

Chapter 1 : Glossary of spirituality terms - Wikipedia

the theory that scientific discoveries prove the existence of an all-encompassing creator because of the perfect order and complexities of life liberal taking a flexible, non-dogmatic approach to religion.

The renewal of religious life during the past twenty years has been in many respects an experience of faith. Courageous and generous efforts have been made to explore prayerfully and deeply what it means to live consecrated life according to the Gospel, the founding charism of a religious institute, and the signs of the times. Religious institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate have tried, in addition, to meet the changes required by the rapidly evolving societies to which they are sent and by the developments in communication which affect their possibilities of evangelization. At the same time, these institutes have been dealing with sudden shifts in their own internal situations: The result has been an understandably mixed experience with many positive aspects and some which raise important questions. Now, with the ending of the period of special experimentation mandated by *Ecclesiae Sanctae II*, many religious institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate are reviewing their experience. With the approval of their revised constitutions and the coming into effect of the newly formulated Code of Canon Law, they are moving into a new phase of their history. At this point of new beginning, they hear the repeated pastoral call of Pope John Paul II to evaluate objectively and humbly the years of experimentation so as to recognize their positive elements and their deviations to International Union of Women Superiors General ; to Major Superiors of Men and Women Religious in France, Religious superiors and chapters have asked this Sacred Congregation for directives as they assess the recent past and look toward the future. Bishops, too, because of their special responsibility for fostering religious life, have asked for counsel. In view of the importance of these developments, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, at the direction of the Holy Father, has prepared this text of principles and fundamental norms. Most recently, its doctrinal richness has been distilled and reflected in the revised Code of Canon Law. All these texts build on the rich patrimony of pre-conciliar teaching to deepen and refine a theology of religious life which has developed consistently down the centuries. Religious life itself is a historical as well as a theological reality. The lived experience, today as in the past, is varied and this is important. At the same time, experience is a dimension which needs to be tested in relation to the Gospel foundation, the magisterium of the Church, and the approved constitutions of an institute. The Church regards certain elements as essential to religious life: Historical and cultural changes bring about evolution in the lived reality, but the forms and direction that the evolution takes are determined by the essential elements without which religious life loses its identity. In the present text addressed to institutes dedicated to apostolic works this Sacred Congregation confines itself to a clarification and re-statement of these essential elements. Consecration is the basis of religious life. By insisting on this, the Church places the first emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls a person whom he sets apart for a particular dedication to himself. At the same time, he offers the grace to respond so that consecration is expressed on the human side by a profound and free self-surrender. The resulting relationship is pure gift. Jesus himself is the one whom the Father consecrated and sent in a supreme way cf. He sums up all the consecrations of the old law, which foreshadowed his own, and in him is consecrated the new People of God, henceforth mysteriously united to him. By baptism, Jesus shares his life with each Christian. Each is sanctified in the Son. Each is called to holiness. Each is sent to share the mission of Christ and is given the capacity to grow in the love and service of the Lord. This baptismal gift is the fundamental Christian consecration and is the root of all others. Jesus lived his own consecration precisely as Son of God: These aspects of his life as Son are shared by all Christians. To some, however, for the sake of all, God gives the gift of a closer following of Christ in his poverty, chastity, and obedience through a public profession of these counsels mediated by the Church. This profession, in imitation of Christ, manifests a particular consecration which is "rooted in that of baptism and is a fuller expression of it" PC 5. The fuller expression recalls the hold of the divine person of the Word over the human nature which he assumed and it invites a response like that of Jesus: Such a consecration is a gift of God: When

consecration by profession of the counsels is affirmed as a definitive response to God in a public commitment taken before the Church, it belongs to the life and holiness of the Church cf. It is the Church which authenticates the gift and which mediates the consecration. Christians so consecrated strive to live now what will be in the after-life. Such a life "more fully manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below" LG In this manner these Christians "give outstanding and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes" LG Union with Christ by consecration through profession of the counsels can be lived in the midst of the world, translated in the work of the world, and expressed by means of the world. This is the special vocation of the secular institutes, defined by Pius XII as "consecrated to God and to others" in the world and "by means of the world" *Primo feliciter*, V and II. Of themselves, the counsels do not necessarily separate people from the world. In fact, it is a gift of God to the Church that consecration through profession of the counsels can take the form of a life to be lived as a hidden leaven. Christians so consecrated continue the work of salvation by communicating the love of Christ through their presence in the world and through its sanctification from within. Their style of life and presence are not distinguished externally from those of their fellow Christians. Their witness is given in their ordinary environment of life. This discreet form of witness flows from the very nature of their secular vocation and is part of the way that their consecration is meant to be lived cf. Such is not the case, however, with those whose consecration by the profession of the counsels constitutes them as religious. The very nature of religious vocation involves a public witness to Christ and to the Church. Religious profession is made by vows which the Church receives as public. A stable form of community life in an institute canonically erected by the competent ecclesiastical authority manifests in a visible way the covenant and communion which religious life expresses. A certain separation from family and from professional life at the time a person enters the novitiate speaks powerfully of the absoluteness of God. At the same time, it is the beginning of a new and deeper bond in Christ with the family that one has left. A further aspect of the public nature of religious consecration is that the apostolate of religious is in some sense always corporate. Religious presence is visible, affecting ways of acting, attire, and style of life. Religious consecration is lived within a given institute according to constitutions which the Church, by her authority, accepts and approves. This means that consecration is lived according to specific provisions which manifest and deepen a distinctive identity. Looking at the numerous religious families, one is struck by the wide variety of founding gifts. The Council laid stress on the need to foster these as so many gifts of God cf. In the case of institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate, religious consecration has a further note: *Perfectae Caritatis* recalls that the very nature of these institutes requires "apostolic activity and charitable services" PC 8. By the fact of their consecration, the members are dedicated to God and available to be sent. Their vocation implies the active proclamation of the Gospel through "works of charity that are entrusted to the institute by the Church and are to be performed in her name" PC 8. For this reason, the apostolic activity of such institutes is not simply a human effort to do good but "an action that is deeply ecclesial" EN It is rooted in union with the Christ who was sent by the Father to do his work. It expresses a consecration by God which sends the religious to serve Christ in his members in concrete ways cf. EN 69 corresponding to the founding gift of the institute cf. Consecration by public vows It is proper, though not exclusive, to religious life to profess the evangelical counsels by vows which the Church receives. These are a response to the prior gift of God which, being a gift of love, cannot be rationalized. It is something that God himself works in the person he has chosen. As a response to the gift of God, the vows are a triple expression of a single "yes" to the one relationship of total consecration. They are the act by which the religious "makes himself or herself over to God in a new and special way" LG Two reasons prompt this dedication: ET 7 ; and second, a desire to be consecrated in a more total way to the service of God cf. The vows themselves "show forth the unbreakable bond that exists between Christ and his bride the Church. The vows themselves are specific: Each emphasizes a relation to Jesus, consecrated and sent. He was rich but became poor for our sakes, emptying himself, and having nowhere to lay his head. He loved with an undivided heart, universally, and to the end. He came to do the will of the Father who sent him, and he did it steadily, learning obedience through suffering, and becoming a cause of salvation for all who obey. The distinguishing mark of the religious institute is found in the way in

which these values of Christ are visibly expressed. For this reason, the content of the vows in each institute, as expressed in its constitutions, must be clear and unambiguous. The religious foregoes the free use and disposal of his or her property, depends through the lawful superior on the institute for the provision of material goods, puts gifts and all salaries in common as belonging to the community, and accepts and contributes to a simple manner of life. He or she undertakes to live chastity by a new title, that of the vow, and to live it in consecrated celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom. This implies a manner of life that is a convincing and credible witness to a total dedication to chastity and which foregoes any behavior, personal relationships, and forms of recreation incompatible with this. The religious is pledged to obey the directives of lawful superiors according to the constitutions of the institute and further accepts a particular obedience to the Holy Father in virtue of the vow of obedience. Implicit in the commitment to the institute which the vows include is the pledge to live a common life in communion with the brothers or sisters of the community. The religious undertakes to live in fidelity to the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute as expressed in its constitutions, proper law, and sound traditions. There is also the willing undertaking of a life of radical and continuous conversion as demanded by the Gospel, further specified in the content of each of the vows. Consecration through profession of the evangelical counsels in religious life necessarily inspires a way of living which has a social impact. Social protest is not the purpose of the vows, but there is no doubt that the living of them has always offered a witness to values which challenge society just as they challenge the religious themselves. Communion in community Religious consecration establishes a particular communion between religious and God and, in him, between the members of the same institute. This is the basic element in the unity of an institute.

Chapter 2 : Course: PHIL Existentialism

The contemplative dimension, then, shows that religious life in all its forms not only does not alienate religious from other human beings and make them useless for human society but, on the contrary, permits them to be present to their brothers and sisters in a deeper way in the charity of Christ (20).

How can the crude cults of the Australian aborigines tell us anything about religions far more advanced in value, dignity, and truth? These questions were important, for Durkheim recognized that scholars frequently focused on primitive religions in order to discredit their modern counterparts, and he rejected this "Voltairean" hostility to religion for two reasons. First, alluding to the second chapter of *The Rules*, Durkheim insisted that such hostility was unscientific; it prejudices the results of the investigation, and renders its outcome suspect. Second, and more important, he considered it unsociological; for it is an essential postulate of sociology that no human institution can rest on an error or a lie. If an institution is not based on "the nature of things," Durkheim insisted, it encounters a resistance in nature which destroys it; the very existence of primitive religions, therefore, assures us that they "hold to reality and express it. The reasons with which the faithful justify them may be, and generally are, erroneous; but the true reasons," Durkheim concluded, "do not cease to exist" and it is the duty of science to discover them. Briefly, he did so for three "methodological" reasons. First, Durkheim argued that we cannot understand more advanced religions except by analyzing the way they have been progressively constituted throughout history; for only by placing each of the constituent elements of modern religions in the context within which it emerged can we hope to discover the cause which gave rise to it. Just as biological evolution has been differently conceived since the empirical discovery of monocellular beings, therefore, religious evolution is differently conceived depending upon what concrete system of belief and action is placed at its origin. Second, Durkheim suggested that the scientific study of religion itself presupposed that the various religions we compare are all species of the same class, and thus possess certain elements in common: These are the permanent elements which constitute that which is permanent and human in religion; they form all the objective contents of the idea which is expressed when one speaks of religion in general. That which is accessory or secondary All is reduced to that which is indispensable to that without which there could be no religion. But that which is indispensable is also that which is essential, that is to say, that which we must know before all else. But if this simplicity of primitive religions helps us to understand its nature, it also helps us to understand its causes. In fact, as religious thought evolved through history, its initial causes became overlaid with a vast scheme of methodological and theological interpretation which made those origins virtually imperceptible. The study of primitive religion, Durkheim thus suggested, is a new way of taking up the old problem of the "origin of religion" itself -- not in the sense of some specific point in time and space when religion began to exist no such point exists, but in the sense of discovering "the ever-present causes upon which the most essential forms of religious thought and practice depend. At the base of all our judgments, Durkheim began, there are a certain number of ideas which philosophers since Aristotle have called "the categories of the understanding" -- time, space, class, number, cause, substance, personality, and so on. They are like the solid frame which encloses all thought; this does not seem to be able to liberate itself from them without destroying itself, for it seems that we cannot think of objects that are not in time and space, which have no number, etc. When primitive religious beliefs are analyzed, Durkheim observed, these "categories" are found, suggesting that they are the product of religious thought; but religious thought itself is composed of collective representations, the products of real social groups. These observations suggested to Durkheim that the "problem of knowledge" might be posed in new, sociological terms. Previous efforts to solve this problem, he began, represent one of two philosophical doctrines: The difficulty for the empirical thesis, Durkheim then observed, is that it deprives the categories of their most distinctive properties -- universality they are the most general concepts we have, are applicable to all that is real, and are independent of every particular object and necessity we literally cannot think without them; for it is in the very nature of empirical data that they be both particular and contingent. The a priorist thesis, by contrast, has more respect for these properties of universality and necessity; but by asserting that the categories simply "inhere" in the

nature of the intellect, it begs what is surely the most interesting and important question of all: Having planted these allegedly formidable obstacles in the paths of his philosophical adversaries, Durkheim then offered his frustrated reader an attractive *via media*: First, the basic proposition of the a priorist thesis is that knowledge is composed of two elements -- perceptions mediated by our senses, and the categories of the understanding -- neither of which can be reduced to the other. By viewing the first as individual representations and the second as their collective counterparts, Durkheim insisted, this proposition is left intact: In so far as we belong to society, therefore, we transcend our individual nature both when we act and when we think. Finally, this distinction explains both the universality and the necessity of the categories -- they are universal because man has always and everywhere lived in society, which is their origin; and they are necessary because, without them, all contact between individual minds would be impossible, and social life would be destroyed altogether: If it is to live," Durkheim concluded, "there is not merely need of a satisfactory moral conformity, but also there is a minimum of logical conformity beyond which it cannot safely go. The fundamental relations between things -- just that which it is the function of the categories to express cannot be essentially dissimilar in the different realms. First, he insisted, we must free the mind of all preconceived ideas of religion, a liberation achieved in *The Elementary Forms* through a characteristic "argument by elimination": First, while he admitted that the sense of mystery has played a considerable role in the history of some religions, and especially Christianity, he added that, even in Christianity, there have been periods -- e. Second, while Durkheim agreed that the forces put in operation by some primitive rite designed to assure the fertility of the soil or the fecundity of an animal species appear "different" from those of modern science, he denied that this distinction between religious and physical forces is perceived by those performing the rite; the abyss which separates the rational from the irrational, Durkheim emphasized, belongs to a much later period in history. Third, and more specifically, the very idea of the "supernatural" logically presupposes its contrary -- the idea of a "natural order of things" or "natural law" -- to which the supernatural event or entity is presumably a dramatic exception; but the idea of natural law, Durkheim again suggested, is a still more recent conception than that of the distinction between religious and physical forces. It is far from being true," Durkheim concluded, "that the notion of the religious coincides with that of the extraordinary or the unforeseen. The difficulty for this definition, Durkheim insisted, is that it fails to acknowledge two categories of undeniably religious facts. First, there are great religions e. Second, even within those religions which do acknowledge such beings, there are many rites which are completely independent of that idea, and in some cases the idea is itself derived from the rite rather than the reverse. Religion is more than the idea of gods or spirits, and consequently cannot be defined exclusively in relation to these latter. Emphasizing that religion is less an indivisible whole than a complex system of parts, he began by dividing these parts into rites determined modes of action and beliefs collective representations ; and since rites can be distinguished from other actions only by their object, and the nature of that object is determined by the beliefs, Durkheim insisted on defining the latter first. Indeed, magic is also composed of beliefs and rites, myths, dogmas, sacrifices, lustrations, prayers, chants, and dances as well; and the beings and forces invoked by the magician are not only similar to those addressed by religion, but are frequently the same. Yet historically, magic and religion have frequently exhibited a marked repugnance for one another, 36 suggesting that any definition of the latter should find some means of excluding the former. The individuals which compose it feel themselves united to each other by the simple fact that they have a common faith. Between the magician and the individuals who consult him, as between these individuals themselves, there are no lasting bonds which make them members of the same moral community, comparable to that formed by the believers in the same god or the observers of the same cult. Almost immediately, however, another difficulty arose -- even the crudest religions of which we have any historical or ethnographic knowledge appear to be the products of a long, rather complicated evolution, and thus exhibit a profusion of beliefs and rites based upon a variety of "essential" principles. To discover the "truly original" form of the religious life, Durkheim observed, it is thus necessary "to descend by analysis beyond these observable religions, to resolve them into their common and fundamental elements, and then to seek among these latter some one from which the others were derived. This was a problem for which two contrary solutions had been proposed, based upon the two common elements found universally among the

observable religions. One set of beliefs and practices, for example, is addressed to the phenomena of nature, and is thus characterized as naturism; while a second body of religious thought and action appeals to conscious spiritual beings, and is called animism. The problem of accounting for the confusing properties of the observable religions thus resolved itself into two mutually contradictory evolutionary hypotheses: Animism According to the animistic theory, the idea of the human soul was first suggested by the contrast between the mental representations experienced while asleep dreams and those of normal experience. The primitive man grants equal status to both, and is thus led to postulate a "second self" within himself, one resembling the first, but made of an ethereal matter and capable of traveling great distances in short periods of time. The transformation of this soul into a spirit is achieved with death, which, to the primitive mind, is not unlike a prolonged sleep; and with the destruction of the body comes the idea of spirits detached from any organism and wandering about freely in space. Henceforth, spirits are assumed to involve themselves, for good or ill, in the affairs of men, and all human events varying slightly from the ordinary are attributed to their influence. As their power grows, men increasingly consider it wise to conciliate their favor or appease them when they are irritated, whence come prayers, offerings, sacrifices -- in short, the entire apparatus of religious worship. Reasoning wholly by analogy, the primitive mind also attributes "second selves" to all non-human objects -- plants, animals, rivers, trees, stars, etc. In the end, Durkheim concluded, "men find themselves the prisoners of this imaginary world of which they are, however, the authors and models. Doubts concerning the first were already raised by the observation, to be discussed later, 44 that the soul, though independent of the body under certain conditions, is in fact considerably more intimately bound to the organism than the animistic hypothesis would suggest. Even if these doubts were overcome, moreover, the animistic theory presumes that dreams are liable to but one primitive interpretation -- that of a "second-self" -- when the interpretive possibilities are in fact innumerable; and even were this objection removed, defenders of the hypothesis must still explain why primitive men, otherwise so unreflective, were presumably driven to "explain" their dreams in the first place. The "very heart of the animist doctrine," however, was its second part -- the explanation of how souls become spirits and objects of a cult; but here again Durkheim had serious doubts. Even if the analogy between sleep and death were sufficient to suggest that the soul survives the body, for example, this still fails to explain why the soul would thus become a "sacred" spirit, particularly in light of the tremendous gap which separates the sacred from the profane, and the fact that the approach of death is ordinarily assumed to weaken rather than strengthen the vital energies of the soul. Most important, however, if the first sacred spirits were souls of the dead, then the lower the society under investigation, the greater should be the place given to the ancestor cult; but, on the contrary, the ancestor cult is clearly developed only in relatively advanced societies e. But even if ancestor worship were primitive, Durkheim continued, the third part of the animist theory -- the transformation of the ancestor cult into the cult of nature -- is indefensible in itself. Not only is there little evidence among primitives of the complicated analogical reasoning upon which the animist hypothesis depends; neither is there evidence among those practicing any form of nature worship of those characteristics -- anthropomorphic spirits, or spirits exhibiting at least some of the attributes of a human soul -- which their derivation from the ancestor cult would logically suggest. For Durkheim, however, the clearest refutation of the animistic hypothesis lay in one of its unstated, but implied, consequences; for, if it were true, not only would it mean as Durkheim himself believed that religious symbols provide only an inexact expression of the realities on which they are based; far more than this, it would imply that religious symbols are products of the vague, ill-conceived hallucinations of our dream-experience, and thus as Durkheim most certainly did not believe have no foundation in reality at all. Law, morals, even scientific thought itself, Durkheim observed, were born of religion, long remained confounded with it, and are still somewhat imbued with its spirit; it is simply inconceivable, therefore, that "religions, which have held so considerable a place in history, and to which, in all times, men have to receive the energy which they must have to live, should be made up of a tissue of illusions. What sort of science is it, Durkheim asked, whose principle discovery is that the subject of which it treats does not exist? Naturism In sharp contrast to animism, the naturistic theory 46 insisted that religion ultimately rests upon a real experience -- that of the principal phenomena of nature the infinity of time, space, force, etc. But religion itself begins only when these natural

forces cease being represented in the mind in an abstract form, and are transformed into personal, conscious spirits or gods, to whom the cult of nature may be addressed; and this transformation is allegedly achieved by language. Before the ancient Indo-European peoples began to reflect upon and classify the phenomena of nature, Durkheim explained, the roots of their language consisted of very general types of human action pushing, walking, climbing, running, etc. When men turned from the naming and classifying of actions to that of natural objects, the very generality and elasticity of these concepts permitted their application to forces for which they were not originally designed. The earliest classes of natural phenomena were thus metaphors for human action -- a river was "something that moves steadily," the wind was "something that sighs or whistles," etc. Once these agents had received names, the names themselves raised questions of interpretation for succeeding generations, producing the efflorescence of fables, genealogies, and myths characteristic of ancient religions. Finally, the ancestor cult, according to this theory, is purely a secondary development -- unable to face the fact of death, men postulated their possession of an immortal soul which, upon separation from the body, was gradually drawn into the circle of divine beings, and eventually deified. Leaving aside the numerous criticisms of the philological premises of the naturistic theory, Durkheim insisted that nature is characterized not by phenomena so extraordinary as to produce a religious awe, but by a regularity which borders on monotony. Moreover, even if natural phenomena were sufficient to produce a certain degree of admiration, this still would not be equivalent to those features which characterize the "sacred", and least of all to that "absolute duality" which typifies its relations with the "profane. And in fact, the earliest objects of such rites were not the principal forms of nature at all, but rather humble animals and vegetables with whom even the primitive man could feel himself at least an equal. It is true, he admitted, that primitive peoples reflect upon the forces of nature from an early period, for they depend on these forces for their very survival. Again, the important place granted to religious ideas throughout history and in all societies is evidence that they respond to some reality, and one other than that of physical nature. Aside from the human individual and the physical world, there should be some other reality, in relation to which this variety of delirium which all religion is in a sense, has a significance and an objective value. In other words, beyond those which we have called animistic and naturistic, there should be another sort of cult, more fundamental and more primitive, of which the first are only derived forms or particular aspect. The peculiar set of beliefs and practices known as totemism had been discovered among American Indians as early as ; and though repeated observations for the next eighty years increasingly suggested that the institution enjoyed a certain generality, it continued to be seen as a largely American, and rather archaic, phenomenon. As the same religion and social organization were increasingly observed and reported among the Australian aborigines, the documents accumulated until James Frazer brought them together in *Totemism*. All these works, however, were constructed out of fragmentary observations, for a true totemic religion had not yet been observed in its complete state. This hiatus was filled, however, in Baldwin Spencer and F. The initial contribution of *The Elementary Forms* to this rapidly growing literature was simply its methodological approach. As a member of the "anthropological" school, for example, Frazer had made no effort to place the various religious systems he studied within their social and historical context; rather, as the name of the school implies, he assumed that man has some sort of innate, religious "nature" regardless of social conditions, and thus "compared" the most disparate beliefs and rites with an eye to their most superficial similarities. For this reason, two facts from different societies cannot be usefully compared simply because they seem to resemble one another; in addition, the societies themselves should resemble each other -- be varieties of the same species. Their Nature, Causes, and Consequences But where, in such totemic societies, was one to look first? At their rites, as had Robertson Smith and the early Frazer? The fact that myths are frequently constructed after the rite in order to account for it suggested the first; while recognition that rites are often the sole expression of antecedent beliefs argued for the second. On this contemporary controversy in the scientific study of religion, Durkheim ultimately leaned heavily toward the second alternative; and on the ground that it is impossible to understand a religion without a firm grasp of its ideas, his discussion of Australian totemism in *The Elementary Forms* thus began with its beliefs. This name, moreover, is taken from a determined species of material objects an animal, less frequently a plant, and in rare cases an inanimate object with which the clan members are assumed to enjoy the same relations of kinship.

But this "totem" is not simply a name; it is also an emblem, which, like the heraldic coats-of-arms, is carved, engraved, or designed upon the other objects belonging to the clan, and even upon the bodies of the clan members themselves. Indeed, it is these designs which seem to render otherwise common objects "sacred," and their inscription upon the bodies of clan members indicates the approach of the most important religious ceremonies. The same religious sentiments aroused by these designs, of course, are aroused by the members of the totemic species themselves. Clan members are thus forbidden to kill or eat the totemic animal or plant except at certain mystical feasts see below , and the violation of this interdiction is assumed to produce death instantaneously. Moreover the clan members themselves are "sacred" in so far as they belong to the totemic species, a belief which gives rise to genealogical myths explaining how men could have had animal and even vegetable ancestors. How, then, were these beliefs to be explained?

Chapter 3 : The Meaning of Life: An exploration of the purpose of human existence

Religious life with its daily routines and structured spiritual life is giving way to something new. Up ahead there is a new horizon of religious consciousness awakening, a new type of religious person is forming, and thus a new type of church will eventually appear with a new zest for life.

Christ alive – Robert Powell as Jesus of Nazareth in The historical evidence for Jesus of Nazareth is both long-established and widespread. Within a few decades of his supposed lifetime, he is mentioned by Jewish and Roman historians, as well as by dozens of Christian writings. Compare that with, for example, King Arthur, who supposedly lived around AD The major historical source for events of that time does not even mention Arthur, and he is first referred to or years after he is supposed to have lived. The evidence for Jesus is not limited to later folklore, as are accounts of Arthur. What do Christian writings tell us? The value of this evidence is that it is both early and detailed. These all appeared within the lifetimes of numerous eyewitnesses, and provide descriptions that comport with the culture and geography of first-century Palestine. It is also difficult to imagine why Christian writers would invent such a thoroughly Jewish saviour figure in a time and place – under the aegis of the Roman empire – where there was strong suspicion of Judaism. What did non-Christian authors say about Jesus? As far as we know, the first author outside the church to mention Jesus is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who wrote a history of Judaism around AD He has two references to Jesus. About 20 years after Josephus we have the Roman politicians Pliny and Tacitus, who held some of the highest offices of state at the beginning of the second century AD. From Tacitus we learn that Jesus was executed while Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect in charge of Judaea AD and Tiberius was emperor AD – reports that fit with the timeframe of the gospels. Pliny contributes the information that, where he was governor in northern Turkey, Christians worshipped Christ as a god. Did ancient writers discuss the existence of Jesus? Strikingly, there was never any debate in the ancient world about whether Jesus of Nazareth was a historical figure. In the earliest literature of the Jewish Rabbis, Jesus was denounced as the illegitimate child of Mary and a sorcerer. Among pagans, the satirist Lucian and philosopher Celsus dismissed Jesus as a scoundrel, but we know of no one in the ancient world who questioned whether Jesus lived. How controversial is the existence of Jesus now? In a recent book, the French philosopher Michel Onfray talks of Jesus as a mere hypothesis, his existence as an idea rather than as a historical figure. About 10 years ago, The Jesus Project was set up in the US; one of its main questions for discussion was that of whether or not Jesus existed. Some authors have even argued that Jesus of Nazareth was doubly non-existent, contending that both Jesus and Nazareth are Christian inventions. It is worth noting, though, that the two mainstream historians who have written most against these hypersceptical arguments are atheists: Jesus was on the side of the poor and exploited. Christian politicians should remember that Brad Chilcott Read more Is there any archaeological evidence for Jesus? Part of the popular confusion around the historicity of Jesus may be caused by peculiar archaeological arguments raised in relation to him. Recently there have been claims that Jesus was a great-grandson of Cleopatra, complete with ancient coins allegedly showing Jesus wearing his crown of thorns. It is hard to find historians who regard this material as serious archaeological data, however. The documents produced by Christian, Jewish and Roman writers form the most significant evidence. These abundant historical references leave us with little reasonable doubt that Jesus lived and died. The more interesting question – which goes beyond history and objective fact – is whether Jesus died and lived.

Chapter 4 : Philosophy of Religion (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Kierkegaard thereby fails to understand the self in terms of its concrete historical situation and, despite his best intentions, creates a self-contradictory system of existence, which in turn prepares the ground for Heidegger's ontology.

Existence precedes essence Sartre claimed that a central proposition of Existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the most important consideration for individuals is that they are individuals— independently acting and responsible, conscious beings "existence" —rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individuals fit "essence". The actual life of the individuals is what constitutes what could be called their "true essence" instead of there being an arbitrarily attributed essence others use to define them. Thus, human beings, through their own consciousness, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life. His form must be just as manifold as are the opposites that he holds together. The systematic *eins, zwei, drei* is an abstract form that also must inevitably run into trouble whenever it is to be applied to the concrete. To the same degree as the subjective thinker is concrete, to the same degree his form must also be concretely dialectical. But just as he himself is not a poet, not an ethicist, not a dialectician, so also his form is none of these directly. His form must first and last be related to existence, and in this regard he must have at his disposal the poetic, the ethical, the dialectical, the religious. Subordinate character, setting, etc. The setting is not the fairyland of the imagination, where poetry produces consummation, nor is the setting laid in England, and historical accuracy is not a concern. The setting is inwardness in existing as a human being; the concretion is the relation of the existence-categories to one another. Historical accuracy and historical actuality are breadth. Instead, the phrase should be taken to say that people are 1 defined only insofar as they act and 2 that they are responsible for their actions. For example, someone who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel person. Furthermore, by this action of cruelty, such persons are themselves responsible for their new identity cruel persons. This is as opposed to their genes, or human nature, bearing the blame. As Sartre says in his lecture Existentialism is a Humanism: The more positive, therapeutic aspect of this is also implied: A person can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person. In a set of letters, Heidegger implies that Sartre misunderstood him for his own purposes of subjectivism, and that he did not mean that actions take precedence over being so long as those actions were not reflected upon. This way of living, Heidegger called "average everydayness". Absurdism The notion of the Absurd contains the idea that there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we give it. This meaninglessness also encompasses the amorality or "unfairness" of the world. According to Albert Camus, the world or the human being is not in itself absurd. The concept only emerges through the juxtaposition of the two, where life becomes absurd due to the incompatibility between human beings and the world they inhabit. These are considered absurd since they issue from human freedom, undermining their foundation outside of themselves. The notion of the Absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. It is in relation to the concept of the devastating awareness of meaninglessness that Albert Camus claimed that "there is only one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" in his *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The possibility of having everything meaningful break down poses a threat of quietism, which is inherently against the existentialist philosophy. The ultimate hero of absurdism lives without meaning and faces suicide without succumbing to it. Facticity Facticity is a concept defined by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* as the *in-itself*, which delineates for humans the modalities of being and not being. This can be more easily understood when considering facticity in relation to the temporal dimension of our past: As an example, consider two men, one of whom has no memory of his past and the other who remembers everything. They both have committed many crimes, but the first man, knowing nothing about this, leads a rather normal life while the second man, feeling trapped by his own past, continues a life of crime, blaming his own past for "trapping" him in this life. There is nothing essential about his committing crimes, but he ascribes this meaning to his past. Another aspect of facticity is that it entails angst, both in the sense that freedom "produces" angst when limited by facticity, and in the sense that the lack of the possibility of having facticity to "step in" for one to take responsibility for something one has done, also produces angst. Authenticity Many

noted existentialist writers consider the theme of authentic existence important. Authentic existence involves the idea that one has to "create oneself" and then live in accordance with this self. This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, to a sort of "mimicry" where one acts as "one should". How "one should" act is often determined by an image one has, of how one such as oneself say, a bank manager, lion tamer, prostitute, etc. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre relates an example of a "waiter" in bad faith: *The Other and the Look*[edit] Main article: Other philosophy The Other when written with a capital "O" is a concept more properly belonging to phenomenology and its account of intersubjectivity. However, the concept has seen widespread use in existentialist writings, and the conclusions drawn from it differ slightly from the phenomenological accounts. The experience of the Other is the experience of another free subject who inhabits the same world as a person does. In its most basic form, it is this experience of the Other that constitutes intersubjectivity and objectivity. To clarify, when one experiences someone else, and this Other person experiences the world the same world that a person experiences – only from "over there" – the world itself is constituted as objective in that it is something that is "there" as identical for both of the subjects; a person experiences the other person as experiencing the same things. This is because the Look tends to objectify what it sees. Suddenly, he hears a creaking floorboard behind him, and he becomes aware of himself as seen by the Other. He is thus filled with shame for he perceives himself as he would perceive someone else doing what he was doing, as a Peeping Tom. Another characteristic feature of the Look is that no Other really needs to have been there: Angst and dread[edit] See also: Living educational theory "Existential angst", sometimes called existential dread, anxiety, or anguish, is a term that is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be a negative feeling arising from the experience of human freedom and responsibility. The archetypical example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. Angst, according to the modern existentialist, Adam Fong, is the sudden realization of a lack of meaning, often while one completes a task that initially seems to have intrinsic meaning. While in the case of fear, one can take definitive measures to remove the object of fear, in the case of angst, no such "constructive" measures are possible. There is nothing in people genetically, for instance that acts in their stead – that they can blame if something goes wrong. Therefore, not every choice is perceived as having dreadful possible consequences and, it can be claimed, human lives would be unbearable if every choice facilitated dread.

Chapter 5 : 5 Major World Religions - See What These Different Religions Believe about God

Concrete provisions at the level of each institute and of each province and local community are necessary if prayer is to deepen and thrive in religious life individually and communally. Yet only through prayer is the religious ultimately able to respond to his or her consecration.

Jeremy Bentham The origins of utilitarianism can be traced back as far as Epicurus , but, as a school of thought, it is credited to Jeremy Bentham , [67] who found that "nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure", then, from that moral insight, deriving the Rule of Utility: He defined the meaning of life as the " greatest happiness principle ". Friedrich Nietzsche characterized nihilism as emptying the world, and especially human existence, of meaning, purpose, comprehensible truth, and essential value; succinctly, nihilism is the process of "the devaluing of the highest values". To Martin Heidegger , nihilism is the movement whereby " being " is forgotten, and is transformed into value, in other words, the reduction of being to exchange value. If God, as the supra-sensory ground and goal, of all reality, is dead; if the supra-sensory world of the Ideas has suffered the loss of its obligatory, and above it, its vitalizing and up-building power, then nothing more remains to which Man can cling, and by which he can orient himself. The knowledge disclosed by modern science has effectively rewritten the relationship of humankind to the natural world. Advances in medicine and technology have freed humans from significant limitations and ailments of previous eras; [74] and philosophyâ€™ particularly following the linguistic turn â€™ has altered how the relationships people have with themselves and each other are conceived. Questions about the meaning of life have also seen radical changes, from attempts to reevaluate human existence in biological and scientific terms as in pragmatism and logical positivism to efforts to meta-theorize about meaning-making as a personal, individual-driven activity existentialism , secular humanism. Pragmatism Pragmatism originated in the late 19th-century US, concerning itself mostly with truth , and positing that "only in struggling with the environment" do data, and derived theories, have meaning, and that consequences, like utility and practicality, are also components of truth. Moreover, pragmatism posits that anything useful and practical is not always true, arguing that what most contributes to the most human good in the long course is true. In practice, theoretical claims must be practically verifiable, i. Pragmatic philosophers suggest that the practical, useful understanding of life is more important than searching for an impractical abstract truth about life. William James argued that truth could be made, but not sought. Philosophical theism Theists believe God created the universe and that God had a purpose in doing so. Theists further hold that if there were no God to give life ultimate meaning, value and purpose, then life would be absurd. According to existentialism, each man and each woman creates the essence meaning of their life; life is not determined by a supernatural god or an earthly authority, one is free. One can live meaningfully free of despair and anxiety in an unconditional commitment to something finite, and devotes that meaningful life to the commitment, despite the vulnerability inherent to doing so. Salvation, deliverance, and escape from suffering are in aesthetic contemplation, sympathy for others, and asceticism. Accordingly, he saw nihilism "all that happens is meaningless" as without goals. For to hope in the possibility of help, not to speak of help by virtue of the absurd, that for God all things are possibleâ€™ no, that he will not do. And as for seeking help from any otherâ€™ no, that he will not do for all the world; rather than seek help he would prefer to be himselfâ€™ with all the tortures of hell, if so it must be. As beings looking for meaning in a meaningless world, humans have three ways of resolving the dilemma. Suicide or, "escaping existence": Both Kierkegaard and Camus dismiss the viability of this option. Religious belief in a transcendent realm or being: Kierkegaard stated that a belief in anything beyond the Absurd requires a non-rational but perhaps necessary religious acceptance in such an intangible and empirically unprovable thing now commonly referred to as a " leap of faith ". However, Camus regarded this solution as "philosophical suicide". Acceptance of the Absurd: Camus endorsed this solution notably in his allegorical novel The Plague or La Peste , while Kierkegaard regarded this solution as "demonic madness": Per secular humanism , the human species came to be by reproducing successive generations in a progression of unguided evolution as an integral expression of nature , which is self-existing.

Humanism seeks to develop and fulfill: It is based on the premises that the happiness of the individual person is inextricably linked to the well-being of all humanity, in part because humans are social animals who find meaning in personal relations and because cultural progress benefits everybody living in the culture. In this light, every living creature has the right to determine its personal and social "meaning of life". There are many therapeutic responses to this question. For example, Viktor Frankl argues for "Dereflection", which translates largely as: On the whole, the therapeutic response is that the question itself—"what is the meaning of life? The question then morphs into more specific worries such as "What delusions am I under? The things people, events in the life of a person can have meaning importance as parts of a whole, but a discrete meaning of the life, itself, aside from those things, cannot be discerned. Bertrand Russell wrote that although he found that his distaste for torture was not like his distaste for broccoli, he found no satisfactory, empirical method of proving this: Neither he nor his opponents could advance any argument. In a scientific question, evidence can be adduced on both sides, and, in the end, one side is seen to have the better case—or, if this does not happen, the question is left undecided. But in a question, as to whether this, or that, is the ultimate Good, there is no evidence, either way; each disputant can only appeal to his own emotions, and employ such rhetorical devices as shall rouse similar emotions in others Questions as to "values"—that is to say, as to what is good or bad on its own account, independently of its effects—lie outside the domain of science, as the defenders of religion emphatically assert. I think that, in this, they are right, but, I draw the further conclusion, which they do not draw, that questions as to "values" lie wholly outside the domain of knowledge. That is to say, when we assert that this, or that, has "value", we are giving expression to our own emotions, not to a fact, which would still be true if our personal feelings were different. Postmodernism Postmodernist thought—"broadly speaking"—sees human nature as constructed by language, or by structures and institutions of human society. Unlike other forms of philosophy, postmodernism rarely seeks out a priori or innate meanings in human existence, but instead focuses on analyzing or critiquing given meanings in order to rationalize or reconstruct them. Anything resembling a "meaning of life", in postmodernist terms, can only be understood within a social and linguistic framework, and must be pursued as an escape from the power structures that are already embedded in all forms of speech and interaction. As a rule, postmodernists see awareness of the constraints of language as necessary to escaping those constraints, but different theorists take different views on the nature of this process: Naturalistic pantheism According to naturalistic pantheism, the meaning of life is to care for and look after nature and the environment. Embodied cognition Embodied cognition uses the neurological basis of emotion, speech, and cognition to understand the nature of thought. Cognitive neuropsychology has identified brain areas necessary for these abilities, and genetic studies show that the gene FOXP2 affects neuroplasticity which underlies language fluency. George Lakoff, a professor of cognitive linguistics and philosophy, advances the view that metaphors are the usual basis of meaning, not the logic of verbal symbol manipulation. Computers use logic programming to effectively query databases but humans rely on a trained biological neural network.

Chapter 6 : Why Does Religion Need Commandments? | Reuven Ziegler | First Things

By becoming concrete, objective, and specific, religion becomes strong enough to affect one's entire life, to withstand temptation, to endure regardless of the individual's mood, and to survive from generation to generation.

He rarely left his hometown of Copenhagen, and travelled abroad only five times—four times to Berlin and once to Sweden. His prime recreational activities were attending the theatre, walking the streets of Copenhagen to chat with ordinary people, and taking brief carriage jaunts into the surrounding countryside. His teachers at the university included F. Martensen also had a profound effect on Kierkegaard, but largely in a negative manner. Kierkegaard regarded Martensen as one of his chief intellectual rivals. Martensen was only five years his senior, but was already lecturing at Copenhagen University when Kierkegaard was a student there. Heiberg, more than any other person, was responsible for introducing Hegelianism into Denmark. Kierkegaard spent a good deal of energy trying to break into the Heiberg literary circle, but desisted once he had found his own voice in *The Concept of Irony*. Much of the thrust of his critique of Hegelianism is that its system of thought is abstracted from the everyday lives of its proponents. This existential critique consists in demonstrating how the life and work of a philosopher contradict one another. Kierkegaard derived this form of critique from the Greek notion of judging philosophers by their lives rather than simply by their intellectual artefacts. Because of his existentialist orientation, most of his interventions in contemporary theory do double duty as means of working through events from his own life. His mother does not rate a direct mention in his published works, or in his diaries—not even on the day she died. However, for a writer who places so much emphasis on indirect communication, and on the semiotics of invisibility, we should regard this absence as significant. Kierkegaard was deeply enamoured of the Danish language and worked throughout his writings to assert the strengths of his mother-tongue over the invasive, imperialistic influences of Latin and German. With respect to the former, Kierkegaard had to petition the king to be allowed to write his philosophy dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* with constant reference to Socrates in Danish. Even though permission was granted he was still required to defend his dissertation publicly in Latin. Latin had been the pan-European language of science and scholarship. In *Repetition*, the character and pseudonymous author Constantin Constantius congratulates the Danish language on providing the word for an important new philosophical concept, viz. This may explain the sense of urgency that drove Kierkegaard to write so prolifically in the years leading up to his 34th birthday. The breaking of the engagement allowed Kierkegaard to devote himself monastically to his religious purpose, as well as to establish his outsider status outside the norm of married bourgeois life. It also freed him from close personal entanglements with women, thereby leading him to objectify them as ideal creatures, and to reproduce the patriarchal values of his church and father. The latter included viewing women in terms of their traditional social roles, particularly as mothers and wives, but also in their traditional spiritual roles as epitomes of devotion and self-sacrifice. This problem was compounded by the fact that Denmark had recently and very rapidly been transformed from a feudal society into a capitalist society. Given this problematic in this social context Kierkegaard perceived a need to invent a form of communication which would not produce stereotyped identities. On the contrary, he needed a form of rhetoric which would force people back onto their own resources, to take responsibility for their own existential choices, and to become who they are beyond their socially imposed identities. In this undertaking Kierkegaard was inspired by the figure of Socrates, whose incessant irony undermined all knowledge claims that were taken for granted or unreflectively inherited from traditional culture. In his dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* with constant reference to Socrates Kierkegaard argued that the historical Socrates used his irony in order to facilitate the birth of subjectivity in his interlocutors. Kierkegaard sought to provide a similar service for his own contemporaries. He used irony, parody, satire, humor, and deconstructive techniques in order to make conventionally accepted forms of knowledge and value untenable. He was a gadfly—constantly irritating his contemporaries with discomfiting thoughts. He was also a midwife—assisting at the birth of individual subjectivity by forcing his contemporaries to develop an inner life through critical self-reflection. Hegelianism promised to make absolute knowledge available by virtue of a science of logic. Kierkegaard thought this to be

the hubristic attempt to build a new tower of Babel, or a scala paradisi—a dialectical ladder by which humans can climb with ease up to heaven. Instead of seeing scientific knowledge as the means of human redemption, he regarded it as the greatest obstacle to redemption. Instead of seeking to give people more knowledge he sought to take away what passed for knowledge. Instead of seeking to make God and Christian faith perfectly intelligible he sought to emphasize the absolute transcendence by God of all human categories. Instead of setting himself up as a religious authority, Kierkegaard used a vast array of textual devices to undermine his authority as an author and to place responsibility for the existential significance to be derived from his texts squarely on the reader. Kierkegaard distanced himself from his texts by a variety of devices which served to problematize the authorial voice for the reader. He used pseudonyms in many of his works both overtly aesthetic ones and overtly religious ones. He partitioned the texts into prefaces, forewords, interludes, postscripts, appendices. Sometimes Kierkegaard appended his name as author, sometimes as the person responsible for publication, sometimes not at all. Sometimes Kierkegaard would publish more than one book on the same day. These simultaneous books embodied strikingly contrasting perspectives. He also published whole series of works simultaneously, viz. All of this play with narrative point of view, with contrasting works, and with contrasting internal partitions within individual works leaves the reader very disoriented. Christian faith, for Kierkegaard, is not a matter of learning dogma by rote. This belief is offensive to reason, since it only exists in the face of the absurd the paradox of the eternal, immortal, infinite God being incarnated in time as a finite mortal. These works fall into three genres: The point of indirect communication is to position the reader to relate to the truth with appropriate passion, rather than to communicate the truth as such. It draws on irony, the comic and is high-spirited, in order to get thoughts into motion prior to action. A deliberation is a weighing-up, as a propaedeutic to action. It seeks to build up the faith that it presupposes. Kierkegaard published many of his Edifying Discourses in short collections to accompany particular pseudonymous texts, then later published them again in larger collections. These are particularly intimate addresses to the sincere Christian, who strives to deepen the subjective passion of faith through confession and through acceptance of divine forgiveness. This was aimed at subverting our focus on worldly goals in order to refocus on other-worldly goals. Our struggle to accept divine forgiveness can become mired in despair, including the second-order despair over the impossibility of forgiveness of our sins and the demonic despair of defiance in which we refuse to accept forgiveness. The first is the aesthetic, which gives way to the ethical, which gives way to the religious. The aesthetic stage of existence is characterized by the following: The figure of the aesthete in *Either-Or Part One* is an ironic portrayal of German romanticism, but it also draws on medieval characters as diverse as Don Juan, Ahasuerus, and Faust. Johannes the seducer is a reflective aesthete, who gains sensuous delight not so much from the act of seduction but from engineering the possibility of seduction. His real aim is the manipulation of people and situations in ways which generate interesting reflections in his own voyeuristic mind. The aesthetic perspective transforms quotidian dullness into a richly poetic world by whatever means it can. That is, the aesthete uses artifice, arbitrariness, irony, and wilful imagination to recreate the world in his own image. The prime motivation for the aesthete is the transformation of the boring into the interesting. This type of aestheticism is criticized from the point of view of ethics. It is seen to be emptily self-serving and escapist. It is a despairing means of avoiding commitment and responsibility. And it is self-deceiving insofar as it substitutes fantasies for actual states of affairs. But Kierkegaard did not want to abandon aesthetics altogether in favor of the ethical and the religious. As far as the aesthetic stage of existence is concerned what is preserved in the higher religious stage is the sense of infinite possibility made available through the imagination. But this no longer excludes what is actual. Nor is it employed for egotistic ends. Aesthetic irony is transformed into religious humor, and the aesthetic transfiguration of the actual world into the ideal is transformed into the religious transubstantiation of the finite world into an actual reconciliation with the infinite. Language and all other media of representation belong to the realm of the ideal. No matter how eloquent or evocative language is it can never be the actual. Therefore, any representation of faith is always suspended in the realm of ideality and can never be actual faith. In fact Johannes Climacus acknowledges this implicitly when at the end of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* he revokes everything he has said, with the important rider that to say something then to revoke it is

not the same as never having said it in the first place. His presentation of religious faith in an aesthetic medium at least provides an opportunity for his readers to make their own leap of faith, by appropriating with inward passion the paradoxical religion of Christianity into their own lives. These works include those by Anti-Climacus, who represents the Christian point of view par excellence, beyond where Kierkegaard placed himself. Kierkegaard also used many biblical figures and stories with poignant and striking effect in the religious writings he published under his own name. As a poet of the religious Kierkegaard was always preoccupied with aesthetics. In fact, contrary to popular misconceptions of Kierkegaard which represent him as becoming increasingly hostile to poetry, he increasingly referred to himself as a poet in his later years all but one of over ninety references to himself as a poet in his journals date from after Kierkegaard never claimed to write with religious authority, as an apostle. His works represent both less religiously enlightened and more religiously enlightened positions than he thought he had attained in his own existence. Such representations were only possible in an aesthetic medium of imagined possibilities like poetry. It is used to denote both: These social norms are used as reasons to make sense of, or justify, an action within a community. Even human sacrifice is justified in terms of how it serves the community, so that when Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia he is regarded as a tragic hero since his community understands that the sacrifice is required by the gods for the success of the Greek expedition to Troy Fear and Trembling. Kierkegaard, however, recognizes duties that cannot be justified in terms of social norms. That is, Abraham recognizes a duty to something higher than both his social duty not to kill an innocent person and his personal commitment to his beloved son, viz. However, he cannot give an intelligible ethical justification of his act to the community in terms of social norms, but must simply obey the divine command. In order to raise oneself beyond the merely aesthetic life, which is a life of drifting in imagination, possibility and sensation, one needs to make a commitment. That is, the aesthete needs to choose the ethical, which entails a commitment to communication and decision procedures. The metaethics or normative ethics are cognitivist, laying down various necessary conditions for ethically correct action. The choice of metaethics, however, is noncognitive. There is no adequate proof of the truth of metaethics. The choice of normative ethics is motivated, but in a noncognitive way. The Judge seeks to motivate the choice of his normative ethics through the avoidance of despair.

Chapter 7 : Meaning of life - Wikipedia

A. Afterlife: (or life after death) A generic term referring to a continuation of existence, typically spiritual and experiential, beyond this world, or after death. This article is about current generic and widely held or repository concepts of afterlife.

A[edit] Afterlife: This article is about current generic and widely held or repository concepts of afterlife. A religious concept which advocates non-violence and a respect for all life. It is interpreted most often as meaning peace and reverence toward all sentient beings. Ahimsa is the core of Hinduism , Jainism , and Buddhism. Its first mention in Indian philosophy is found in the Hindu scriptures called the Upanishads , the oldest dating about BC. Those who practice Ahimsa are often vegetarians or vegans. Practitioners of aikido are known as aikidoka. Aikido is also considered to contain a significant spiritual component. Akasha is a Sanskrit word meaning "sky", "space" or " aether " Said to be a collection of mystical knowledge that is stored in the aether; i. The concept is common in some New Age religious groups. The Akashic Records are said to have existed since the beginning of the planet. Just as we have various specialty libraries e. Most writings refer to the Akashic Records in the area of human experience. The religious belief that all objects, places, and creatures possess a distinct spiritual essence. Denotes a life which is characterised by refraining from worldly pleasures austerity. Those who practice ascetic lifestyles often perceive their practices as virtuous and pursue them to achieve greater spirituality. In the broadest sense, is the absence of belief in the existence of deities. Less broadly, atheism is the rejection of belief that any deities exist. In an even narrower sense, atheism is specifically the position that there are no deities. Atheism is contrasted with theism , which, in its most general form, is the belief that at least one deity. B[edit] Bagua concept: It is an octagonal diagram with eight trigrams on each side. The concept of bagua is applied not only to Chinese Taoist thought and the I Ching , but is also used in other domains of Chinese culture, such as fengshui , martial arts , navigation , etc. Within Roman Catholicism , Eastern Orthodoxy , and similar traditions, formal blessings of the church are performed by bishops , priests , and sometimes deacons , but as in many other religions, anyone may formally bless another. C[edit] Chakra: In Hinduism and its spiritual systems of yoga and in some related eastern cultures, as well as in some segments of the New Age movementâ€”and to some degree the distinctly different New Thought movementâ€”a chakra is thought to be an energy node in the human body. The rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds , either on a single pitch or with a simple melody involving a limited set of notes and often including a great deal of repetition or stasis. Chant may be considered speech, music, or a heightened form of speech which is more effective in conveying emotion or expressing ones spiritual side. The term creation refers to the beginnings of humanity , earth , life , and the universe cosmogony. Creation may explain that the beginnings of the universe were a deliberate act of " Creation " by a supreme being. Many philosophers divide consciousness into phenomenal consciousness which is experience itself and access consciousness which is the processing of the things in experience. Many cultures and religious traditions place the seat of consciousness in a soul separate from the body. Conversely, many scientists and philosophers consider consciousness to be intimately linked to the neural functioning of the brain dictating the way in which the world is experienced. This aspect of consciousness is the subject of much debate and research in philosophy of mind , psychology , brain biology , neurology , and cognitive science. A type of prayer or meditation in the Christian , especially Catholic , tradition. It is an attempt to experience God directly. It is briefly described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church , paragraphs onwards, where the Song of Songs is quoted. Kosmogonia from Kosmos the world and root of gignesthai to be born] The coming into existence , the creation and origination of the universe. It is also the study of these aspects. So a cosmogony describes how the Universe came to be; hence, the creation myth in the Book of Genesis is one such cosmogony, and there are many others, both scientific and mythological. This contrasts with cosmology , which studies the Universe at large, throughout its existence. D[edit] Deism: Historical and modern deism is defined by the view that reason , rather than revelation or tradition , should be the basis of belief in God. Deists reject organized religion and promote reason as the essential element in making moral decisions. This "rational"

basis was usually founded upon the cosmological argument first cause argument , the teleological argument argument from design , and other aspects of what was called natural religion. Deism has become identified with the classical belief that God created but does not intervene in the world, though this is not a necessary component of deism. They assume a variety of forms, but are frequently depicted as having human or animal form. Sometimes it is considered blasphemous to imagine the deity as having any concrete form. They are usually immortal. They are commonly assumed to have personalities and to possess consciousness, intellects, desires, and emotions much like humans. Some deities are asserted to be the directors of time and fate itself, to be the givers of human law and morality, to be the ultimate judges of human worth and behavior, and to be the designers and creators of the Earth or the universe. Some of these "gods" have no power at all-they are simply worshipped. Pali , translates as Path of the Dharma. According to tradition, these are answers to questions put to the Buddha on various occasions, most of which deal with ethics. Beings that live in harmony with Dharma proceed quicker towards moksha , nirvana , or personal liberation , a concept first taught in Indian religions Hinduism , Buddhism , Jainism and Sikhism. To engage in dhikr is to have awareness of God according to Islam. More generally, any activity in which the Muslim maintains awareness of God is considered dhikr. E[edit] Emanationism: Technically is a henotheism component in the cosmology of certain religious or philosophical systems that argue a Supreme Being did not directly create the physical universe , but instead emanated lower spiritual beings who created the world. As a concept is related to the Buddhist Bodhi but is a cornerstone of religious and spiritual understanding in practically all religions. It literally means being illuminated by acquiring new wisdom or understanding. Entheos means literally "in God", more freely translated "inspired". The Greeks used it as a term of praise for poets and other artists. Genesthai means "to cause to be". So an entheogen is "that which causes a person to be in God". The translation "creating the divine within" that is sometimes given is not quite correct -- entheogen implies neither that something is created as opposed to just perceiving something that is already there nor that that which is experienced is within the user as opposed to having independent existence. The feast was initially based on, and viewed as a fulfillment of, the Jewish Feast of Lights. This was fixed on January 6. In many religions , the end of the world is a future event prophesied in sacred texts or folklore. More broadly, eschatology may encompass related concepts such as the messiah or messianic era, the afterlife , and the soul. Refers to knowledge suitable only for the advanced, privileged, or initiated, as opposed to exoteric knowledge , which is public. It is used especially for mystical , occult and spiritual viewpoints. While in the popular mind, eternity often simply means existing for an infinite , i. There are a number of arguments for eternity , by which proponents of the concept, principally, Aristotle , purported to prove that matter, motion, and time must have existed eternally. Eutheism, dystheism, and maltheism: Eutheism and dystheism are dialectic opposites within the spectrum of theistic religious beliefs. Eutheism is the belief that God exists and is good. Dystheism is the belief that God exists but is not good. There is no universally accepted theory of what the word existence means. The dominant though by no means universal view in twentieth-century and contemporary Anglo-American philosophy is that existence is what is asserted by statements of first-order logic of the form "for some x Fx". This agrees with the simple and commonsensical view that, in uttering "There is a bridge across the Thames at Hammersmith", or "A bridge crosses the Thames at Hammersmith", we are asserting the existence of a bridge across the Thames at Hammersmith. The word "existence", on this view, is simply a way of describing the Logical Form of ordinary subject-predicate sentence. The practice of evicting demons or other evil spiritual entities which are supposed to have possessed taken control of a person or object. The practice, though ancient in roots, is still part of the belief system of many religions. The word "exorcism" means "I cause [someone] to swear," referring to the exorcist forcing the spirit to obey a higher power. F[edit] Faith healing: The use of solely spiritual means in treating disease , sometimes accompanied with the refusal of modern medical techniques. Another term for this is spiritual healing. Faith healing is a form of alternative medicine. The act of willingly abstaining from all food and in some cases drink , for a period of time. Depending on the tradition, fasting practices may forbid sexual intercourse , or any sexual desire , masturbation , as well as refraining from eating certain types or groups of food e. Fasting for religious and spiritual reasons has been a part of human custom since pre-history. G[edit] Glossolalia: A blanket term for various mystical initiatory

religions , sects and knowledge schools, which were most prominent in the first few centuries AD. It is also applied to modern revivals of these groups and, sometimes, by analogy to all religious movements based on secret knowledge gnosis, thus can lead to confusion. The term God is capitalized in the English language as a proper noun when used to refer to a specific monotheistic concept of a supernatural Supreme Being in accordance with Christian , Jewish sometimes as "G-d" - cf. Names of God in Judaism , and more recently in the U. A Muslim and some Hindu traditions.

Chapter 8 : Religious Concrete Statues

people at the deepest level of their existence; he sought their physical, mental, and spiritual healing (Jn ,). He "came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly".

Consequently, the history of the religious life is inseparable from that of the Church as a whole; and the latter bestows its own significance upon it. This history is subject to the general laws of social life, where periods of vigour alternate with those of decline. It is insufficient however merely to note the succession of these periods; we must also attempt to grasp the meaning of their flow. For history is like a symphony, which delivers up its secret only to those who discern its internal rhythm. There is no question, in the following pages, of tracing even schematically the history of the religious life. Taking this as known, we shall recall only its broad lines and shall endeavour primarily to grasp its vital rhythm. In this way we hope to gain some insights which will enable us to understand better the present situation of religious life and perceive more clearly how it should be inserted into the Church and world of our day. It is in the Gospel, and nowhere else, that the source of Christian religious life is to be found. It does correspond, however, to the profound tendencies of the human soul. Wherever civilization has reached a sufficient degree of spiritualization similar forms of life have appeared. Thus, in the Greek culture of the sixth century B. Every Christian vocation is a personal call from Christ. Nevertheless, it would be a mistaken effort to try to wrest from this or that text of the New Testament any kind of institution of the religious life by Christ Himself. The religious life is not founded upon any particular passage of the Gospel, but springs directly from the evangelical message in its entirety. We are accustomed to a theology of the religious life based upon a rigid distinction between the precepts and the counsels. Even more, it is not theories on the Christian life that the Gospel offers us, but rather concrete instances which manifest clearly the radical demands of the sequela Christi. Whenever in some way or other the profound unity of the Christian is threatened with dissolution or his heart is in danger of being divided, then radical steps are required of him and not merely counselled: In this sense, and in this sense only, is it possible to speak of the evangelical "counsels". Christ had required of his apostles such a radical life-style. Here at Jerusalem on the morrow of Pentecost their life was one of fraternal communion, sharing in the one table of the Lord, and common ownership of goods. But the very fact that this radical manner of living the Gospel was seen as the ideal of the whole community is significant. It is with good reason then that each time the religious life was initiated or reformed, reference was made to this precedent. Beginning with the first Christian generation, we see virgins and ascetics present in the life of the local Churches. The story of how Christianity spread with astonishing rapidity is well known. Profiting by the Pax romana and the means of communication furnished by the Empire, it was soon established in every part of the Roman world and even overflowed its borders into eastern Syria, the kingdom of Edessa or Osroene, and Persia. And in all these places we come upon parthenoi of both sexes, who lived in the midst of the ecclesial community and devoted themselves not only to celibacy but to a rigorous asceticism also. They manifested an equal zeal for liturgical worship and for visiting the poor, the sick, and the orphans. In the numerous writings of the second and third century which mention there, it becomes clear that these "virgins" come from every social class and occupation. During these centuries so marked by moral decadence they are the glory of the Churches, which consider them as a group apart and favour them with special deference in the Christian assemblies. Their resolve to live in continence is recognized by the Church, and even before there is any question of an explicit promise this resolve is ordinarily treated as irrevocable. We get the impression that these ecclesial communities in their entirety were living what we today would designate as a "monastic" life. In any event, it was in the midst of these communities and from this Judaeo-Christian soil that there sprang up the first groups of virgins and ascetics; these were the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, about whom we are informed a little later by St Ephrem at Nisibis and Edessa, and by St Aphrahat in Persia. The rise of monasticism had been prepared by the rapid growth of the Church during the third century. She had soon spread and become established in the most scattered countries of the Empire: Egypt, Spain, Italy, Gaul, and the regions of the Danube. By the time the Edict of Milan confirmed her victory, monasticism was already present and alive

nearly everywhere. Far from being a product exported from Egypt to all the other lands, the monastic phenomenon appeared almost everywhere at once, springing from the vitality of each Church. This accounts moreover for the extreme diversity of its forms. In Egypt, when Anthony withdrew to his first solitude around 312, there was already in existence a community of virgins in his home town, since he arranged for his sister to stay there. Monks had preceded Anthony into the desert proper, too, and legions were to follow him there. When at Pispir he was gathering his disciples, other anchorites were grouping about Ammon and the two Macariuses to form the great semi-eremical centres of Nitria, Scete, and the Cells, south of Alexandria. He himself, under the guidance of Eustathius of Sebaste, had previously been. They were also in some degree the source of vitality for the liturgical celebrations of the local community. The monastic movement also pervaded the whole of Palestine and both eastern and western Syria. Besides the Latin monasticism established at Jerusalem and Bethlehem, we find in Palestine from the beginning of the fourth century a system of *lauras* erected solidly by Hilarion and Chariton. At the end of the century Sabas, a disciple of Euthymius the Great, founded there many *lauras*, *coenobia*, *hospices*, etc. The hermits of Palestine were legion-and they allowed themselves every form of eccentricity. In Upper Syria the plain of Dana was covered with monasteries, and at the mouth of the Euphrates, in the environs of Edessa, Julian Sabas and James of Edessa multiplied the number of *lauras* and monasteries. Still further afield, at Niniveh and in Persia, the number of monks was also very great. Armenia, Georgia, and Constantinople too possessed their own monastic traditions. In the West, where Eastern influences are soon apparent, the monastic phenomenon manifests the same spontaneity and vitality. From the second quarter of the fourth century the monastic life was propagated in Gaul among all the social classes, but especially in the rural areas. After a slight let up in the fifth century, during the invasions of the Vandals, Huns, and Visigoths, it flourished anew in the sixth century. The Merovingian saints often showed considerable versatility in their careers, they were by turns hermits, cenobites, preachers, bishops Marmoutiers was surely one of the most original of these foundations, for there all the forms of monasticism were housed under a single roof, from the monk-cleric engaged in pastoral work with his bishop to the lay monk occupied in copying manuscripts. In Italy, the ascetical inclinations inherent in any Christian life were awakened in souls by St Athanasius during the period of his exile; and St Jerome sharpened the edge of this ideal. About Constantina, the daughter of Constantine the Great, had already established a community of virgins at Rome near the Basilica of St Agnes. In Bishop Eusebius of Vercelli organized the clerics of his cathedral church into a monastic community. Ambrose did the same at Milan. Sometime later, in the sixth century, in an Italy exhausted from its struggle against the Barbarians and at a time when Rome itself was witnessing a serious crisis for the papacy, St Benedict laid the foundations of the monastic tradition which was destined to dominate the whole of western monasticism until our own times. In Africa, Augustine founded a lay monastery close to his cathedral, organized his clergy as a monastic community, and brought the virgins together for a common life. Like the ascetical groups which existed there from pre-Augustinian days, this monasticism was to remain alive in Africa until Christian life was just about wiped out in that region by the Arab invasion. The same picture is presented by the far-off Celtic lands. Truly likeable, these Irish monks-simultaneously in love with solitude yet eternal pilgrims of God, sometimes taking refuge on a desert island, sometimes traversing the world to evangelize the pagans! It was from these northern lands that the high-spirited and indefatigable Columban set out at the end of the sixth century to plant Christianity and monasticism across the whole breadth of northern and eastern Gaul. A little later Willibrord did the same in Frisia, and Boniface in Germany. This rapid expansion of monasticism through the whole Christian world is truly an extraordinary epic. Within the local Churches there were virgins and ascetics who embraced the life of celibacy and asceticism without abandoning the normal setting of their life in society. There were others who dedicated themselves to the works of mercy; and some joined together in communities, which continued however to live at the centre of the local Church. Then there were those who took themselves off to a solitary place, into the desert, either to establish there ascetical brotherhoods or to live there in absolute solitude. Some bishops encouraged their clerics to share with them this life of community and asceticism. The "evangelical counsels" therefore were being lived under such diverse forms that there is no difficulty in claiming, from this point forward, that the Church possessed all the forms of religious life with which we are familiar today.

Nevertheless, from the end of the third century, this ascetical movement had developed especially in the specific direction of what was afterwards labelled the "monastic life" properly so called. This means that the word monk had at that time a meaning which was as broad as that. The ambiguity is surely unfortunate, but it is a simple matter of fact. The extraordinary expansion of the strictly monastic movement was indirectly to have some very significant repercussions on the whole history of the religious life. Until this time the ascetics, whatever their form of life, had been dependent upon their local bishops, just as any other Christians and by the same title. The bishops did not meddle with the inner life of the communities, at least as long as the welfare of all the faithful was not at stake. In this way it came about that the early legislation "for religious" was concerned almost exclusively with monks strictly so called. As the legislation grew but abstracted from other forms of consecrated life, these remained unrecognized and were gradually thrust to the periphery. This was true to such an extent, at least in the West, that the Carolingian. Even the virgins, who had traditionally lived in the midst of the local Churches, would be more and more compelled to cloister themselves. Let us not anticipate the facts however. We would only observe that a similar tendency was evident in the East. The Council of Chalcedon canon 3 had already passed legislation dealing with monks, intended to put them explicitly under the jurisdiction of the local bishops. Shortly afterwards, the imperial theocrat Justinian also took cognizance of the monks, in his Novellae 5, , Solitaries were merely tolerated, and they were to remain few in number. Control over the monasteries and their observance was entrusted to the officials of the patriarchate. The astonishing fact about the entire monastic movement described above is that it took place at the very moment when Europe was entering upon an age of darkness and barbarity. From the beginning of the fifth century we witness a disturbing retreat of civilization, evident in the moral decadence and in a frightful decline of culture. While decline in the life of the clergy had been more rapid, their reform also came about more quickly. We recall how bishops such as Augustine at Hippo and Eusebius at Vercelli had tried to have their clergy lead a real monastic life. While this clearly could not be imposed universally, the ideal of common life pure and simple was more accessible to the majority of clerics. The idea was that of a simple common life within which each one would preserve his own personal possessions; there was no question of an integral practice of the evangelical counsels. Chrodegang drew up for his "canons" a Rule that was heavily influenced by that of St Benedict and which was to play a rather important role in the Carolingian reform. As Justinian had done in the East, so also Charlemagne undertook the reform of the entire ecclesiastical polity within his kingdom a fact that went hand in glove with his political aims. He was particularly attentive with regard to the canons and the monks. Charlemagne decreed that this uncertain state of affairs should be terminated: This decision was of great consequence for the future of the religious life. First of all, the only form of religious life henceforth admitted, i.

Chapter 9 : Culture | Definition of Culture by Merriam-Webster

The reality of the soul is among the most important questions of life. Although religions go on and on about its existence, how do we know if souls really exist?

The Field and its Significance The philosophical exploration of religious beliefs and practices is evident in the earliest recorded philosophy, east and west. This intermingling of philosophical inquiry with religious themes and the broader enterprises of philosophy e. Only gradually do we find texts devoted exclusively to religious themes. Cudworth and his Cambridge University colleague Henry More produced philosophical work with a specific focus on religion and so, if one insisted on dating the beginning of philosophy of religion as a field, there are good reasons for claiming that it began gradually in the mid- 17th century see Taliaferro Today philosophy of religion is a robust, intensely active area of philosophy. Almost without exception, any introduction to philosophy text in the Anglophone world includes some philosophy of religion. The importance of philosophy of religion is chiefly due to its subject matter: A philosophical exploration of these topics involves fundamental questions about our place in the cosmos and about our relationship to what may transcend the cosmos. Such philosophical work requires an investigation into the nature and limit of human thought. Alongside these complex, ambitious projects, philosophy of religion has at least three factors that contribute to its importance for the overall enterprise of philosophy. Philosophy of religion addresses embedded social and personal practices. Philosophy of religion is therefore relevant to practical concerns; its subject matter is not all abstract theory. A chief point of reference in much philosophy of religion is the shape and content of living traditions. In this way, philosophy of religion may be informed by the other disciplines that study religious life. Another reason behind the importance of the field is its breadth. There are few areas of philosophy that are shorn of religious implications. Religious traditions are so comprehensive and all-encompassing in their claims that almost every domain of philosophy may be drawn upon in the philosophical investigation of their coherence, justification, and value. A third reason is historical. Most philosophers throughout the history of ideas, east and west, have addressed religious topics. One cannot undertake a credible history of philosophy without taking philosophy of religion seriously. While this field is vital for philosophy, philosophy of religion may also make a pivotal contribution to religious studies and theology. Religious studies often involve important methodological assumptions about history and about the nature and limits of religious experience. These invite philosophical assessment and debate. Theology may also benefit from philosophy of religion in at least two areas. Historically, theology has often drawn upon, or been influenced by, philosophy. Platonism and Aristotelianism have had a major influence on the articulation of classical Christian doctrine, and in the modern era theologians have often drawn on work by philosophers from Hegel to Heidegger and Derrida. The evaluation has at times been highly critical and dismissive, but there are abundant periods in the history of ideas when philosophy has positively contributed to the flourishing of religious life. This constructive interplay is not limited to the west. The role of philosophy in distinctive Buddhist views of knowledge and the self has been of great importance. At the beginning of the 21st century, a more general rationale for philosophy of religion should be cited: Philosophers of religion now often seek out common as well as distinguishing features of religious belief and practice. This study can enhance communication between traditions, and between religions and secular institutions.

The Meaningfulness of Religious Language A significant amount of work on the meaningfulness of religious language was carried out in the medieval period, with major contributions made by Maimonides , Thomas Aquinas , Duns Scotus , and William of Ockham In the modern era, the greatest concentration on religious language has taken place in response to logical positivism and to the latter work of Wittgenstein This section and the next highlights these two more recent movements. Logical positivism promoted an empiricist principle of meaning which was deemed lethal for religious belief. The following empiricist principle is representative: The stronger version of positivism is that claims about the world must be verifiable at least in principle. Both the weaker view with its more open ended reference to evidence and the strict view in principle confirmation delimit meaningful discourse about the world. Ostensibly factual claims that have no implications for our

empirical experience are empty of content. In line with this form of positivism, A. Ayer and others claimed that religious beliefs were meaningless. How might one empirically confirm that God is omnipresent or loving or that Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu? In an important debate in the 1950s and 1960s, philosophical arguments about God were likened to debates about the existence and habits of an unobservable gardener, based on a parable by John Wisdom in 1956. The idea of a gardener who is not just invisible but who also cannot be detected by any sensory faculty seemed nonsense. It seemed like nonsense because they said there was no difference between an imperceptible gardener and no gardener at all. Using this garden analogy and others crafted with the same design, Antony Flew in his essay in Mitchell made the case that religious claims do not pass the empirical test of meaning. The field of philosophy of religion in the 1950s and 1960s was largely an intellectual battlefield where the debates centered on whether religious beliefs were meaningful or conceptually absurd. Empirical verificationism is by no means dead. Some critics of the belief in an incorporeal God continue to advance the same critique as that of Flew and Ayer, albeit with further refinements. Michael Martin and Kai Nielsen are representatives of this approach. And yet despite these efforts, empiricist challenges to the meaningfulness of religious belief are now deemed less impressive than they once were. In the history of the debate over positivism, the most radical charge was that positivism is self-refuting. The empiricist criterion of meaning itself does not seem to be a statement that expresses the formal relation of ideas, nor does it appear to be empirically verifiable. How might one empirically verify the principle? At best, the principle of verification seems to be a recommendation as to how to describe those statements that positivists are prepared to accept as meaningful. But then, how might a dispute about which other statements are meaningful be settled in a non-arbitrary fashion? If the positivist principle is tightened up too far, it seems to threaten various propositions that at least appear to be highly respectable, such as scientific claims about physical processes and events that are not publicly observable. For example, what are we to think of states of the universe prior to all observation of physical strata of the cosmos that cannot be observed directly or indirectly but only inferred as part of an overriding scientific theory? Or what about the mental states of other persons, which may ordinarily be reliably judged, but which, some argue, are under-determined by external, public observation? Also worrisome was the wholesale rejection by positivists of ethics as a cognitive, normative practice. The dismissal of ethics as non-cognitive had some embarrassing *ad hominem* force against an empiricist like Ayer, who regarded ethical claims as lacking any truth value and yet at the same time he construed empirical knowledge in terms of having the right to certain beliefs. Can an ethics of belief be preserved if one dispenses with the normativity of ethics? The strict empiricist account of meaning was also charged as meaningless on the grounds that there is no coherent, clear, basic level of experience with which to test propositional claims. A mystic might well claim to experience the unity of a timeless spirit everywhere present. Ayer allowed that in principle mystical experience might give meaning to religious terms. Those who concede this appeared to be on a slippery slope leading from empirical verificationism to mystical verificationism.

Alston A growing number of philosophers in the 1950s and 1960s were led to conclude that the empiricist challenge was not decisive. Critical assessments of positivism can be found in work by, among others, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, and John Foster. One of the most sustained lessons from the encounter between positivism and the philosophy of religion is the importance of assessing the meaning of individual beliefs in comprehensive terms. Carl Hempel developed the following critique of positivism, pointing the way to a more comprehensive analysis of the meaning of ostensible propositional claims. But no matter how one might reasonably delimit the class of sentences qualified to introduce empirically significant terms, this new approach [by the positivists] seems to me to lead to the realization that cognitive significance cannot well be construed as a characteristic of individual sentences, but only of more or less comprehensive systems of sentences corresponding roughly to scientific theories. A closer study of this point suggests strongly that the idea of cognitive significance, with its suggestion of a sharp distinction between significant and non-significant sentences or systems of such, has lost its promise and fertility and that it had better be replaced by certain concepts which admit of differences in degree, such as the formal simplicity of a system; its explanatory and predictive power; and its degree of conformation relative to the available evidence. The analysis and theoretical reconstruction of these concepts seems to offer the most promising way of

advancing further the clarification of the issues implicit in the idea of cognitive significance. Hempel , If Hempel is right, the project initiated by Ayer had to be qualified, taking into account larger theoretical frameworks. Religious claims could not be ruled out at the start but should be allowed a hearing with competing views of cognitive significance. Ayer himself later conceded that the positivist account of meaning was unsatisfactory Ayer With the retreat of positivism in the s, philosophers of religion re-introduced concepts of God, competing views of the sacred, and the like, which were backed by arguments that appealed not to narrow scientific confirmation but to broad considerations of coherence, breadth of explanation, simplicity, religious experience, and other factors. But before turning to this material, it is important to consider a debate within philosophy of religion that was largely inspired by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Religious Forms of Life and Practices Wittgenstein launched an attack on what has been called the picture theory of meaning, according to which statements may be judged true or false depending upon whether reality matches the picture represented by the belief. It gives rise to insoluble philosophical problems and it misses the whole point of having religious beliefs, which is that the meaning is to be found in the life in which they are employed. By shifting attention away from the referential meaning of words to their use, Wittgenstein promoted the idea that we should attend to what he called forms of life. As this move was applied to religious matters, a number of philosophers either denied or at least played down the extent to which religious forms of life involve metaphysical claims. Phillips have all promoted this approach to religion. It may be considered non-realist in the sense that it does not treat religious beliefs as straightforward metaphysical claims that can be adjudicated philosophically as either true or false concerning an objective reality. By their lights, the traditional metaphysics of theism got what it deserved when it came under attack in the mid-twentieth century by positivists. This Wittgensteinian challenge, then, appears to place in check much of the way philosophers in the west have approached religion. When, for example, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, and Hume argued for and against the justification of belief in God, metaphysics was at the forefront. The same preoccupation with the truth or falsehood of religious belief is also central to ancient and medieval philosophical reflection about the Divine. At least two reasons may support recent non-realism. First, it has some credibility based on the sociology of religion. Religion seems pre-eminently to be focused upon how we live. A second reason that might be offered is that the classical and contemporary arguments for specific views of God have seemed unsuccessful to many philosophers though not to all, as observed in section 4. Non-realist views have their critics from the vantage point both of atheists such as Michael Martin and theists such as Roger Trigg. By way of a preliminary response it may be pointed out that even if a non-realist approach is adopted this would not mean altogether jettisoning the more traditional approach to religious beliefs. If one of the reasons advanced on behalf of non-realism is that the traditional project fails, then ongoing philosophy of religion will still require investigating to determine whether in fact the tradition does fail. As John Dewey once observed, philosophical ideas not only never die, they never fade away. A more substantial reply to Wittgensteinian non-realism has been the charge that it does not preserve but instead undermines the very intelligibility of religious practice. Let us concede that religious practice is antecedent to philosophical theories that justify the practiceâ€”a concession not shared by all.