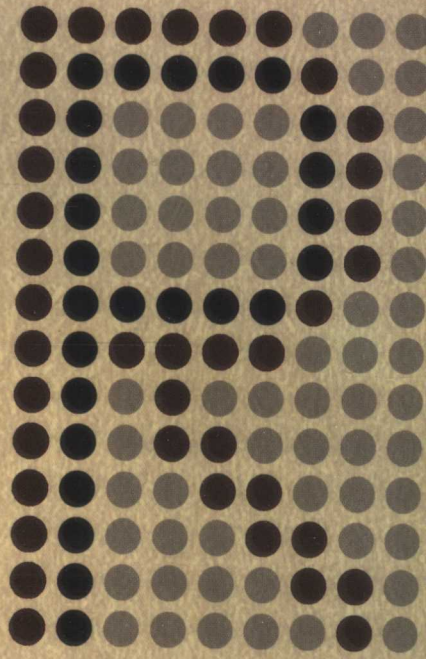
Philosophy of Religion

宗教哲学经典选读

MELVILLE Y. STEWART XING TAOTAO



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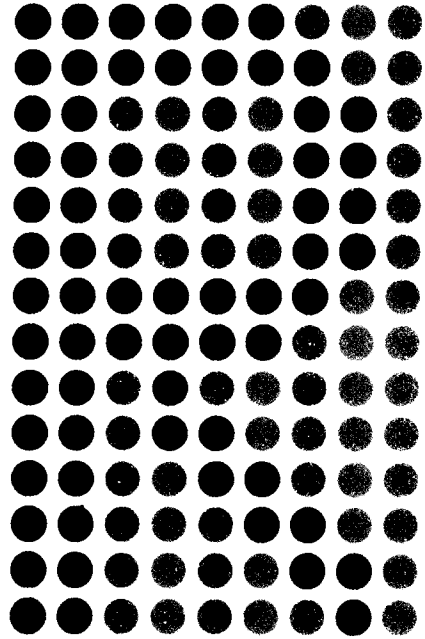

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PREFACE

It has been with a special sense of pleasure that we have been able to work together in the production of this new anthology in philosophy of religion. Seven thousands miles separate us, but the computer world has helped shrink those miles for this exciting collaborative venture.

The range includes nine areas of specialty falling under the philosophy of religion rubric. Various key authors from the past are included so as to provide historical perspectives on issues and problems discussed.

The scholars enlisted are well recognized, and many have submitted their most recent contribution to their respective fields of specialty. We have had to work within certain space constraints but this has pushed us to include only the very best out there.

Philosophy of religion is of special interest to the current Chinese scholarly world. Universities in China are developing new religious studies departments attracting a whole new genre of students gifted to pursue issues relating to the religious. It has been the delight of both editors to sense that interest and excitement as it is found in the classroom.

Inquiry into the religious affects all other disciplines. The critical reflective processes of philosophical inquiry can aid the human spirit in this its most lofty of pursuits, namely, knowledge when available of the ultimate origin of things and their respective destinies.

We are very grateful to the editors of Peking University Press for the invitation and their interest in the project from the very beginning. We also want to thank the Press for allowing the inclusion of illustrations thereby signaling and enhancing each topic in the Collection.

Peking University Department Chair of Philosophy, Zhao Dunhua, is to be thanked for his supportive and affirmative role, as is also Bethel University Department Chair, Paul Reasoner for making the Copy Center facilities available for manuscript preparation.

Special thanks to our friend, Professor Bruce Reichenbach (Augsburg College), for his careful reading of various parts of the manuscript that led to needed refinements.

We want to thank five undergraduate students at Bethel University, Joshua D. Bau III, Daniel Farmer, Justin Marshall, Jason Markley, and Mike Nordin for their careful proofreading of the manuscript. They have thus contributed to the overall quality of the work.

But we especially want to thank Ms Marie Balsley Taylor for her masterful and artistic preparation of the manuscript. Without her careful attention to detail many errors and stylistic shortcomings would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Our special thanks to Professor Richard Swinburne of Oxford University for writing the *Forward*, and for his contributions to several topics in the Collection.

We also want to thank various publishing houses in the West for making articles previously published accessible for inclusion in this work without fee, thereby allowing a potentially greater audience.

We look forward to the appearance and wide circulation of this English Edition venture.We wish all who read these pages a challenging and inspiring experience in the pursuit of wisdom in an area of inquiry so abundantly endowed with mystery, so rich with intri-

igue, and so lofty in respect to its subject matter. If and when truth shines forth, it is our hope that it will both exhilarate and liberate the human spirit.

Xing Taotao (Peking University)

Melville Y. Stewart (Bethel University)
Editors

FORWARD

Richard Swinburne

The early Greek philosophers of twenty five centuries ago gave philosophical form to those ultimate questions which should concern every human being-why does the world exist, what makes actions good and bad, are we really free when we make choices, what will happen to us after death? When Greek philosophy met the Christian religion, and the similar theistic (that is God-centered) religions of Judaism and Islam, these questions came to be expressed in ways which challenged those religions-did God make the world, does God's choice determine which actions are good or bad, does God cause humans to do what they do and if so do we deserve blame for doing wrong, is the essential part of each of us an immaterial soul to which (perhaps with a new body) God will give a new life after death?

These questions and all the other questions examined in this anthology were discussed in rigorous detail by the philosophers of the medieval West such as Anselm, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus; and again, with sensitivity to the developing modern science, by all the great philosophers of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe-Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume and Kant. But with the nineteenth and early twentieth century many philosophers of Europe and America no longer believed that religious answers had much plausibility. The late twentieth century however saw a considerable revival of interest among philosophers of the English speaking world in religious answers to these perennial questions. Philosophers began to apply their philosophical skills to the claims of religion, using in their work all the tools and theories being developed in branches of philosophy other than the philosophy of religion: the tools of deductive logic and the calculus of probability, and different theories of knowledge and justification, of morality and of meaning. Using these tools and theories, and sensitive to the latest developments in the sciences, they have put religious claims under a powerful philosophical microscope, asking what do these claims mean, are they true, and are we justified in holding them. This anthology contains examples of the very best of such work focussed on claims central to theistic religions. In order to bring out the historical background to modern discussions, it includes some extracts from classical works. But most of the papers are very recent, some published for the first time. Some of the authors favour the religious viewpoint, some attack it; but all think the issues to be of very great importance, and try to expound their own view with clarity and vigour. The final section of the anthology begins a philosophical examination of non-Western religions; and we can expect that much further philosophical work will in due course develop the approaches illustrated in this anthology to give the great religions of the East the thorough philosophical analysis which they deserve. It matters greatly which if any religious beliefs are true; and I congratulate the editors on producing a new large relevant anthology, covering different central topics and representative of different viewpoints, which will help philosophy students and the wider educated public to sort out their own views on these all-important questions.

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INTRODUCTION

There is probably no area in contemporary Western philosophy more exciting and engaging than philosophy of religion. The plethora of books and articles on topics falling within its domain evidences unmistakably the avid interest of philosophers, both those disposed to religious belief as well as those inclined to reject it. This is partly due to the interconnectedness of the topics generally associated with philosophy of religion. Some find a never-ending fascination with trying to weave various initially discordant strands into a coherent meaningful whole, while others, contrariwise, see nothing but loose ends and disconnectedness. For example, some, notably atheists, view the existence of evil as incompatible with one or more of God's attributes. Others argue that the amount of evil in the world makes God's existence strongly improbable. Theists have tried to address the former problem with various consistency strategies and the latter with evidential arguments designed to hold the line for the probability of God's existence. There is also a cluster of troublesome and difficult questions relating to Christian theistic beliefs about God's sovereignty and how it relates to human freedom and responsibility. The questions are indeed multivarious and often perplexing if not daunting; the stakes are as high as any life presents.

But perhaps the chief reason for philosophy of religion's attraction is the fact that considerations having to do with the existence and nature of a Supreme Being raises issues of ultimate concern. No issue surpasses it in terms of importance, ramification and implication. All else one endeavors to affirm in philosophy pivots, and rightly so, on claims made regarding whether such a being exists, and what sort of beliefs properly follow from affirmation or denial of God's existence.

Two basic orientations prevail in the literature in the West, the analytic way of thinking, or as some prefer to call it, Anglo-American philosophy, and Continental philosophy. The latter finds some representation in this collection, but some readers no doubt may think it not enough. The analytic is given greater attention for a number of reasons, only a few of which are only briefly stated here. Scant if any attention is given to arguments for the existence of God by Continental authors. Other topics typically included in Western philosophy of religion texts are also sparsely covered if at all, such as miracles, and other evidential sorts of topics, like the problem of evil.

As for further representative balance, not only are the non-theists given a significant voice, authors from the three mainstream Christian traditions, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox can be found in their respective distinctiveness. A choice is apparent with regard to numbers of authors. Wholeness of an essay has been an important criterion rather than numbers of authors. We've attempted to put together the best of the most recent materials available, some of which appears in book form for the first time.

The topics selected are something of an index to the bulk of the literature: faith and reason, arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, the attributes of God, miracles, religion and science, religion and ethics, death, identity, immortality and resurrection, and religious pluralism. Unlike my earlier anthology, *Philosophy of Religion, An Anthology of Contemporary Views* (also in a Chinese Edition), this new collection includes historical as well as contemporary authors. Philosophy can't be properly grasped apart from its historical context. One regret is that page constraints didn't allow a fuller historical panorama. The topics are briefly described below.

I. Faith and Reason

Six articles cover a spectrum of options ranging from the fideism of Søren Kierkegaard, the Reformed epistemological approach of Alvin Plantinga, the reason/faith model of Thomas Aquinas, the reason-of-the-heart slant of Jonathan Edwards, the probabilistic epistemic account of religious belief of Richard Swinburne, and finally Ludwig Wittgenstein's theology-of-grammar approach to the meaning of religious language. In no section should the order be viewed as an ascending scale from the least attractive to the most or as suggesting a progressive advance. These sorts of appraisals are left to the discretion of the reader.

The first, by Robbert Merrihew Adams, sets the stage for a consideration of fideism by critically examining three arguments offered by Kierkegaard in defense of his finely tuned fideism (the view that reason and argument are inappropriate to God's call to faith), the approximation, postponement, and passion arguments. Adams judges that while none of the arguments work—the first is faulty, and the second and third have an imbedded notion of religiousness Adams finds objectionable; he nonetheless concludes that Kierkegaard's case works with a more substantial logical structure than he is ordinarily viewed as having; moreover, he is judged as having more difficulty getting away from objective justification than he was willing to allow.

Having given an initial sketch of the Aquinas/Calvin model for warranted Christian belief in Chapter 6 (of *Warranted Christian Belief*), in this excerpt from Chapter 8, Alvin Plantinga expands on its chief aspects to show that Christian beliefs such as belief in God, the Trinity, the resurrection, etc., can be said to be *justified*, *rational* and *to have warrant*. God's rescue of humanity from fallenness is communicated via a three-tiered cognitive process as follows: (1) the production of the Scriptures; (2) the presence and action of the Holy Spirit; (3) a response of faith involving a cognitive component. The third, *faith* according to Aquinas and Calvin is a work of the Holy Spirit that also involves a "trio of processes," (1) the belief, (2) a divine teaching (content), and (3) a special divine activity. The model proposed means that a Christian can have *justification*, *internal* and *external rationality* and *warrant* for his beliefs. Basic Christian beliefs, on Plantinga's account can be and probably are (deontologically) *justified*. Such beliefs may also be *internally rational*, that is if they issue from a properly functioning belief-forming mechanism, and the believer has done his best to assist in their formulation. *Warrant* and *external rationality* may also be claimed providing four conditions are met: (1) the beliefs accepted by faith (a) are instigated of the Holy Spirit, and (b) are produced by a cognitive process working properly; (2) the cognitive environment is suited to the cognitive process; (3) the process is designed to produce true beliefs; (4) the beliefs produced are in fact true. Finally, regarding proper basicality and the Scriptures, as God's vehicle for communication of his message, the Scriptures are accepted because they are *self-authenticating*, that is, their acceptance does not rest upon the evidence of other beliefs.

In his article "On Faith," Thomas Aquinas examines the nature of faith, its corresponding gifts, knowledge and understanding, its opposing vices, and faith as a virtue. Faith is that which gives assent to the truth of God, and faith's object of knowledge is not a proposition, but the object which the proposition may be said to *describe*, the *heavenly vision*. The *light of faith* does not direct us to things that are seen, but to things which are above. He distinguishes two ways of knowing, the path of natural reason, and faith. Working with the former, one may come to give assent to first principles (by the natural light of reason), and following the mode of faith, one may perceive the *invisible things of God*. The latter is a complement to the former. There is a rational side to faith, if the believer is moved by the authority of God vindicated by the miraculous.

The piece by William J. Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Heart," treats the reader to one of America's greatest philosophers in the Christian tradition. Edwards falls within the Reformed tradition, and so contrary to Aquinas, he evidences a strong distrust of humanity's natural capacities, and hence of natural reason. At the same time, he is heir to the strong confidence in reason generally associated with the Continental rationalists and the British empiricists. Wainwright tries to show in a qualified way how Edwards weaves elements of these two traditions, the Reformed tradition, and English rational enlightenment confidence in rationality together in a reason-and-the-heart way, through a specially tuned evidentialism/f-oundationalism. Belief must rest on sufficient evidence. Edwards further insists that evidence must be met with a *passion* issuing from the *heart.*

In his article, "What Kinds of Religious Beliefs are Worth Having?," Richard Swinburne emphasizes that different philosophers provide different accounts of what makes belief *justified* or *warranted.* He is concerned with, not which of these accounts is correct (because such terms as *justified* or *warranted* are often used in very different senses in ordinary languages), but with what kind of justification or warrant do we need for our religious beliefs. He argues that we need beliefs which are probably true, since it would be silly, for example, to worship a God who almost certainly did not exist. He allows, by his *principle of credulity*, that anyone who has the evidence of a very strong personal experience of God has evidence which renders it probable that there is a God. But he considers that most people are not in this position and so they need arguments which start from publicly available evidence (such as the orderliness of the universe) to the existence of God, if their belief that there is a God is to be justified in a useful sense. He claims that such a theory of warrant as Plantinga's externalism, has the consequence that anyone whose beliefs are produced by a process such as Plantinga describes has no means of checking up on whether that process does yield true beliefs, and so no means of improving the quality of one's beliefs.

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein words do not have a fixed essential meaning (as he thought when he wrote the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*), but are to be understood in the context of their use. Thus when it comes to religious terms and religious language games, he thought that the believer/theologian needs to pay attention to the sorts of things the rules of conversation permit one to say about such things as *angels*, *life after death* and *God.* His general proposal is thus a theology of grammar where religious expressions/utterances are to be understood in terms of their use.

The contemporary literature takes the reader well beyond the simple options of faith, or reason, or a simple combination of the two. Kierkegaard's fideism is presented from a non-favorable point of view. According to Plantinga's external epistemological model, a religious belief may be said to be *justified, rational* and *have warrant* just in case it meets certain specific criteria. Swinburne takes a probabilistic/internalism line, contending that beliefs worth having are those which are judged probably true because of the strength of the evidence of relevant personal experience. Aquinas crafts a reason/faith model which begins with natural reason and its limits, and moves beyond reason's limits by way of a faith expansion which accesses special revelation. There are of course other options, and multifarious fine tunings in the literature.

II. Arguments for the Existence of God

Regarding arguments for God's existence, pages giving account of them seem to go *on without* end.

Anselm's piece is the *locus classicus* of the ontological argument for God's existence. It proceeds from a definition of *God's being* as ***that than which none greater can be conceived.***

From this definition he draws the conclusion that God exists, because if one hypothesizes that this being involves only mental existence, this leads to the absurdity that one can conceive of a greater than that than which nothing greater can be conceived, namely one which exists in the understanding and in reality. He concludes, God exists.

Bruce Reichenbach has provided the reader with the latest innovative formulations of Thomas Aquinas' cosmological proofs for God's existence, the Kalām form of the argument, and Swinburne's inductive cosmological argument. Reichenbach concludes that Swinburne's examination of the argument leaves us with questions as to what counts as an adequate explanation, of defining simplicity, and of determining prior probabilities. Another problem is examined, one that Aquinas was also aware of. Even if Aquinas' argument strategy works, he hasn't shown that the Uncaused Cause, the Unmoved Mover, the Necessary Being, is the God of Christian theism.

The piece by William Rowe, distinguishes the theist's task as having two parts, one which sets out to prove that a Necessary Being exists, and the other above, that of showing that this being is the God of Christian theism. Having drawn this distinction, he introduces his account of the principle of *Sufficient Reason*. He then proceeds to examine four objections to the argument, and comes to conclude that the major variant forms of the argument fail to achieve the objective of the first part, to show that there is a self-existent being.

Richard Swinburne in "The Argument from Laws of Nature," directs his discussion to the confirmatory force of the argument for God from the laws of nature. He concludes that the degree to which the universe is governed by simple laws of nature rather than being chaotic, adds to the probability of theism.

Robin Collins in his "Fine-Tuning Design Argument," appeals to recent findings of contemporary science which suggest that the universe is finely tuned in a way amazingly well-suited for human life, and that even slight variations from these regularities would mean that life as we know it would not have been able to exist. He examines a number of objections to his argument and responds in its defense.

The article by Merold Westphal, "Religious Experience and Self-Transcendence," is the first in this collection that works with the Continental method. His focus is upon religious experience: hence it is relevant to another argument for God's existence, the one from experience. This piece and the one that follows helps direct the reader along two tracks, the Continental and the Anglo-American.

Westphal begins by defining religious experience as *self-transcendence*. Considering various candidates for a proper sense of *self-transcendence*, he discounts both the *transcendence of intentionality* and contemplative or *ecstatic self-forgetfulness* because each retains the centrality of the self. An ethical move that refuses to grant center place to the will is taken as the final solution. He opines that only then can one encounter the *truly other*. But even this move does not absolve one from the possibility that true religion may generate self-deception about the presence of its substance. He finally sees self-transcendence as sometimes elusive and as a life-long pursuit if one is to experience a genuinely authentic Christian life.

William Alston in "Religious Experience and Religious Belief," argues that religious experience can serve as grounds for religious belief. His main contention is that the epistemology of religious experience is analogous to the epistemology of sense experience, even though there are disparities. The validity of sense experience is tied to *verifiability*, but because God is viewed as *wholly other*, these two categories are viewed as not applying to the epistemology of religious experience. His basic conclusion is that Christian Epistemic Practice (CP) has basically the same epistemic status as Perceptual Practice (PP) and furthermore, if one gives credence to the latter, then one should also see the propriety of the former.

Some of the main arguments on the scene today have been examined, the ontological, cosmological, the fine-tuning design argument, and the argument from experience. Once again, the reader is left to judge whether all, some combination, or none at all work or have value for the theistic apologist.

III. Problems of Evil and Defensive Strategies

There is an array of arguments against the theist based on evil, chief among which are the logical and probabilistic formulations. Various strategies have been formulated in response, ranging from a *defensive* scheme, which tends to be more modest than a *theodicy* because a *defense* is often intended only as a possible justification for allowing evil, whereas a *theodicy* may be tendered as a comprehensive justificatory scheme for all evils, sometimes with the added claim that the scheme is a close if not actual representation of God's reasons for allowing all of the evils that exist.

In his article, "Evil and Omnipotence," J. L. Mackie contends that Christian theists face a logical problem based on evil. It is his thesis that beliefs basic/central to the Christian faith, namely that (1) that God exists, (2) that he is omnipotent, omniscient, and omni-benevolent, and (3) that evil exists, together with two other propositions which are quasi-logical and boil down to (4) the God thus described in (2) above would eliminate every occurrence of evil, comprise a set that is logically inconsistent. He contends that the only way out for the theist is either to acknowledge that the system of Christian beliefs is inconsistent and so untenable, or to alter one of the basic beliefs, specifically (2), since (1) is essential to the Christian belief system, (3) is obviously true, and (4) is quasi-logical and so undeniably true. That part of (2) which he suggests needs to be altered is the claim that God is omnipotent. If theists somehow unpack this key attribute, say in a limited-God way, this would ease them out of the difficulty.

Robin Le Poidevin in "Can the Theist Refuse to Answer the Problem of Evil?", examines several alternatives for the believer. First is the approach which offers a full defense for the faith in the face of evil. The second avoids offering a justification for evil altogether. The fault Le Poidevin finds with the second is that it tends to make theism irrational or unintelligible.

In his piece, "The Greater Good Defense," Keith Yandell contends that because the God of Christian theism is all-good and all-powerful, these two beliefs *imply* some version of what he calls the *greater good defense*. That is, for every evil, there is at least a counterbalancing good, and the good in question logically requires the evil, or some evil like it, and there are some evils which are overbalanced by goods which logically require them or some evils like them. So on balance, the evil in the world is overbalanced by the goods.

Alvin Plantinga's "The Free Will Defense," is an updated modal version of Augustine's account of the same offered as a defense for God's allowing evil in his creation. That is, since God values *significant freedom* which involves choices between goods and evils, then if he wants creatures with this sort of freedom creating them brings about the possibility of evil in the world. Plantinga's modal version of the free will defense is developed in part as an answer to an objection raised by J. L. Mackie. Mackie contended that since God is all-knowing, even if he wanted creatures free, he could, since he is omniscient, bring about only those creatures whom he foreknew would choose only to do the good. Plantinga's counter to this is that while God is omnipotent, he can't bring about *just any* world that he *pleases*, *if* he wishes to bring about significantly free creatures. While he can (as the sole agent) *strongly actualize* such a world, following the mode of *weak actualization* (which involves both the divine and human agents), he cannot interfere with significantly free choices, and so he can't guarantee that the world he makes is free of evil. To clinch his case, Plantinga advances a transworld identity thesis, and

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