular, an account of liberty or freedom relevant to the Free-Will Defense of evil in the



IMAGE: RACHEL TITRIGA

world—a defense that is endorsed by many contemporary philosophers of religion.

Today, no one working on the problem of evil ever imagines backing away from the advances that Plantinga made by applying modal logic to the logical problem of evil or the advances that Rowe and Wykstra made by applying probabilistic epistemology to the evidential problem of evil. All now can agree that these advances have undeniably improved our understanding of the problem of evil. Could it be then that by bringing to bear the untapped resources of contemporary moral and political theory on the problem of evil, there would be a similar advance in our understanding of the problem?

In addition to funding my own research to attempt to answer this

question, the Templeton Foundation has also funded two mini-conferences and provided stipends for two graduate students to explore this question. At the first conference, Marilyn Adams, Stephen Wykstra and Linda Zagzebski addressed the question. This year, March 21-22, John Hare, Laura Garcia and Stephen Maitzen will also address the same question, but they have the benefit of having the papers and a video recording of the first conference. Nevin Climenhaga and Meg Schmitt, who are helping me run the conferences, are also working on projects related to the central question of my Templeton project. Hopefully, with all this effort, we will be able to come up with an answer to this central question of my Templeton project that will enable us all to move closer to a fully adequate solution to the problem of evil. 



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