THINKING ABOUT GOD: The Search for the Ultimate

Defining Religion
- C. P. Tiele (1830-1902)
  “religion is, in truth, that pure and reverential disposition or frame of mind which we call __________.”
- F. H. Bradley (1846-1924)
  “religion is rather the attempt to express the complete reality of ______________ through every aspect of our being.”
- James Martineau (1805-1900)
  “religion is the belief in an ever living God, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding __________ relations with mankind.”
- Ninian Smart—6 “dimensions” of religion
  1. Ritual
  2. Mythological
  3. Doctrinal
  4. Ethical
  5. Social
  6. ________________________

Religion is a set of beliefs, actions, and emotions, both personal and corporate, organized around the concept of an Ultimate Reality.

- **Beliefs**
  Statements that are taken as ________.
- **Religious beliefs**
  How fundamental beliefs about the Ultimate are interpreted and expressed in real life.
- **The Intellectual dimension of a religion—**
  That part which gives meaning and points to the many actions and experiences of those who adhere to a given religion.
  - Philosophy considers consistency and __________ in beliefs
  - Philosophy can legitimately examine religious beliefs

Syllogism
- Religion is comprised of ______________
- There is an intellectual dimension to religious belief
- Philosophy considers the consistency and truth in beliefs using intellect
- Therefore: Philosophy is suited to investigate religion
The Study of Religion
- Psychology of religion
- Sociology of religion
- Anthropology of religion
- Religious History
- Comparative study of religions

What is the Philosophy of Religion?
The academic discipline that examines the intellectual dimension of religion is known as the philosophy of religion.

Philosophy
“To think hard about things that matter.”
—William Hendricks

Philosophical Method of Investigation
- The desire for clarity
- The need to be critical
- Opinions must be based on _____________ rather than preference or group conviction
- The construct approach
- Other areas of philosophy
  - Epistemology — theory of ______________
    - Can one have knowledge of religious belief?
    - Arguments for and against the Existence of God
    - Evidentialism — evidence for and against God / beliefs
  - Metaphysics — first causes for existence
  - Ethics

Traditional philosophy
- Truth or falsehood applied to theological belief

Natural Theology
- The belief that the existence of God and other religious beliefs can be established by philosophical argument

Phenomenological approach to religion
- “bracketing” or suspending argument to experience a religion
Analytic approach

- Analyzes the logic of ideas
- Focuses on the meanings of concepts
- Does not allow truth or false statements
- Mainly points to a bigger truth and reason

**Philosophy of religion** is the attempt to analyze and critically evaluate religious beliefs.

- Not dogmatic theology
- Not apologetics
  - Negative
  - Positive

**The God of Theism**

**Classical Theism**

- God is a ________________ being
- Transcendent
- Omnipotent
- Omniscient
- Perfectly good

**Missing The Heart Of Religion**

- Intellectual interest alone
- Abstract analysis of religious concepts
- Logical examination of theology
- “The God of the philosophers” _____ _____ “the God of religion”
- Nothing to offer devout faith

**Religious Faith**

- Involves personal trust in God
  - Based on beliefs about God
    - God exists
    - God is perfect in power
    - God has all knowledge
    - God operates with justice
  - ________ than an intellectual ascent
- Open to rational evaluation from outsiders
  - Even if that faith is immune from critical examination
- The believer may seek deeper understanding of their own faith
- St. Anselm (1033-1109)
  - “Faith seeking understanding”
The Nature of the Task

- To think philosophically about issues in religion, particularly theistic concepts of God
  - Does God exist?
  - Are miracles possible?
  - Why would a good God allow suffering?
  - Among many religions, can only one be true?