God

A brief philosophical introduction

III

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Series in Philosophy

VERNON PRESS

www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street, Suite 1200,
Wilmington, Delaware 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Philosophy

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021933250

ISBN: 978-1-64889-210-3

For

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Introduction

Religion

The great religions of the world are Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each of these great religions identifies the ultimate goal of a human being's life and it identifies a means *or* means to realise it. Here is an example: in Buddhism, the ultimate goal of a human being's life is to realise a particular state of being, *viz.* nirvāṇa;[1] the Eightfold Path is the means to realise it.

This ultimate goal is related in each great religion to something which is good and which is greater in value than anything else and which is not in a human being's ordinary experience. Here is an example: in Buddhism, the ultimate goal of a human being's life is related to something, *viz.* nirvāṇa, which is good; it is greater in value than anything else; it is not in a human being's ordinary experience.

There is a report (or reports) of an experience of this thing and a number of beliefs about it and a number of practices in relation to it in each of these great religions. Here is an example: in Buddhism, there is a report of an experience of this state of being in the life of the Buddha[2] and in the life of others; there is a belief about it that a human being does not have the "basic impurities" of a human being in it; there is the practice of the Eightfold Path in relation to it.

This thing is God in some of these great religions.[3] Traditionally, God is a thing which is alive and which is non-physical and which is among other things all-knowing and all-powerful and morally perfect and eternal and which has to be so and which has brought about the physical universe and human beings and which sustains the physical universe and human beings and which cares about the physical universe and human beings. God is worthy of worship. Someone who believes that God exists is *a theist*. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the prime examples of religions which are theistic.

Analytic philosophy, the philosophy of religion, and this work

The western tradition of philosophy begins with the ancient Greeks in the 6th century BCE.[4] This tradition includes a sub-tradition, *viz.* analytic philosophy. This sub-tradition begins in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. It is pre-dominant in the English-speaking world today. The origins of it lie in the work of (among others) Gottlob Frege and George Edward Moore and Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Analytic philosophy includes regularly the analysis of (some) fundamental concepts;[5] it includes regularly the identification of arguments for this or that claim; it includes regularly the critical assessment of arguments for this or that claim; and, it is regularly detailed and rigorous.

The philosophy of religion is a sub-discipline of analytic philosophy. This sub-discipline is concerned above all with the claim that God exists. Its concern above all is with the analysis of the concept or nature of God *and* with arguments for and against the existence of God.[6]

This is a work in analytic philosophy. It is concerned in the main with the analysis of the nature God and with arguments for and against the existence of God. So, it is concerned in the main with what the philosophy of religion is concerned with above all.

An explanation of some key words or expressions used in (the analytic tradition of) philosophy and how some words or expressions are re-stated in this work

Analysis

The analysis of this or that is the following: the identification of its (ultimate) constituents. The analysis of this or that is regularly the identification of the constituents which are required and which are enough for it. Here is an example: the tripartite analysis of *someone knows this or that.* (This analysis of *someone knows this or that* is as follows: (that) this or that *is* the case; he *believes* (that) this or that; he has *sufficient grounds* or *justification* for his belief.[7])

What is required for this or that is regularly stated after the words "only if": this or that *only if* _____ - _____ is a

statement of what is required. Here are some such statements: someone knows this or that *only if* (that) this or that is the case; someone knows this or that *only if* he believes (that) this or that; someone knows this or that *only if* he has sufficient grounds or justification for his belief.

What is enough for this or that is regularly stated after the word "if": this or that *if* _____ - _____ is a statement of what is enough. Here is such a statement: someone knows this or that *if* (that) this or that is the case and he believes (that) this or that and he has sufficient grounds or justification for his belief.

What is required and what is enough for this or that is regularly stated after the words "if and only if" (or "*iff*"): this or that *if and only if* (or *iff*) _____ - _____ is a statement of what is required and what is enough. Here is such a statement: someone knows this or that *if and only if* (or *iff*) (that) this or that is the case and he believes (that) this or that and he has sufficient grounds or justification for his belief.

What is required for this or that is stated in another way in this work: *not* this or that *unless* _____ - _____ is a statement of what is required. Here are some such statements: someone does *not* know this or that *unless* (that) this or that is the case; someone does *not* know this or that *unless* he believes (that) this or that; someone does *not* know this or that *unless* he has sufficient grounds or justification for his belief.

What is enough for this or that is also stated in another way in this work: this or that *in case* _____ - _____ is a statement of what is enough. Here is such a statement: someone knows this or that *in case* (that) this or that is the case and he

believes (that) this or that and he has sufficient grounds or justification for his belief.

Finally, what is required and what is enough for this or that is also stated in another way in this work: this or that *just in case* _____ - _____ is a statement of what is required and what is enough. Here is such a statement: someone knows this or that *just in case* (that) this or that is the case and he believes (that) this or that and he has sufficient grounds or justification for his belief.

Argument(s)

An argument includes statements *or* propositions. (Statements *or* propositions have values: either the value *true* or the value *false*.[8]) An argument includes one *or* more statements *or* propositions which purportedly support another statement *or* proposition. The initial propositions *or* statements are premises and the proposition *or* statement they purportedly support is the conclusion. (A conclusion is preceded in ordinary discourse in English by a word such as "so" or "therefore".)

In a *valid* argument, the premises are such that the conclusion *follows* from them. Here is an example of such an argument: the Tate is a gallery; a gallery exhibits works of art; so, the Tate exhibits works of art. (The statement *or* proposition that the Tate is a gallery and the statement *or* proposition that a gallery exhibits works of art are the premises. The statement *or* proposition that the Tate exhibits works of art is the conclusion. The premises are such that the conclusion follows from them. Hence, this is a valid argument.) A valid argument is *sound* just in case its premises are true.

Incidentally, there is a form of argument which is used regularly in this work. It is used in order to establish that this or that statement *or* proposition is untrue. It includes one *or* more initial premises which are true and it includes this statement *or* proposition as a further premise, *viz.* a supposition, and it includes a further statement *or* proposition which follows and which is absurd. It concludes that this statement *or* proposition, *viz.* the supposition, is untrue for it is included and a further and absurd statement *or* proposition as a result follows. (This form of argument is referred to as *reductio ad absurdum*.)

In an *inductively strong* argument, the premises are such that the conclusion is *probable*. Here is an example of such an argument: water has boiled whenever we have heated it to a certain temperature; so, all water boils when it is heated to that temperature. (The statement *or* proposition that water has boiled whenever we have heated it to a certain temperature is the premise. The statement *or* proposition that all water boils when it is heated to that temperature is the conclusion. The premise is such that the conclusion is probable. Hence, this is an inductively strong argument.)

In an argument which is *not valid* and which is *not inductively strong*, the premises are *not* such that the conclusion follows from them *or* that the conclusion is probable. Here is an example of such an argument: the River Thames is polluted; so, there are visitors to the Tate gallery. (The statement *or* proposition that the River Thames is polluted is the premise. The statement *or* proposition that there are visitors to the Tate gallery is the conclusion. The premise is *not* such that the conclusion follows from it *or* that the conclusion is probable. Hence, this is an argument which is not valid and which is not inductively strong.)

Modal expressions

Here is a modal expression: *it is possible that*. This expression operates on statements *or* propositions to form more complex statements *or* propositions. It is an *operator*. Here is an example of its use: it is possible that the Tate gallery is not in London.

Here is another modal expression: *it is necessary that*. This expression also operates on statements *or* propositions to form more complex statements *or* propositions. It is an operator. Here is an example of its use: it is necessary that *3* is greater than *2*.

Here is another modal expression: *it is impossible that*. This expression also operates on statements *or* propositions to form more complex statements *or* propositions. It is an operator. Here is an example of its use: it is impossible that a thing is not identical with itself.

These expressions are stated in another way in this work. The expression "it is possible that" is stated as follows: *it can be that*. (It also operates on statements *or* propositions to form more complex statements *or* propositions.) Here is example of its use: it can be that the Tate gallery is not in London.

The modal expression "it is necessary that" is stated as follows: *it cannot be that* _____ *is not so* or, in places, *it has to be that*. (They also operate on statements *or* propositions to form more complex statements *or* propositions.) Here is example of the use of "it cannot be that _____ is not so": it cannot be that *3* is greater than *2* is not so.

The modal expression "it is impossible that" is stated as follows: *it cannot be that*. (It also operates on statements *or* propositions to form more complex statements *or* propositions.) Here is an example of its use: it cannot be that a thing is not identical with itself.

A way to understand these expressions is in terms of *possible worlds*. A possible world is how things as a whole, *viz.* a world, can be.[9] Here is how these expressions are understood in terms of possible worlds using examples from the preceding paragraphs. The first example, *viz.* it is possible that the Tate gallery is not in London, is understood as follows: there is a possible world which is such that the Tate gallery is not in London in it. The second example, *viz.* it is necessary that *3* is greater than *2*, is understood as follows: every possible world is such that *3* is greater than *2* in it. The third example, *viz.* it is impossible that a thing is not identical with itself, is understood as follows: there is no possible world which is such that a thing is not identical with itself in it. (Here is another statement of how it is understood: there is no possible world which is such that it includes a thing and that thing is not identical with itself.)

Some of the (fundamental) kinds of there are and some of their features according to this work

One of the principal concerns of western philosophy (including analytic philosophy) has been the following question: what (fundamental) kinds of thing are there? (This particular question is a concern of another sub-discipline, *viz.* ontology.) Well, here are some of the kinds of there are and some of their features according to this work.

Abstract and concrete things, states of affairs, facts, and (intrinsic) value

Things are abstract *or* concrete. Abstract things among other things are not in space and they do not change intrinsically and they are such that someone is able only to (mentally) apprehend them. Here are some examples of abstract things: concepts; propositions; numbers; possible worlds; states of affairs; properties.

Here are some examples of concrete things: God; instants and seconds; areas of space; the planets; the island which includes England; the Tate gallery in London. (Some concrete things such as God are not in space. Some concrete things such as an instant of time do not change intrinsically.)

Abstract things include states of affairs.[10] Here are some examples of states of affairs: that *3* is greater than *2*; that a thing is identical with itself; that the Tate gallery is in London; that the Tate gallery is one of a number of galleries in London; that *3* is not greater than *2*; that a thing is not identical with itself.

States of affairs are not conjunctive *or* conjunctive. The states of affairs in the pen-ultimate sentence are not conjunctive. The states of affairs which follow are conjunctive: that *3* is greater than *2 and* a thing is identical with itself; that the Tate gallery is in London *and* the Tate gallery is one of a number of galleries in London; that *3* is not greater than *2 and* a thing is not identical with itself.

States of affairs obtain *or* they do not obtain. Some states of affairs obtain and they have to obtain. Here are some examples: that *3* is greater than *2*; that a thing is identical with itself; that *3* is greater than *2* and a thing is identical with itself. (Such states of affairs are such that things *are* as they are in them *and* in that case it can be that things are as they are in them *and* indeed it cannot be that things are not as they are in them.)

Some states of affairs obtain and they do *not* have to obtain. Here are some examples: that the Tate gallery is in London; that the Tate gallery is one of a number of galleries in London; that the Tate gallery is in London and the Tate gallery is one of a number of galleries in London. (Such states of affairs are such that things *are* as they are in them *and* in that case it can be that things are as they are in them *and* it can be that things are *not* as they are in them.) States of affairs which obtain *represent* how things *are*.

Some states of affairs do not obtain and they *cannot* obtain. Here are some examples: that *3* is *not* greater than *2*; that a thing is *not* identical with itself; that *3* is *not* greater than *2* and a thing is *not* identical with itself. (Such states of affairs are such that things are *not* as they are in them *and* indeed it cannot be that things are as they are in them.[11])

Some states of affairs do not obtain and they can obtain. Here are some examples: that the Tate gallery is *not* in London; that the Tate gallery is *not* one of a number of galleries in London; that the Tate gallery is not in London and the Tate gallery is not one of a number of galleries in London. (Such states of affairs are such that things are *not* as they are in them *and* it can be that things are as they are in them.) States of affairs which do *not* obtain do *not* represent how things *are*. (States of affairs which are such that it can be that things are as they are in them represent how it can be that things are whether they obtain *or* they do not obtain.)

A state of affairs is *a part of* some other state of affairs just in case it has to be that it obtains in case that other state of affairs obtains. Here is an example: the state of affairs that the Tate gallery is in London is a part of the state of affairs that the Tate gallery is in London and the Tate gallery is one of a number of galleries in London for it has to be that it obtains in case the latter state of affairs obtains.[12]

Some parts of other states of affairs are (temporally) immediate parts of them and others are (temporally) non-immediate parts of them. A part is a (temporally) immediate part of some other state of affairs just in case it is a part of that other state of affairs *and* that other state of affairs – in case it obtains - obtains at some time and it obtains at that time, too. Here is an example: the state of affairs that the Tate gallery is in London is a (temporally) immediate part of the state of affairs that the Tate gallery is in London and the Tate gallery is one of a number of galleries in London. (It has to be that it obtains in case the latter state of affairs obtains *and* the latter state of affairs – in case it obtains - obtains at some time and it obtains at that time, too.)

A part is a (temporally) non-immediate part of some other state of affairs just in case it is a part of that other state of affairs *and* that other state of affairs – in case it obtains - obtains at some time and it does *not* obtain at that time.

Here is an example: the state of affairs that God judges human beings at some time is a (temporally) non-immediate part of the state of affairs that God brings about (in the very first instance) human beings who possess the power to act freely and who possess the power to lead lives. (It has to be that it obtains in case the latter state of affairs obtains *and* the latter state of affairs – in case it obtains – obtains at some time and it does *not* obtain at that time.)

What is a *fact*? Well, *this or that* in case the state of affairs that (that) this or that obtains. The *this or that* is a fact. Here is an example: *the Tate gallery is in London* in case the state of affairs that the Tate gallery is in London obtains; *the Tate gallery is in London* is a *fact*.

It can be that this or that in case the state of affairs that (that) this or that can obtain. This, *viz.* it can be that there is (that) this or that, is a fact in case that is so. Here is an example: it can be that the Tate Gallery is in London in case the state of affairs that the Tate gallery is in London can obtain; this, *viz.* it can be that the Tate Gallery is in London, is a fact in case that is so.

There are facts and they have to be facts. Here is an example: *3* is greater than *2*. This is so and this has to be so. This is so

and this has to be so for the state of affairs that *3* is greater than *2* obtains *and* it has to obtain.

There are facts and they do not have to be facts. Here is an example: the Tate gallery is in London. This is so and this does not have to be so. This is so and this does not have to be so for the state of affairs that the Tate gallery obtains *and* it does not have to obtain.

Finally, *this or that* has an (intrinsic) *value*. (The theistic traditions of the Middle East and other traditions also maintain that what is so has an intrinsic value.) Let us take it that states of affairs which can obtain - whether they obtain *or* they do not obtain - also have this value in order to facilitate this discussion. States of affairs which *can* obtain *alone* have a value.

The value of a state of affairs (which can obtain) is good *or* bad *or* neutral. Here are some examples of good states of affairs: that someone is undertaking an act with good intentions; that someone is happy; that something is functioning properly; that something is well-proportioned.

Here are some examples of bad states of affairs: that someone is undertaking an act with bad intentions; that someone is unhappy; that something is not functioning properly; that something is not well-proportioned.

Here are some examples of neutral states of affairs: that someone is not undertaking an act with good intentions; that someone is not happy; that there is a small hole in the earth; that there is a small stone in the earth.

Good states of affairs and bad states of affairs have *a degree* of value. So, they have *relations* to each other: *greater than*; *equal to*; *less than*. Here is an example: the degree of value of the good state of affairs that someone is happy and someone else is happy is greater than the degree of value of the good state of affairs that that someone alone is happy.

Good states of affairs and bad states of affairs and neutral states of affairs also have relations to each other: *better than*; *neither better than nor worse than*; *worse than*. Here are some examples of these relations: a good state of affairs is better than a neutral state of affairs; a neutral state of affairs is neither better than nor worse than some other neutral state of affairs; a bad state of affairs is worse than a neutral state of affairs.

Some states of affairs are such that their value *or* their degree of value is determined by their parts. Here is an example: the value of the state of affairs that someone is not unhappy and someone else is not unhappy is neutral *for* the value of each of the states of affairs which are parts of it is neutral. (The state of affairs that someone is not unhappy and the state of affairs that someone else is not unhappy are the parts of this state of affairs. The value of each part is neutral.)

Properties and change

Abstract things also include *properties*. Here are some examples of properties: being in London; being identical with itself; being cube-like. Further, there is an instance of a property just in case there is a thing with that property. Here is an example: the Tate gallery being in London. (There is an instance of a property, *viz.* being in London, for there is a thing, *viz.* the Tate gallery, with that property.)

A property of a thing is a relational property of it *or* a non-relational property of it. A relational property of a thing is its being in some relation to something(s). Here is an example of a relational property of a thing (*viz.* the Tate gallery): the Tate gallery *being in London*. (The Tate gallery has a relation, *viz.* being in, to something, *viz.* London. Hence, this is a relational property of it.)

Incidentally, relational properties are extrinsic *or* intrinsic. An extrinsic relational property of a thing is its being in some relation to some *other* thing(s). Here is an example of an extrinsic relational property of a thing (*viz.* the Tate gallery): the Tate gallery *being in London*. (The Tate gallery has a relation, *viz.* being in, to some *other* thing, *viz.* London. Hence, this is an extrinsic relational property of it.)

An intrinsic relational property of a thing is its being in some relation to *itself*. Here is an example of an intrinsic relational property of a thing (*viz.* the Tate gallery): the Tate gallery *being identical with itself*. (The Tate gallery has a relation, *viz.* being identical with, to *itself*. Hence, this is an intrinsic relational property of it.)

Any other property of a thing is a *non-relational* property of it. Here is an example of a non-relational property of a thing (*viz.* the Tate gallery): the Tate gallery *being cube-like*. (The Tate gallery being cube-like is *not* its being in some relation to something(s). Hence, this is a non-relational property of it.)[13]

What is a *change* in a thing? Well, a change in a thing is the following: it has a property at some time and it does *not* have it at a later *or* earlier time. Further, a change in a thing is an *extrinsic* change in it *or* an *intrinsic* change in it. An extrinsic change in a thing is the following: it has an extrinsic relational property at one time and it does not have it at a later *or* earlier time. Here is an example of an extrinsic change in a thing (*viz.* the Tate gallery): the Tate gallery being in London at some time and the Tate gallery *not* being in London at a later time. (The Tate gallery has an extrinsic relational property, *viz.* being in London, at some time and it does *not* have it at a later time. Hence, it is an extrinsic change in it.)

An intrinsic change in a thing is the following: it has an intrinsic relational property *or* non-relational property at one time and it does *not* have it a later *or* earlier time. Here is an example of an intrinsic change in a thing (*viz.* the Tate gallery): the Tate gallery being cube-like at some time and the Tate gallery *not* being cube-like at a later time. (The Tate gallery has a non-relational property, *viz.* being cube-like, at one time and it does not have it at a later time. Hence, it is an intrinsic change in it.)

Incidentally, a thing which exists at some time and which does not exist at an earlier *or* later time is *not* an intrinsic change in it. It is not an intrinsic change in it for a change in a thing is its being this or that at some time and it not being this or that at an earlier *or* later time and in that case that thing exists at both times.

Notes

1. In this state of being, a human being's "basic impurities" have been (gradually) eliminated and there is among other things no "attachment" to things and there is a state of peace. (A human being's basic impurities are a desire for the sensual and a desire for continued existence or "manifestation" and an ignorance of the nature reality.)

This is "nirvāṇa with the substrate of life remaining" for the particular physical and psychological constituents of someone who has attained it remain.

There is "nirvāṇa without the substrate of life remaining" in death.

2. The origins of Buddhism lie in the life and teachings of Sid dhārtha Gautama, the Buddha. He lived in the 5th century BCE.

Traditional biographies include *The Acts of the Buddha* (c. 2nd century CE). These biographies claim that he attained nirvāṇa.

The Pali Canon (c. 1st century BCE) – the Pali Canon is a set of authoritative texts and it is the earliest such set which survives intact – also claims that he attained nirvāṇa.

3. Traditionally, God is transcendent in at least this way: "God is beyond the universe".

Some have understood the claim "God is beyond the universe" in the following way: "God is beyond the universe" where "universe" is *everything*. It is added that this is absurd. (For example, Kai Nielson in *Naturalism and Religion*, New York 2001, p.473.)

This is absurd. But, this is an improper understanding of the claim. Here is the proper understanding of the claim: God is a thing *and* he is not a physical thing *or* things in the physical universe *and* he is not the physical universe itself.

4. The epics of Homer, *viz.* the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in particular inform the minds of the ancient Greeks prior to the first philosophers. (Homer lived in the 7th century BCE according to Herodotus (484 - 420 BCE).)

In these epics, the actions of the gods and necessity – in particular, in relation to the time of the death of a human being – and chance explain how things are in the physical and ordered universe.

The first philosophers in Miletus in Ionia or Greek Asia – modern day Turkey – seek an independent and single and rational explanation of the physical and ordered universe.

5. Which concepts? Well, in particular a concept which (to begin with) is the following:

(i) fundamental in relation to the physical universe *or* to human beings *or* to both

and

(ii) applies to something(s) *or* it can apply to something(s) *or* it is not evident that it cannot apply to something(s).

Such a concept is not subject to analysis *unless* the following is so:

(iii) its (ultimate) constituents are not evident

and

(iv) it lends itself to philosophical analysis.

Here is an example: the concept of being a living thing which knows this or that.

6. It is also concerned with among other things religious language and with non-rational grounds for the claim that God exists.

It is concerned with the concept or nature of God for it is a concept which (to begin with) is fundamental in relation to the physical universe and human beings *and* it is not evident that it cannot apply to something(s).

Further, its ultimate constituents are not evident *and* it lends itself (somewhat) to philosophical analysis.

7. Incidentally, this analysis will be considered in the course of the consideration of God's knowledge in the first chapter.

8. These are the *standard* values which a statement *or* proposition has in a key sub-discipline of philosophy, *viz.* logic.

9. This statement is not altogether satisfactory for "how things as whole, *viz.* a world, can be" includes a modal term, *viz. can.*

10. It is taken that states of affairs and propositions – for example, the proposition *a thing is identical with itself* – are *equivalent* to each other.

11. States of affairs are such that it can be that things are as they are in them *or* they are such that it cannot be that things are as they are in them.

12. A state of affairs is an *independent part of* some other state of affairs just in case it is a part of that other state of affairs *and* it is *not* a part of any other part of that other state of affairs.

Here is an example: the state of affairs that a particular person is experiencing a certain amount of unhappiness about what he is thinking about is an independent part of the state of affairs that he is experiencing a certain amount of unhappiness about what he is thinking about, *viz.* his own wrongdoing.

The state of affairs that he is experiencing a certain amount of unhappiness about what he is thinking about, *viz.* his own wrongdoing, includes the following parts: that he is experiencing a certain amount of unhappiness about what he is thinking about and that he is thinking about his own wrongdoing.

But, the state of affairs that he is experiencing a certain amount of unhappiness about what he is thinking about is *not* a part of the state of affairs that he is thinking about his own wrongdoing.

Hence, it is an independent part of the state of affairs that he is experiencing a certain amount of unhappiness about what he is thinking about, *viz.* his own wrongdoing.

13. Here is another distinction.

An *essential property* of a thing is a property which it has and which it has to have in order to be that thing.

Here is an example: the property *being a place to exhibit works of art* is a property of the Tate and it is a property which it has to have in order to be it.

An *accidental property* of a thing is a property which that thing has and which it does not have to have in order to be that thing.

Here is an example: the property of *being one of several large galleries in London* is a property of the Tate and it is *not* a property which it has to have in order to be it.

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