

# THE THEO GLOSSARY

A List Of Terms Relating To Apologetics And Philosophy  
By Roderick Graciano

**Bold type** in an entry indicates a related heading in the glossary (or one that will soon be added). Underlining indicates a mnemonic device.

## ANALECTS

A collection of teachings and sayings attributed to Confucius. Many have to do with the contrast between “Great Man” and “Petty Man”: “Great man reaches complete understanding of the main issues; Petty Man reaches complete understanding of the minute details.”

## ANALYTIC STATEMENT

A statement that is true *a priori*, that is, inherently true by virtue of the definition of its terms, such as “all unmarried men are bachelors.” Cf. **Synthetic Statement.**

## ANAMNESIS

In Plato, our recollection by experience and reason of our knowledge of the World of Forms, which knowledge was inscribed on our eternal souls but forgotten at the moment of birth. See **Forms.**

## ANIMISM

Belief that all things, animate and inanimate are inhabited by a spirit.

## ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

The proposition that the universe was finely tuned, from the first moment of its existence, for the emergence of life in general and human life in particular. Hugh Ross writes that “as of October 1993, twenty-five different characteristics of the universe were recognized as precisely fixed. If they were different by only slight amounts, the differences would spell the end of the existence of any conceivable life. To this list of twenty-five can be added thirty-eight characteristics of our galaxy and solar system that likewise must fall within narrowly defined ranges for life of any kind to exist ... three of the characteristics of the universe must be fine-tuned to a precision of one part in  $10^{37}$  or better.”<sup>1</sup> As examples, oxygen comprises 21% of our atmosphere. If it were 25%, fires would erupt, if 15% we would suffocate. “If the gravitational force were altered by 1 part in  $10^{40}$ , the sun would not exist.... If the rotation of the earth took longer than 24 hours, temperature differences would be too great between night and day; if the rotation period was

<sup>1</sup> *Evidence and Truth* by Robert J. Morgan, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, 2003), ch. 3.

shorter, atmospheric wind velocities would be too great.”<sup>2</sup> The anthropic principle offers an explanation for one of the most enduring mysteries of physics, namely, the question of why the values of the so-called fundamental constants (such as the speed of light, or the gravitational force) are as they are.

## APOLOGETICS

An apology is a defense. An apologetic is a reasoned defense of a belief, philosophy or worldview. Apologetics in Christian usage is the study of evidences for the veracity of the Bible and the truthfulness of the Christian worldview. Christian Apologetics studies evidences as diverse as manuscript evidence, geological phenomena, archaeological and historical support, and philosophical **presuppositions**.

## APOLOGETICS, PRESUPPOSITIONAL

An apologetic approach that emphasizes the foundation of theistic presuppositions. The presuppositionalist insists that at minimum we must presuppose God’s existence before we can begin to make sense out of any other evidence for Christianity.

## APOLOGETICS, EVIDENTIAL

An apologetic approach that emphasizes the evidence from history, experience and nature to support the veracity of the Bible and the Christian faith.

## A POSTERIORI

Relating to or derived by reasoning from observed facts. Cf. **A Priori**.

2 Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics.

## A PRIORI

Presupposed or presumed. Also, relating to or derived by reasoning from self-evident propositions. Cf. **A Posteriori**.

## ARCHETYPES

See **Forms**.

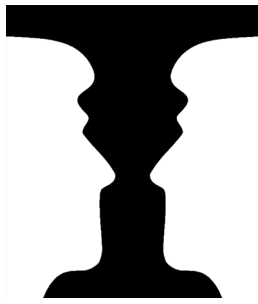
## ARISTOTLE

Greek philosopher (384-322 BC) who “invented logic as a formal discipline,” and one-time student of **Plato**.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle was interested in the purpose of things and that interest infused his studies of nature. In fact, Aristotle can be said to have anticipated the discovery of DNA coding, because he understood that living things could not be understood in terms of their physical substances alone; instead he saw a principle of organization, a “preimposed plan” which he called “a Form that governs the development from embryo to adult.”<sup>4</sup> The idea of purpose, as that of a wing for flying or gills for breathing in water, also infused Aristotle’s taxonomic system that used the categories of *genus* and *species*. “The synthesis of Aristotelian biology and Christian belief attracted many Christians to the study of living things” [in the age of exploration].<sup>5</sup> (Pearcey and Thaxton note that the assumption of **intelligent design**, that goes back to antiquity, was reinforced in the age of exploration, not by ignorance, but by an explosion of biological data.) Aristotle’s

3 Evans’ *Pocket Dictionary Of Apologetics & Philosophy Of Religion*.

4 Pearcey’s and Thaxton’s *The Soul Of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*.

5 Ibid.



interest in purpose also led him to write his *Nicomachean Ethics*, an important treatise on the nature of **happiness** and the means of attaining it.

## AUTOCRAT, AUTOCRATIC

From Grk, *ruling by oneself*, a person ruling with absolute (political) authority.

## AUTHENTICITY

The quality of conforming to an original standard or of being consistent with essential beliefs.

## AXIAL AGE

A phrase coined by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) to refer to the pivotal religious events of the sixth century BC, i.e., to the nearly simultaneous rise of major religious figures along an axis from southern Italy to northern China.

## BACONIAN METHOD

From English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who opposed the stifling affect of Aristotelian **metaphysics** and church pontifications upon scientific inquiry. Credited with establishing the inductive method of science, Bacon taught that “genuine science must start not with philosophy, but with facts, then reason strictly by **induction**.”<sup>6</sup> Early American theologians like Charles Hodge applied the Baconian method to the study of Scripture. This meant setting aside histori-

cal theological formulations (be they Calvinist, Lutheran or Anglican) and examining the biblical text as a collection of “facts” that could speak for themselves. Thus, “applied to theology, the Baconian Method claimed that the Bible was accessible to everyone who cared to look at its “facts” — an idea that appealed to a newly born democratic culture.”<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, the Baconian Method made the Bible more accessible to the masses and freed Bible students from earlier theological and philosophical presuppositions. On the other hand, though, it gave the false impression that Bible students could fully free themselves from biases and presuppositions, while at the same time removing accountability to previously established theological truth. This encouraged the independent spirit of American evangelicals, and “treating Bible verses as isolated, discrete “facts,” ... [encouraged] proof-texting — pulling out individual verses ... with little regard for [thematic,] literary or historical context.”<sup>8</sup> Later, after Darwin, as science took a more and more **naturalistic** turn, the Baconian mind-set was turned against religion, viewing it as a system of [blind] faith, not of *facts*.

## BACONIAN SCIENCE

See **Baconian Method**.

## BHAGAVAD-GITA

This most revered of Hindu sacred texts appeared sometime between the third century BC and the time of Christ, and reinforces India’s caste system and belief in reincarnation. It records an ongoing dialogue between the hero-

6 Pearcey’s *Total Truth*, p. 298.

7 Ibid., p. 300.

8 Ibid., p. 301.

warrior-god Krishna and Arjuna, his kinsman, friend and disciple.

### COMMON SENSE REALISM

Also called *Scottish Common Sense Philosophy* or *Scottish Realism*, the philosophy developed by Thomas Reid, and that became the dominant philosophy during the United States of America's founding. "Common sense" in Reid's usage did not mean what the phrase connotes today, but instead referred to "those truths known by universal human experience — *common* to all humanity. Most nineteenth-century thinkers included among the self-evident [common sense] truths many of the basic teachings of Christianity, such as God's existence, His goodness, and His creation of the world. These were taken to be self-evident to reasonable people."<sup>9</sup>

### CREATIO EX NIHILO

*Creation out of nothing.* The biblical teaching that God did not begin with pre-existing material when He created the heavens and the earth. The biblical Hebrew word *bara* (Gen 1.1 and elsewhere) speaks exclusively of God's creative work that begins with nothing.

### DEDUCTION, DEDUCTIVE REASONING

A process of logical inference by which, if the premises are true and the logic is sound, the conclusion follows necessarily. The *Syllogism* is a deductive form of argument. *Compare Induction.*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

### DEISM

Belief in a God who created the universe with its natural laws but who does not continue to intervene in human (or earthly) affairs, neither by inspired revelation nor by miracles such as an incarnation or resurrection. Oddly, Deism has taught that God does hold man morally accountable in a final judgment.

### DESCARTES, RENE

French philosopher (1596-1650) best known for his attempt to gain certainty by a process of methodical doubt. He doubted everything he could, but finally could not doubt his own existence. He immortalized this conclusion in the words: "*Dubito ergo cogito, cogito ergo sum.* [I doubt therefore I think, I think therefore I am.]"

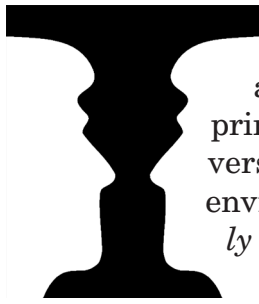
An apocryphal story relates that Descartes once called for his tab at a bar. The bartender asked, "One more for the road?" Descartes replied, "I think not," and — poof! — he disappeared.

### DETERMINISM

The belief that all natural events, including human choices and actions, necessarily result from antecedent states or events. A Christian may believe that God sovereignly causes all things on an **ontological** level. Many atheistic **naturalists** believe that every human event including our thoughts is determined by an endless chain of preceding biochemical events.

### DING AN SICH

[ding ahn zikh] A thing-in-itself as it exists in the **noumenal** realm beyond the reach of our senses. (From **Kant.**)



## DUALISM

The idea that there are two opposing principles in the universe. Extreme dualism envisions two *eternally* opposed beings or principles, and thus explains the philosophical problem of evil. Less extreme expressions of dualism envision two opposed entities, one spiritual and one material, or one eternal and the other created. Against the first of these, the Bible teaches creation *ex nihilo*, and that there is only one eternal entity. With regard to the second, biblical faith is sometimes called dualistic in the sense that it understands God as the origin of good and Satan as the mighty, supernatural proponent of evil.

## EMPIRICAL

From Grk *empeirikos* = doctor relying on experience alone. Relying upon — and capable of being verified or disproved by — experience or experimental observation, not dependent upon presuppositions.

## EMPIRICISM

The theory or practice of relying on observation and experiment as the basis for all knowledge. “The only things you can call knowledge are things that can be scientifically tested” — agnostic Margaret Atwood.<sup>10</sup>

## ESSENCE

The ultimate nature of a thing, involving its permanent attributes by which it can be placed in its proper class or identified as being what it is.

## ETHICS

Ethics refers to the set of standards that define what people ought to do. By contrast, **morals** and **morality** technically refer to what people are already doing, regardless of their professed ethics.

## EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE

Language using words like *good*, *bad*, *right*, *wrong*, that expresses the value inherent in a thing or action, or the value place on a thing or action by the speaker.

## EVIDENTIALISM

A philosophy that demands “proof” for all things which are neither self-evident or evident to the senses. It proposes that *it is irrational for anyone, anywhere, to believe anything without sufficient evidence.*

## EXIST

To have a property or to be a property that is had.

## EXISTENTIALISM

A cluster of philosophies that attempt to define what it means to be human in terms of existence (what we do) rather than in terms of essence (what we are by nature). These philosophies tend to stress the responsibility of the individual to define (or validate) himself through his actions. The idea is to make life meaningful rather than to find the meaning of life. While the father of existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard, along with others, propounded Christian or religious forms of existentialism, the progression of existential philosophy has been strongly toward atheism. See **Sartre**.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Huberman’s *The Quotable Atheist*.

## EXISTENTIALIST

A proponent of **existentialism**.

## FORM, FORMS

(Also called **Ideas, Ideals** or **Arche-types**.) In **Plato's** philosophy, the eternal, transcendent and invisible essence of a thing. The form is not perceived by the senses but only grasped by the mind, and is more real than the perceptible objects that instantiate it. "The beautiful rose we admire is merely a flawed approximation of the ideal rose and of the ideal standard of beauty — an illusion, in fact, that 'participates' only partially in its ideal form. ... Just as the forms are eternal, so are individual human souls. Experience and reason help us recall the knowledge of the World of Forms that is inscribed on our souls but forgotten at the moment of birth."<sup>11</sup> See **Anamnesis** and **Plato**.

## FREE WILL

One of our most used and least examined phrases. When we say *free will* it usually refers to our belief that we are able to make our own choices, free from the dictates or coercion of another, including God. This is certainly true on the **phenomenological** level, for we have no awareness of anyone or anything external to ourselves telling us what to think or choose. However, we do well to examine the processes by which we think and make choices, and we must also examine how the sovereignty of God can possibly allow for free will on the **ontological** level.

## GUT

Grand Unified Theory, or Grand Unification Theory: any theory seeking to

<sup>11</sup> Chris Rohmann, *A World Of Ideas*, p. 305.

unite in a single mathematical framework the electromagnetic and weak forces with the strong force or with the strong force and gravity. Cf. **TOE**.

## HENOTHEISM

Worship of a single god while acknowledging the existence of many gods. Cf. **Monotheism**.

## HERMENEUTICS

The science of interpretation, particularly of texts.

## IDEAS, IDEALS

See **Forms**.

## IMMANENT, IMMANENCE

To be immanent is to exist or operate within a domain of reality, as opposed to **transcendently** from without.

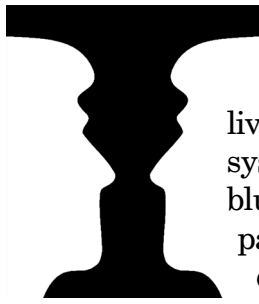
## INDUCTION, INDUCTIVE ARGUMENT

Inductive arguments do not fit into neat patterns as well as **Deductive** inferences, but include arguments by analogy, statistical arguments, causal arguments and hypothetical arguments. "The conclusion of an inductive argument is [only] probable, given the truth of the premises."<sup>12</sup>

## INFORMATION

Dictionary definitions of information tend to be circular. Here is an attempt at my own formulation: Information is *specification* expressed by (a) symbol or (b)

<sup>12</sup> DeWeese's and Moreland's *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult*, p. 21.



code, i.e., language, imposed upon the constituents of a (c) living or (d) mechanical system. Examples: (a) blueprint, (b) essay, (c) pacemaker signal, (d) carburetor setting.

## KANT, IMMANUEL

(AD 1724-1804) German philosopher whose written works include *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's relevance for us has to do with his revolutionary observation that we "Kan't know reality as it is in itself" — we can only know our perception of it. In other words, we think we experience reality, but we mistake our experience of reality for reality itself. This observation forces us to concede that common sense is not infallible; the earth is not stationary, for example, in spite of what our senses tell us. Kant also forces us to recognize two realms, the phenomenological and the noumenal. The phenomenological world is the world of our experience, the world *as* we experience it. The noumenal world (in D'Souza's analysis of Kant) is a "reality of a completely different order from anything that we know, constitutes the only permanent reality there is, and ... sustains our world and presents it to our senses."<sup>13</sup> Materialists resist this kind of thinking, but it is congruent with the Christian understanding that the world we experience is "a transient world that is dependent on a higher, timeless reality."<sup>14</sup>

Magill, in his synopsis of

<sup>13</sup> D'Souza in *What's So Great About Christianity*, p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

*Critique Of Pure Reason*, explains that according to Kant **empiricism** alone cannot account for all knowledge because sense-experience depends upon prior *categories* of human understanding that were not discovered by sense-experience. On the other hand, **rationalism** alone is not enough, because human reasoning must be held accountable by **empirical** data. "Kant's initial concern was to determine whether men can fruitfully engage in metaphysical speculation. ... [regarding such things as] the immortality of the soul, the origin and extent of the universe, and the existence and nature of God. Was a science of such matters really possible? ... Kant's answer to this burning question was an unequivocal No!"<sup>15</sup> Kant denied that we could "scientifically" search out metaphysical truth because in the end "all knowledge is the product of human understanding applied to sense-experience"<sup>16</sup> and since we can't experiment with metaphysical realities to hold our speculations about those realities in check, we best leave them well enough alone. However, while asserting that **metaphysical** ideas don't constitute "real" knowledge, Kant nevertheless assigned great value to the belief — arrived at by pure reason, — that there is a rational and purposeful God who created a rationally constructed world, *making experimental enquiry by men possible*. "Although Kant argued that only phenomena can be known ... the distinction between things as they appear and as they are 'in themselves' made it possible to argue that belief in God and immortality ... was compatible

<sup>15</sup> Magill's *Masterpieces Of World Philosophy*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

with the limitation of knowledge to the phenomena.”<sup>17</sup>

Kant reveals as delusion the atheists’ belief that their **empiricism** and **rationalism** are capable of figuring out all that there is, and [perhaps unintentionally] supports the Christian contention that we are dependent upon revelation to truly understand reality.

## KNOWLEDGE

Philosophers define knowledge as “justified true belief” (JTB). However, this definition raises the questions: what is truth? and what justifies a belief as true?

## MAGIC

Any effort to manipulate the supernatural without reference to God or gods or to any overarching philosophy of existence.

## METAPHYSICAL

Relating to a transcendent reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses. We might say, having to do with the *supernatural* realm.

## METAPHYSICS

The branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality (thus sometimes used synonymously with **Ontology**). Metaphysics inquires into such questions as whether God exists, and whether numbers exist independently of the human mind.

## MIRACLE

A divine intervention in the natural order. The biblical terms translated *miracle* connote no violation or contravening

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

of natural laws. The NT word, *dynamis*, for example, speaks of an application of energy great enough to overcome the normal effects of natural law in a specific instance. So, just as a rocket does not violate the law of gravity, but overcomes its pull in a specific instance, so miracles do not violate, but overcome the effects of natural laws in specific instances by the application of power. “We modern people think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order, but Jesus meant them to be the restoration of the natural order.... Jesus has come to redeem [the world] where it is wrong and heal the world where it is broken. His miracles are not just proofs that he has power but also wonderful foretastes of what he is going to do with that power.... a promise to our hearts that the world we all want is coming.”<sup>18</sup>

## MONOTHEISM

Belief that there is only one God, who is distinct from nature. Monotheism does not deny the existence of other spiritual entities, but understands them as all created beings, none of whom qualify as a god. Cf. **Henotheism**, **Pantheism**.

## MORALS, MORALITY

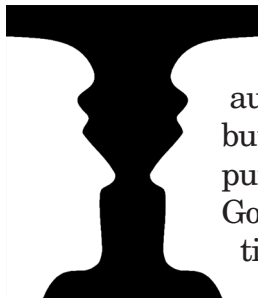
The behavioral patterns of a society, usually linked with a sense of rightness or wrongness. The application or practice of **Ethics**, whether or not consistent.

## MYSTICISM

A focus upon the subjective experience of spiritual realities by means that transcend reason and sensory perception.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, (Dutton, New York, 2008), pp. 95-96.





Christian mysticism would recognize the authority of the Bible, but would emphasize the pursuit of experiencing God through contemplative prayer and worship, and possibly visions. An exclusively

mystical religion would reject or deny the importance of the historical acts of God and any authoritative revelation.

## MYTH

A slippery term in today's culture. Rodney Stark defines a myth as a story "that may happen in this world or in 'another' world, but which includes active supernatural participants. Some 'myths' involve only Gods; some tell extensive interactions between Gods and humans; and in some the focus is on humans with Gods in the background."<sup>19</sup>

## NATURALISM, NATURALISTIC

Opposed to supernaturalism, naturalism sees the universe as a system closed to supernatural agency, and in practice denies that supernatural entities exist.

## NEW AGE MOVEMENT (NAM)

A mix of diverse metaphysical beliefs often incorporating elements of Gnosticism and Eastern pantheism, but fusing them with the Western commitment to Darwinism's naturalistic philosophy. The strangeness of this syncretism arises in

<sup>19</sup> Rodney Stark, *Discovering God*, p. 413.

part from its mix of the Eastern rejection of the supremacy of reason with the Western commitment to Darwinism that is supposedly dependent upon the application of reason to questions of origin and subsequent evolution.

The only sin in the NAM is the absence of enlightenment; the only "savior" is a method to raise one's consciousness to ***Self-realization***. Good and evil, right and wrong, are whatever the NAM adherent wants them to be. Consequently, ethical discussion can be a good bridge to the NAM follower.

The NAM worldview is also deeply influenced by the occult. Therefore, ministry to NAM adherents requires preparedness for dealing with the demonic realm.

## NOMA

*Non-Overlapping Magisteria*. A term coined by evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002) to promote the idea that science and religion each have their own *magisterium* (= teaching authority), addressing entirely different aspects of reality, and therefore can have nothing to say about one another's truth claims. In effect, the *NOMA* idea is an attempt to marginalize religion and silence its voice in the public square, while scientists go right on pontificating beyond the limits of their supposed magisterium. If a religion has nothing to say about physics, astronomy, geology, and biology, it is a very meager religion indeed!

NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH  
German writer (1844-1900) responsible for the oxymoron "God is

dead.” By this Nietzsche of course did not mean that there had been a God and now He had died, but rather that Europe had for all practical purposes abandoned the idea of God. With his glorification of power and his idea of the “superman” Nietzsche inspired Adolph Hitler. Nietzsche, full of despair, lost his mind and remained insane for the last 11 years of his life. And yet, “it may not be an exaggeration to say that Nietzsche is the most influential philosopher today”!<sup>20</sup>

## NIHILISM

From the Latin *nihil* (nothing). Belief in the nothingness of reality, and/or in the nonexistence of any objective basis (such as God) for meaning and morality. Some nihilists mourn the loss of meaning, and some celebrate the freedom from moral strictures. **Nietzsche** is often thought of as a nihilist since he promoted the idea that God is dead, thus simultaneously denying the existence of meaning and morality.

## NOUMENA

Objects or events as they really exist independently from, and perhaps very differently from, our perception of them by our senses. Compare **Phenomena**.

## NOUMENAL

Imperceptible or undefinable by human senses. Compare **Phenomenal**.

## ONTOLOGY

From the Grk participle, *ὄν*, *being*. The study of being, i.e., the consideration

of essential reality as distinguished from what appears to be (cf. **Phenomenology**). Strictly speaking, ontology simply investigates the nature of existence, or what it means “to be.” Ontology overlaps with **Metaphysics**, which also deals with the nature of reality.

## ONTOLOGICAL

To speak of something in the ontological sense is to speak of its essential nature or fundamental reality, as opposed to its *Phenomenological* aspect or how we perceive it. Ontological can also be distinguished from *functional*. For example, in the Bible the phrase *son of God* sometimes speaks of a functional office rather than an essential reality.

## PANTHEISM

Belief that everything is God, i.e., that all things, animate or inanimate are modes, attributes or manifestations of a single divine essence or being. This is distinct from **polytheism** which posits a plurality of discrete gods, and from **monotheism** which posits a single God who is distinct from nature.

## PANENTHEISM

The idea that what the Bible sees as created things are parts of God as cells are part of a larger organism.

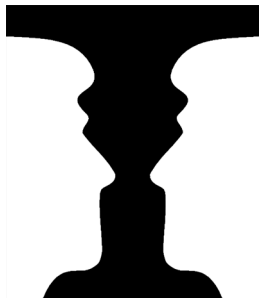
## PERCIPIENT

One who perceives.

## PHENOMENA

Things that can be perceived or experienced by the human senses.

<sup>20</sup> Wilkens, *Good Ideas from Questionable Christians and Outright Pagans*, p. 226.



## PHENOMENAL

Able to be perceived or experienced by the senses.

## PHENOMENOLOGY

The science of awareness; a study that has no direct reference to real existence.

## PHENOMENOLOGICAL

Having to do with our perception or awareness of things, rather than with the essential reality of those things.

## PHILOSOPHY

*Philosophy* means *love of wisdom*. As a discipline, philosophy is the pursuit of truth, and as such explores all the deepest questions of life. A person's "philosophy" is the set of their important beliefs. (Compare **Worldview**.)

## PLATO, PLATONIC

(470-399 BC) Student of Socrates, considered the founder of Western philosophy.

Plato taught that there are two worlds: the material world that we experience and World of **Forms** that is eternal and transcends what we experience with our senses. The World of Forms is the more real of the two worlds, and consists of the eternal Forms or Ideals that are imperfectly reflected in the material world we ex-

perience. While we may see a stack of chairs, Plato posits a greater reality of "chairness," that is, the transcendent, archetypal *Form of a chair* that only the mind is able to grasp. The chairs we see and sit on may appear to us in different shapes and colors, but in the transcendent World of Forms, there is only one ideal Form of chairness that all material chairs partially and imperfectly illustrate. Here's the interesting thing: according to Plato, we all used to live in the ideal World of Forms as eternal souls, but forgot everything about our preexistence there when we were born into this world.

Think of the idea of the *Matrix* movies turned inside out. In *The Matrix*, there is a world of perfect suits, perfect steaks, perfect women, perfect slums, perfect drug addicts — but it isn't the real world; it is an illusion perpetrated by machines upon the minds of humans whose bodies are in stasis. The human protagonist in the story, Neo, must escape the idealized but illusory mental state by getting unhooked from the machines and regaining his ability to perceive the material world in which his body really lives. The real world is much grittier, polluted, damaged and challenging than the world in which he has been living, that is, the world which he has only been experiencing in his mind. Plato believed the opposite story: this damaged, gritty world of our senses isn't the real world, but is the illusory world we experience while trapped inside our physical bodies; the real world is that mathematically, esthetically, perfect and ideal world that can only be experienced by the mind. Were Plato to watch *The Matrix*, I think he would shout, "No, no, stay hooked to the machines!" (Interestingly, the "Judas"

character in *The Matrix* negotiates to be reaccepted by the machines and return to bodily stasis where he can continue to enjoy the good life, albeit all in his mind.)

“For Plato, what is ‘really real,’ then, is the invisible world of the Forms (which are eternal and unchanging), not the visible world of things (which, as temporal, are subject to generation and decay). The material world is ‘less real’ than the Forms.... [Congruent with this belief,] Plato describes the body as a prison for the soul, from which the soul seeks release and liberation. The way to achieve liberation from the imprisonment of the body is to pursue philosophy ... [and then] upon death, escape the prison of the body.”<sup>21</sup>

On the one hand, Platonic philosophy is attractive to the Christian theologian in that it teaches a reality that transcends the strictly material. The theory of eternal Forms can provide an objective basis for ethics, for example. When based upon transcendent Forms of virtue, ethics can stand upon an eternal and unchanging foundation, which is required for absolutes of right and wrong to exist. Also, Plato’s theory of Forms points us to a higher form of contemplative love than what is poorly reflected in physical passion, hence our expression “a platonic relationship.”

On the other hand, however, Platonism became the basis for the Gnostic disparaging of the human body, of sexuality and of all material reality. In some Christian circles, this Platonic or Gnostic perspective subtly discourages belief in God’s continuing purposes for national Israel, the Holy Land and planet Earth. Thinking of

<sup>21</sup> Clark, Lints and Smith, *101 Key Terms In Philosophy And Their Importance For Theology*.

sex as inherently sinful, or of heaven as completely spiritual and other-worldly without reference to the material creation, is Platonic rather than biblical.

As a mnemonic device, think of making forms out of Play-Doh to remind you to associate Plato with his key teaching about **Forms**.

## POLYTHEISM

Belief in many gods, as contrasted to **Monotheism**.

## PRAGMATISM

The philosophical system that values ideas or actions based on their usefulness. Cf. **Utilitarianism**.

## PRESUPPOSITION

An idea assumed beforehand, that forms the premise from which other ideas can be inferred.

## PROBLEM OF EVIL

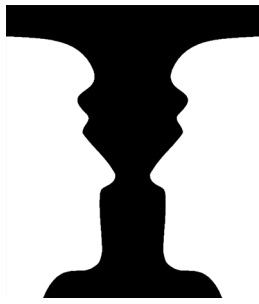
The philosophical problem that asks how God can be all good, almighty and at the same time allow evil in the universe. See **Theodicy**.

## PURE LAND SUTRA

A revisionist Buddhist scripture that appeared in the first or second century BC, and became the foundational text of the Pure Land or Mahayana Buddhism that dominated China.

## RATIONALISM

The belief that reason is a superior source of knowledge than sense perception, and provides the best and perhaps only path to truth. Often contrasted with **Empiricism**. Theologically speaking,



rationalism refers to the idea that reason is superior to revelation; theological rationalism may rule out revelation as a source of knowledge altogether.

## RECONSTRUCTIONISM

Apostmillennial view that calls believers to aggressively bring change to society, with the ultimate goal of establishing a Christian Republic ordered by the Mosaic Law. Reconstructionism sees the home school movement as the primary vehicle for bringing societal change, but also encourages Christian involvement in government and other social institutions for the sake of pursuing its goals in the world.

## REINCARNATION

In Eastern thought, the continuation of consciousness after death, allowing for re-embodiment in an inferior or superior vessel. In Western thought, the transmigration of the soul from body to body resulting in many different lifetimes for the individual. In the New Age Movement, re-embodiment in only one direction, namely in the direction of higher and higher levels of consciousness.

## RELIGION

By biblical definition, devotion to God expressed in a system of external observances, but most importantly by purity of life and ministry to the needy (Jam 1.27). By popular definition, any system of devotion to God or gods, but

particularly those systems characterized by an emphasis on rules and seemingly pointless and/or superstitious rituals. As a sociologist, Rodney Stark defines religion as consisting of “explanations of existence (or ultimate meaning) based on supernatural assumptions and including statements about the nature of the supernatural, which may specify methods or procedures for exchanging with the supernatural.”<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Spirituality*.

## REVELATION

What God has made know about Himself, or the means by which He has made it known. We often distinguish between *general revelation* given in nature and universal human experience, and *special revelation* given through the inspired authors of the Bible, the prophets and God’s own Son.

## SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL

(1905-1980) Atheistic, French writer and philosopher, known for his **existentialist** dictum, “Existence precedes essence.” “Sartre makes a contrast between manufactured things and human beings. The former are designed and made to fit the function or purposed conceived by their maker. The idea of the thing, its essence precedes its manufacture, which creates its actual existence. In the case of manufactured objects, their essence precedes their existence. For the same thing to be true of human beings, there would have to be a maker who designs and creates them. The creator would have an idea of what he intends to make and would have in mind a purpose for his creation.”<sup>23</sup> Sar-

<sup>22</sup> Rodney Stark, *Discovering God*, p. 413.

<sup>23</sup> Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas*, pp. 177-78.

tre denied the existence of a designer for man, and therefore proposed that man's existence comes first, and then he must strive to give himself identity and his life meaning.

Sartre helps us see that purpose derives from personal (intelligent) design. Apart from a Designer, life in general and mankind in particular has no ultimate purpose or meaning.

### SELF-REALIZATION

In the New Age Movement, the raising of ones consciousness to the point of realizing that he or she is one with, or in fact *is*, the cosmos. As the Buddhist said to the New York hot-dog vender, "Make me one with everything."

### SOLIPSISM

Belief that the self is all that exists, and that self can know nothing but its own modifications.

### SPIRITUALITY

As understood by our present culture, spirituality is a metaphysical state of mind, or belief or practice that differs from "religion" primarily in that it involves neither commands nor covenants.

### SYLLOGISM

A form of deductive reasoning consisting of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion; for example, All human beings are mortal, the major premise, I am a human being, the minor premise, therefore, I am mortal, the conclusion.

### SYNCHRONOLOGICAL

Occurring at more or less the same time rather than in consecutive order.

Descriptions of synchronological events in prophecy tend to double back after the description of one event in order to describe other events decreed to occur at the same time, or to describe the first event again but from a different perspective.

### SYNCRETISM

The (unnatural) blending of elements from two different philosophies or religions.

### SYNTHETIC STATEMENT

A statement only verified *a posteriori*, that is, only by examining the external evidence for its truth. Cf. **Analytic Statement.**

### TAO-TE CHING

The sacred book of Taoism attributed to Lao-Tzu.

### TERMINUS AD QUEM

Literally *limit to which*; the final limiting point in time. Also, the goal, destination or purpose.

### TERMINUS A QUO

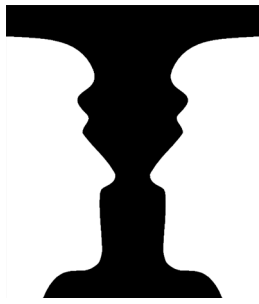
Literally *limit from which*; the point of origin, or first limiting point in time.

### THEODICY

Literally *a justification of God*. The term for propositions or arguments that attempt to maintain God's goodness while explaining the presence of evil in the universe. An attempt to solve the philosophical Problem of Evil.

### THEOPHANY

A vision or other manifestation of God.



## TOE

Theory Of Everything: a hypothetical theory of physics that fully explains and links together all known physical phenomena.

The primary problem in producing a TOE is that the accepted theories of quantum mechanics and general relativity are hard to combine. Cf. **GUT**.

## TOTALITARIAN, TOTALITARIANISM

Having to do with dictatorial control by an autocratic leader or hierarchy.

## TRANSCENDENT, TRANSCENDENCE

To be transcendent is to extend, operate or exist beyond the limits of ordinary or material existence. Compare **Immanent**.

## UPANISADS

Hindu scriptures of the 6th century BC that exhibit a diminished concern with Vedic deities, and a greater interest in the concept of a single supreme being and reunion of the self (*atman*) with it.

## UTILITARIANISM

The ethical system that asserts that moral rightness is what leads to the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Traditionally the “greatest good” is identified with happiness, and happiness is defined as the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. Cf. **Pragmatism**.

## VEDAS

The earliest Hindu scriptures from around 1500 BC, that include spells and hymns to the gods.

## WORLD VIEW

The mental framework through which we perceive and understand our world and reality. Though usually held uncsciously, one’s worldview consists of the sum of one’s generalized beliefs.