

Modern European Thought: 1600–1800

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The early modern period (roughly, 1600–1800 CE) in Europe brought tremendous changes in intellectual, political, and cultural life. It was a period in which philosophical debates were inevitably bound up with questions about the nature and sources of religious truth. A chronological examination of some of the period's major thinkers highlights two issues that were central to the development of philosophy of religion in the period. The first concerns the relations between God, the soul, and the body; the other concerns the relationship between human reason and divine revelation.

Guiding questions

Infinite mind, finite minds, and the material universe

The first set of issues is about the relationship between God's infinite mind and the universe in its various parts, and about the relationship between *soul* and *body* – or more broadly what is rational in human beings (soul, spirit, thinking substance, mind, or reason) and what is tangible (body, matter, or material substance) (see SOUL). Each of the major thinkers of the period engage this issue, and their views often have a basis in, or even form a key part of, their philosophy of religion.

The problem is an old one, but it gained new significance with the rejection of the Aristotelian (see ARISTOTLE) conception of nature. This was the view on which bodies have substantial forms that make them the specific sort of thing they are. Some bodies, on this view, have an “anima” or soul – a substantial form that “animates” them – gives them life, makes them sentient and, in some cases, makes them rational. The new “mechanical philosophy,” by contrast, removed *all* substantial forms from bodies, viewing bodies instead as composed of uniform bits of matter (atoms, corpuscles) governed by a few simple laws (of motion, force, etc.). This early modern picture, which was given powerful expression in René Descartes' thought (see DESCARTES, RENÉ), has its roots in early modern developments in empirical science and in a specific account of God's infinity.

As a result of the movement away from the Aristotelian picture, the metaphysical distinction between souls and bodies became more profound. The soul is capable of considering reasons and following rational laws, of contemplating supersensible realities including God, and (for most philosophers in the period) of free action (see FREE WILL) and immortal life (see AFTERLIFE). Bodies, meanwhile, are just configurations of inert bits of matter, which can be acted on or configured into machines but lack the power to originate action. On this picture, it becomes increasingly difficult to see what these two kinds of things (souls and bodies) have to do with one another.

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The sources of religious doctrine: Reason and revelation

The second set of issues can be approached from a number of angles. One is simply the relationship between *natural religion or theology* (hereafter “natural religion,” which for present purposes will mean religious doctrines which can be justified through reason without reference to revelation), and *revealed religion or theology* (hereafter “revealed religion,” religious doctrines which do make a *justificatory* reference to revelation, i.e. to some sort of divine or transcendent communication) (see NATURAL THEOLOGY; REVELATION IN ABRAHAMIC FAITHS). This distinction becomes more significant in the context of religious difference – an important theme during this period. On the one hand, much of Europe, especially cultural and political elites, self-identified as Christian (see CHRISTIANITY). The authority of the church and/or the Christian Bible (see BIBLE, CHRISTIAN), and Europe’s role in bearing Christian light and truth to the world, was foundational to the self-understanding of many Europeans. However, pervasive religious differences – old and new, inside and outside of Europe – raised questions about the nature of human access to religious truth, and about what to do when revelations disagree (see RELIGIOUS PLURALISM; RELIGIOUS DISAGREEMENT).

Within Europe, there were at least four major sources of religious difference. First, the Jewish population had a shared past and some shared scriptures with the Christians, but obviously bore a different relation to that common legacy (see JUDAISM; BIBLE, HEBREW). Second, some of what we today consider Europe was at various points under the rule of the Ottoman Turks, who were officially Muslim, but whose authors have not been prominent in the Western philosophical canon (see ISLAM). (Note: The Ottomans adhered to the Sunni branch of Islam, which unlike the Shi‘a branch was in this era anti-rationalist and largely opposed to natural religion. Earlier Islamic thinkers had wrestled with the connections between Aristotle’s philosophy and Abrahamic monotheism and were also key sources by which the works of Aristotle (384–322 BCE) were recovered in European learning (see MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, ISLAMIC CONTRIBUTION; MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION). Third, within Christianity, there was a great deal of religious division not only between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions but also as a result of the emergence of ever-more Protestant sects, along with wars between various Protestant and Catholic regimes in the sixteenth century and following. Fourth, the ongoing recovery of classical texts, together with the widespread use of the printing press, led to the proliferation and revival of pagan philosophical views.

There was also increased awareness of previously unknown peoples and points of view outside of Europe, as for example in Malebranche’s (see MALEBRANCHE, NICOLAS) and Leibniz’s (see LEIBNIZ, GOTTFRIED WILHELM) explorations of Chinese culture. One frequent mode of such “discovery” was in the context of colonial expansion, where ecclesial mission and rank exploitation were often inextricably linked. These encounters, and even the vast distances involved in generating them, inevitably led to reflection about the universality and rational justification of various religious claims, and about the ability of Christian theology to narrate the whole

world (see Jennings 2010, chapter 2). How could peoples far away from the Mediterranean be related to traditions of thought and religion rooted there? Many thinkers would turn to St. Paul's (see PAUL THE APOSTLE) epistle to the Romans, which had claimed that: "ever since the creation of the world [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So [people] are without excuse." Are there certain claims about God that everyone ought to be aware of? And if they aren't, are they at fault?

Hume (see HUME, DAVID) would suggest that the emphasis on natural religion in the period was due to the religious establishment needing a way to justify itself in the face of other cultures, by arguing that philosophical doctrines friendly to Christian theology could be objectively proved. But that is not the only relationship visible between natural and revealed religion in this period. At times, natural religion appears that way – as a neutral foundation for monotheistic religion, a sort of "general revelation" given to reason and on which a particular "special revelation" could build, or even as *pointing to* a particular revelation. But at other times it appears as a rival or replacement for revealed religion – perhaps its natural destination, or even a pathway to irreligion or atheism.

The religious encounters of this period thus raise pressing questions at the intersection of social, political, and intellectual history. The central questions within philosophy of religion, however, can perhaps be organized around these three: (i) what can be known through our faculties without revelation from God, i.e. through natural religion? (ii) what does special revelation add, if anything, to natural religion? (iii) how can one use one's natural faculties to discern when to assent to a piece of alleged revelation, i.e. to treat it as genuinely from a divine source? (Note: This third subquestion often has to do with miracles or with religious experience. The latter is left aside here, and the former is treated primarily in the second half of the discussion – in Locke [see LOCKE, JOHN], Hume, Lessing, and Kant [see KANT, IMMANUEL].)

Most of the major philosophers from the period make important contributions on both these lines of questions: Descartes (see DESCARTES, RENÉ), Spinoza (see SPINOZA, BARUCH), Conway (see CONWAY, ANNE), Malebranche, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley (see BERKELEY, GEORGE), Hume, and Kant. To the first set of questions, about the relationship of the soul, the body, and God, they present nine distinct answers. With respect to the second set, there is less diversity, but still a number of distinct camps. In certain thinkers, such as Conway, the two overarching lines of questioning interact in interesting ways.

Many other figures in the period play important roles deserving of mention, including Pascal (see PASCAL, BLAISE), Hobbes (see HOBBS, THOMAS), Bayle, VOLTAIRE, and Lessing. The list of notable philosophers concerned with religion in the period goes on, though, and some are not mentioned here, including: Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), and the Encyclopedists who followed in the footsteps of Bayle's dictionary, Denis Diderot (1713–1784) (see DIDEROT, DENIS) and Jean D'Alembert (1717–1783) (see also ASTELL, MARY; CUDWORTH, RALPH; HERBERT OF CHERBURY; MASHAM, DAMARIS CUDWORTH; PALEY, WILLIAM; REID, THOMAS; HAMANN, JOHANN GEORG; HERDER, JOHANN GOTTFRIED;

BÖHME, JACOB; for more on the significance of Rousseau and other figures, see ENLIGHTENMENT).

It is important to keep in mind, when reading philosophy of religion in this period, that there were issues of censorship. Although the landscape of toleration in Europe changed drastically across these centuries (for example, Giordano Bruno's [1548–1600] being burned at the stake in 1600, in part for his Copernican beliefs, would have been unthinkable in most parts of Europe in 1800), it remains an issue throughout the period. Thus Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) (see FICHTE, JOHANN GOTTLIEB), for instance, could still lose his professorship at Jena in 1799 after being accused of atheism. Other key examples: Descartes, we know, suppressed his first planned published work in 1632, after Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was condemned by the Inquisition. Several of the works considered most injurious to religion, Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) and Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779 [hereafter "*Dialogues*"]), were only published posthumously. Further, Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) was published not only with a fake author name and publisher listed, but also a false cover page! Even in 1793, Kant's major work on religion, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, prompted the royal censor to exact from Kant a promise not to publish on religion again. Furthermore, not everyone wrote with the same legal protections – Kant's contemporary Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) (see MENDELSSOHN, MOSES), as a Jew in Prussia, did not have full civil rights. None of this, however, gives us unqualified license to read these authors as insincere whenever they say something which supports the religious establishment (although reading in this way is perhaps impossible to avoid with an author like Hume).

René Descartes (1596–1650)

Descartes played a decisive role in redirecting philosophy and philosophy of religion. He wanted philosophy to assist the new empirical science in helping us learn about the world, and he found the principle of it in the idea of an infinite divine being.

The crucial role of God's infinity for Descartes is apparent in his famous method of doubt. Descartes, in an effort to arrive at maximally certain conclusions, begins in the first of his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) by doubting everything that can be doubted, including the existence of objects outside of him (see DREAM ARGUMENT). After trying to give up all his beliefs, he finds (in the second Meditation) that there is one thing he cannot doubt – as long as he is thinking, he remains certain that "I am, I exist" (Descartes [1641] 1985, 17). However, because any of his other beliefs could still be doubted on the grounds that God or a demonic "genius" was deceiving him, he seemed to be stranded on this inner island, where all he knows is that he thinks, and that he is a thinking thing. In the third Meditation, he ultimately discovers the isthmus that can take him back to external reality by reflecting on the idea of God that he finds in himself. The idea represents God as infinite: all-good (see OMNIBENEVOLENCE), all-knowing (see OMNISCIENCE), and all-powerful (see OMNIPOTENCE) – an idea his mind can touch but not comprehend

(see DIVINE ATTRIBUTES). Descartes reasons that all ideas must come from somewhere, and that he, as an imperfect being, cannot be the source of the idea of a perfect being. Thus the infinitely perfect being represented by the idea of God must itself really exist (that Descartes starts from the concept of God might seem to make this an “ontological” argument for God’s existence – but that term is typically reserved for the argument, originally put forward by St. Anselm [1033–1109; see ANSELM, SAINT] but also floated by Descartes in the fifth Meditation, which proves God’s existence not by asking *where* the idea of God *comes from*, but by showing that the idea *contains necessary existence* as a part of itself) (see ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT; NECESSARY BEING; PERFECT BEING THEOLOGY).

Descartes argues that the obvious conclusion to draw from the existence of such a benevolent God is that we are not entirely, systematically deceived. God would never do that himself, and God would not allow an evil genius to do it either, so long as we stick to what we can “clearly and distinctly” perceive with the God-given “light of reason.” However, it turns out that what we can clearly and distinctly perceive about nature is merely that it is made up of matter: extended stuff. Thus bodies have no qualities *in* them other than those pertaining to extension: size, shape, motion, direction. In themselves they have no colors, no smells, and crucially none of the essences of individual things which had populated Aristotelian natural philosophy: “all those forms or qualities which they dispute in the Schools” (Descartes [1637–1649] 1985, 132). The world of bodies is merely (in Galileo’s words) “geometry made concrete” – extended stuff that we comprehend through mathematical, mechanical reasoning. Anything that does not violate logical or mathematical laws – that is, anything we can conceive of – can be done in nature, by omnipotence at least. Thus we ourselves, through clear and distinct perception, can approach the perspective of God. In mind and gradually in practice, we can thus become, in Descartes’ famous phrase, “the lords and masters of nature” (Descartes [1637–1649] 1985, 142–143) (for background, see Harries 2001).

There is, however, no question for Descartes that our rational souls stand above matter: they are immaterial substances that possess consciousness and reason. As noted in the introduction, this poses the problem, for Descartes, of how our rational soul (which reasons, uses language, and thinks of things as lofty as God), is connected to our machine body. Descartes develops his most articulate solution to this problem after being pressed on the point by Elisabeth, princess of Bohemia. The soul is not located in any one place in our body, but the body is able to influence the soul’s sensations and passions through changing the direction of movement of a particular gland of the brain, the pineal gland (see COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND THE SOUL). Conversely, on the occasion of our willing to act, the soul can somehow direct the gland’s movement and thereby influence the nerves and muscles of the body.

Descartes says little about revelation, mainly just stipulating that the light of revelation is not subject to his method of doubt, and yet that we can be confident that revelation (properly interpreted) and reason are always in accord with one another. In one place he does note that he thinks developing arguments in natural religion is a service to the Catholic Church, and makes reference to the decree of the Fifth

Lateran Council in 1517 that philosophers ought to use reason to establish what it can within religious matters, including the immortality of the soul (Descartes [1641] 1985, 4). He also argues that his philosophy is better suited than Aristotle's to Christianity, because it can render the mystery of transubstantiation in the Eucharist in a coherent way (Descartes [1641] 1985, 175; see SACRAMENTS). Thus, while reason cannot demonstrate revealed truths of religion, it can show that they are in accord with reason – that they are indeed *above* it, rather than *against* it.

Blaise Pascal (1623–1661) interacted with Descartes on scientific matters, and like many other authors examined here held that some revealed truths are beyond reason's insight. Pascal differs from the majority in placing a greater emphasis on the extent to which the passions (those feelings in which the soul is passively acted on by something outside of reason) and the imagination pose a threat to reason unaided by faith. The picture is effectively one of the fallen intellect weakened by sin to the point where our thinking is clouded (see FAITH; ORIGINAL SIN). Pascal did not believe that we can prove the existence of God; instead he develops the famous “Wager argument” for the pragmatic rationality of religious belief (see PASCAL'S WAGER).

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677)

One philosopher never mistaken for having low confidence in reason, but who also gives due consideration to the passions, is Spinoza. He has perhaps the most ambitious project in natural religion in the modern philosophical canon, at least until G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) (see HEGEL, GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH) just after our period (and Hegel saw himself as following in Spinoza's footsteps). He lays this vision out in his posthumously published *Ethics* (1677), but it is his earlier *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670 [hereafter “*TTP*”]) that expresses most of his views on the relationship between natural and revealed religion, and between both of them and the state.

The goal of *TTP*, as stated in its preface, is to show that freedom of religion is good for the state: that it “can be granted without harm to piety and the peace of the Republic, but also that it cannot be abolished unless piety and the Peace of the Republic are abolished with it” (Spinoza [1665–1677] 2016, 69). To this end, Spinoza sets out to show that reason and revelation are independent of one another, a fact which becomes clear, he claims, when one examines scripture with unprejudiced eyes. Now, by scripture here Spinoza means Christian scripture, as his audience is primarily Christians; however, the texts he engages with most directly are those of the Hebrew Bible, both perhaps out of a desire to avoid the greater offense which might be caused by reading New Testament texts in an unorthodox way, and because of his greater familiarity with the Hebrew Bible, having been a member of Amsterdam's Jewish community until his excommunication at 23. Spinoza works through a great many scriptural texts, and responds to various readings of them, particularly by Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) (see MAIMONIDES, MOSES) and other Jewish thinkers (see MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, JEWISH CONTRIBUTION; JEWISH PHILOSOPHY). What should be noted here is his remarkable conclusion, that scripture teaches no

speculative philosophical doctrines, but only obedience to divine commands, and that such obedience can be a means to salvation (see SALVATION/SOTERIOLOGY IN JUDAISM; SALVATION/SOTERIOLOGY IN CHRISTIANITY). That obeying morality can be a path to salvation is for Spinoza the one revealed truth that is above reason – or at least it is beyond what reason has been able to achieve so far. It is, however, capable only of a “moral certainty,” a kind of trust we have in the prophets who relayed God’s commands, which is merited by their holy life as well as by signs or miracles they used to authenticate themselves as sent by God. Note that our sense of what a holy life is must therefore come from reason, before revelation. Thus the *content* of the commands is not what is revealed, but only *that obeying them* leads to salvation. That is what constitutes revelation’s “domain,” and it does not contradict or overlap with reason’s domain. The separation between these two domains allows Spinoza to go on in *TTP* to develop a moderate proposal on behalf of religious liberty.

But what is salvation, for Spinoza? It might seem, based on what he says in *TTP*, that it involves an afterlife in which one is rewarded for good deeds (for many, including Locke below, this doctrine is at the center of natural religion; see HEAVEN; HELL). However, Spinoza makes clear in *Ethics* that he thinks the prospect of future reward can have only so much influence on our resolution to overcome passions, especially fear and the desire for present pleasures. This is one of the reasons Spinoza sets out in his *Ethics* to show the way, through reason, to a more potent conception of salvation, one which can provide greater peace of mind and go further in overcoming our bondage to the passions. This is made clear in the final proposition of *Ethics*: “Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; nor do we enjoy it because we restrain our lusts; on the contrary, because we enjoy it, we are able to restrain them” (Spinoza [1661–1677] 1985, 616). So perhaps what Spinoza means in *TTP* is that by obedience in pursuit of a reward one can accidentally find one’s way into virtue and hence true blessedness. Regardless, revelation remains valuable, because the kind of salvation that reason can offer is not one that everyone can reach.

In *Ethics*, Spinoza first establishes the relationship between God, soul, and body. He argues that when we reflect on the definition of a substance, we see that there are in fact no substances aside from God; thus, all other things, mental or physical, are in God (see MONISM; PANENTHEISM; PANTHEISM). Our souls or minds are only “modes” of God’s thought “attribute,” and our bodies are only modes of God’s extension attribute. Furthermore, because both attributes express God’s nature, there is a thoroughgoing correspondence between them: “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (Spinoza [1661–1677] 1985, 451). There is simply one world of things, which comprehended “under the attribute of thought” is expressed as one complete picture, and comprehended “under the attribute of extension” is expressed as another complete picture. Thus the “union” of my soul and my body is accomplished because they are in some sense identical – isomorphic modes, we could more properly say, in two different attributes of God. Crucially, though, all things, however they are expressed, proceed necessarily from God’s nature. God thus does not have the freedom to choose a certain world – this is not only the best but the *only* possible world (see DIVINE

FREEDOM; FREE WILL). The remaining three books of the *Ethics* show the nature of feeling in the human soul, how the soul is controlled by feelings which are passions, and how, by becoming aware of God and how things relate to God, the human being can develop love for God which makes the soul active, allowing it to more fully overcome its passions and to act virtuously, thus attaining blessedness as described above.

So two key Cartesian doctrines go by the wayside in Spinoza: the notion that souls and bodies can interact (Spinoza writes regarding Descartes' account of their interaction through the pineal gland that "I would hardly have believed it had been propounded by so great a man, had it not been so subtle,") and the notion that God and the soul act freely (Spinoza [1661-1677] 1985, 596). Many later thinkers will struggle with both these questions. Of course, one existing solution to these problems was that of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who simply denied that there was more than matter, and sought to explain the functions of the "soul" just as mechanistically as the movements of the body, even making God corporeal (see MATERIALISM). Hobbes's picture of God was not popular during this period, however, and neither was Spinoza's – both were taken by many to be incompatible with true religion, and indeed not properly "God" at all. Thus, Hobbes and Spinoza are generally seen in this period as the arch-atheists who must be refuted at all costs.

Anne Conway (1631-1679)

While there has been some discussion of the influence of the Jewish mystical tradition of KABBALAH on Spinoza's work, it is in the work of Conway and her circle that Kabbalah comes most to the fore in this period. Conway and her one-time teacher Henry More (1614-1687) reflected on Kabbalistic writings, notably those of Isaac Luria (1534-1572), which had been introduced to them by Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698) (regarding More, see CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS). Mistakenly believing (as was not uncommon in the reception of texts in early modern Europe) that Luria's writings were much older than they actually were, they saw the texts as ancient Jewish wisdom which had been passed down from Moses. Conway and More both took interest in Kabbalah, and Conway goes further than More in reconciling Luria's Kabbalah with Christianity, although some of her doctrines are outside of traditional Christian orthodoxy (see Hutton 1999).

Unfortunately, only a few of Conway's notes on this issue have been preserved, but in those pages she offers a distinctive response to questions about the relations between God, soul, and body and between natural and revealed religion. Conway goes quite far in tying natural religion and revealed religion together, in a way that is similar to Malebranche below, and reflects one form of what has since been dubbed "ramified" natural theology (see Chignell and Pereboom 2020). Conway thinks that the Christian doctrine of the TRINITY – that God is one and yet somehow still three persons – is not above reason, as Descartes or some of our other authors would have it. She also rejects the idea that the doctrine is in a different domain than reason, a view closer to Spinoza's. Rather, Conway thinks it is accessible to common

human reason, and able to be demonstrated (at least in part) from consideration of the question of how God relates to the world. In line with this, she argues that the offensiveness of the notion of a Trinity to Jews and Muslims (a rejection of the notion of God as Trinity goes back in the Islamic tradition all the way to the QUR'ĀN) arises from a general confusion, including among Christians, about the rational meaning of the doctrine (see *DIVINE SIMPLICITY*). She goes so far as to say that those who, like the Kabbalists, believe in the necessity of a divine mediator – which she claims is susceptible to proof by rational argument that is just as clear as the proof of God's existence – are already implicitly believers in Christ, such that if only the historical identity of the mediator (see *JESUS OF NAZARETH*) were revealed to them, they would become Christians. Indeed, Conway claims that her argument for a mediator between God and creatures would be a great aid to spreading Christianity among non-Christian peoples.

Part of the background of that argument is the fact that for Conway, in contrast to Descartes and Malebranche, the question of how the soul can be coordinated with the body is much less central than the question of how both soul and body can relate to God. That is to say, for Conway the most important metaphysical fault line is the distinction between God and creatures, rather than that between two sorts of creaturely reality. God does not change, but creatures regularly change, even for the worse – the kind of change with which God can have no association (see *IMMUTABILITY AND IMPASSIBILITY*). Thus for Conway there has to be one quasi-creature who is generated differently from the rest, and who changes but remains good, rather than changing between good and evil, as other creatures do. This one creature shares both God's inability to get worse, and creatures' ability to improve, and so can mediate between the two (see *CHRISTOLOGY*).

Such, in brief, is Conway's account of how God and creatures can interact – via Christ the mediator (her account of the third person of the Trinity is left aside here). As far as the soul and body of creatures are concerned, they do not essentially differ, and in fact they can transform into one another. Thus Conway will say that Descartes and Hobbes misunderstand matter, seeing only its “husk and shell,” and never the “kernel” (Conway [1690] 1996, 66). Matter contains within itself the capacity to become spirit, and thus the potential for all activities of spirit, including knowledge and love, meaning that even sand can be elevated into a human soul by natural processes over long periods of time (see *PANPSYCHISM*). Thus, Conway goes against the Cartesian grain in holding that there is no essence which separates souls from bodies (in this general view Leibniz will follow her).

Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715)

Malebranche has views that are similar to Conway's on the relationship of natural and revealed religion, but quite opposite to her on the relation of God, the soul, and the body.

Malebranche thinks that we can establish a great deal with our reason, including proving God's existence from the concept of a perfect being. However, for Malebranche, the pursuit of natural religion through reason often runs into "reefs" or contradictions, and while often these can be resolved by carefully specifying and rigorously observing one's rational principles, at times the best way to resolve them is to bring in a revealed doctrine which resolves the apparent contradiction (Malebranche [1688] 1997, 153). So, for example, on the question of why God would allow the soul to be drawn, against its will, away from contemplation of God by bodies or external circumstances, Malebranche (like Pascal) appeals to the Christian doctrine of the Fall of humanity. Before the Fall, Adam could resist the allure of the body, but now because of sin's effects we are justly distracted from contemplation. Furthermore, on the question of why God would have sufficient reason to create a finite, "profane" world (since it seems such a world could never give glory to an infinite creator, no matter how good it was), Malebranche suggests that the INCARNATION in Christ suffices to hallow the profane world, and give it a proper relationship to God, such that it can bring God glory. These are a few of the junctures where Malebranche illustrates his assertion that, although reason is sovereign, it must at times be guided by faith – that is, by revealed truth.

Malebranche's view on the connection of soul and body – typically called "occasionalism" – is that for which he is best known. Malebranche suggests that God must at every moment mediate in a strong, causal way between the soul and the body. In fact, God must mediate in this way between *any* two things. In any causal interaction, what seems to us to be the cause of an event is only the "occasional cause," the occasion for God to step in. Thus an external object near someone's body is, because of some law of the union of the soul and body, the occasion for God to produce in their soul an impression of its appearance; a prick of a thorn on their finger is, because of another such law, the occasion for God to produce a feeling of pain; someone willing to move their arm, by another such law, is the occasion for God to set that arm in motion.

Malebranche does not mean to deny the role of bodies, or in particular brains, in the production of these events; the brain is simply the final stop in the body, before God transfers something over to the soul (or the first stop, when it comes to volition, which originates in the soul). But the soul is nevertheless more at home in the contemplation of God than in interaction with the body. In this, Malebranche makes clear his debt to Augustine (354–430) (see AUGUSTINE, SAINT) and, by way of Augustine, to PLATO (c. 427–347 BCE). But Malebranche insists that he can demonstrate this doctrine more clearly than Augustine did, now that Descartes has shown just how debased matter really is, being mere extension without further qualities.

John Locke (1632–1704)

Although this is hard to guess from reading the text, the conversation among friends which prompted Locke's great work of theoretical philosophy, the *Essay Concerning*

Human Understanding (1689) was reportedly about the relationship between morality and revelation (Cranston 1957, cited in Winkler 1996, xiv). What seems to have emerged out of that conversation was yet another prominent view about the relationship between natural and revealed religion. In Conway and Malebranche, natural religion was not independent because contradictions within it cannot be avoided without appeal to revelation (or at least, resolving its apparent contradictions by reason alone would mean accepting doctrines like the existence of some mediator or the necessity of some incarnation – which would make natural religion look a lot like Christianity). Locke, however, emphasizes a different sort of dependence of natural religion on revelation. For Locke, what Christianity adds to natural religion lies not in its ability to make sense of what reason could not in principle make sense of on its own, but in its clear and forceful presentation of the truths of natural religion, thus serving as what Kant will call a “vehicle” for natural religion (Kant [1793] 1996, 146).

To understand this, however, it helps to understand Locke’s epistemology in general. Locke is notoriously restrictive in his claims about what can be known. Anything in sense experience, aside from the fact of what is immediately present to the mind, does not attain the certainty required for knowledge. However, the intuitive knowledge of one’s own existence is completely certain, and anything that can be proved from what is intuitively certain (or what one can remember having once so proved) is also knowledge, though of a slightly lower grade.

It is on the latter basis that Locke thinks we can know that God exists. He develops a form of the COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT, one which begins from the fact that something exists, namely I myself. Because I exist, and because something cannot come from nothing, and because you could run the same argument with respect to my parents, and their parents, and so on, there must therefore always have been something. Everything (on Locke’s view) gets its power, including knowledge, from that which produces it, and so this eternal ground of all things must be most powerful and most knowing, and can be called God. Locke does not find arguments beginning from the concept of God, as Descartes and Malebranche appealed to, sufficient, even supposing them valid, because some people do not discover the right idea of God in themselves. Thus the argument is often unfit for “silencing atheists” (Locke [1689] 1975, 622).

Locke thinks it is certain, from the concept of God and of ourselves, that we ought to fear and obey God. It is likewise certain that we will have an afterlife in which God will give us reward and punishment for our deeds on earth. This is enough to give us reason to observe morality, the basic content of which Locke also suggests is capable of demonstration. Interestingly, though, Locke will suggest that we do not know whether our soul is immaterial, because even though matter as we know it possesses only properties like extension, motion, and solidity (as in Descartes), God *could* give it thought via an operation he calls “superaddition.” However, Locke asserts, this would be an irregularity, like God giving speech to Balaam’s ass in the Bible (so Locke’s matter is not like Conway’s). Locke thinks a separate soul is religiously unnecessary because the afterlife will involve resurrection of the body,

into which God can superadd a psychology that is continuous with our *ante-mortem* selves (see RESURRECTION).

How can one rationally accept a revelation, and what does a revelation add to natural religion? Locke's answer to the first question is clear. Miracles are always the foundation of any divine revelation, because they entitle someone to speak as God's messenger. Interestingly, he claims that the only unambiguous way to define a miracle is simply as something "which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine" (Locke [1706] 2000, 114). While this could lead to differences in who accepts what as a miracle, Locke does not think this is a major problem since, in his view, very few people have claimed to be issuing revelations. The interesting case, Locke thinks, is when two people both do miracles opposing each other, like Moses and Pharaoh's sorcerers in the book of Exodus. In that case, one simply listens to the more powerful miracle worker, since God, not being a deceiver and indeed having a sense of pride regarding the truth, would never let an angel or demon claim a revelation (see ANGELS AND COMMUNICATION). Building from this understanding of miracles, Locke (as Berkeley will as well) develops a probabilistic argument that the Christian revelation is likely true, reflecting another strand of what has since been called "ramified" natural theology (see Chignell and Pereboom 2020).

In answer to the question of what revelation adds, Locke looks at the Christian revelation from a God's-eye view, and suggests that God could have had many reasons for it. However, the divine reason Locke most emphasizes by far is the communication and reinforcing of the truths of natural religion. He writes that before Christianity, natural religion had not spread much, because the argument for God's existence, and from there to the need to worship God and be moral, was difficult for reason to uncover. Thus, although morality is accessible to reason, revelation is often needed to help people realize the truth faster (Locke [1695] 2000, 147–150). It might seem, then, that for Locke revelation really is a revelation *of* natural religion, rather than natural religion being, as it is for some other thinkers, a mere common denominator between revealed religions and a tool *for* them. This is not the whole story, because Locke does allow that a revelation can include additional truths, such as Christ's divinity or the existence of angels, but it is a noteworthy emphasis.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716)

Leibniz had a long and prolific career. The late work *Theodicy* (1710) was the only book-length text he published during his lifetime, and was his main contribution to philosophy of religion then and for a long time after. It also stands between two other important works: Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697) and Voltaire's *Candide* (1759).

Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) is a provocative and puzzling figure. In his *Dictionary* he made popularly available a large number of skeptical or anti-religious views, most

prominently those based in the existence of both natural and moral evil (see *EVIL AS A PROBLEM FOR THEISM*). In the *Dictionary* and in his other works he also put forward many arguments which put reason and faith at odds. However, he was not (at least officially) an atheist: he himself professed belief in the Calvinist Christianity (see *REFORMED TRADITION, THE; CALVIN, JOHN*) in which he had been raised, claiming that in these contradictions faith triumphed over reason. This is a view now known as *FIDEISM*. (Whether Bayle was giving his honest opinion on this matter is the subject of ongoing, heated debate.) Leibniz wrote of him that, “after having applied his whole mind to magnifying the objections [reason makes to faith], he had not enough attention left over for the purpose of answering them” (Leibniz [1710] 1985, 121).

While most of the *Theodicy* is structured around repeatedly citing and refuting statements made by Bayle, Leibniz takes a special opportunity at the start of the work to respond to Bayle’s view on the relationship between faith and reason. The basic views he espouses there are similar to those of many others in the period, if more thoroughly and precisely expressed. These include the view that true reason and true revealed faith will never contradict one another, and that reason and revelation are both gifts from God, albeit very different kinds of gifts.

The main text of the *Theodicy* is a defense of God’s justice in the face of evil (see *THEODICY; EVIL AND SUFFERING*). As a result, the primary relationship visible between revealed and natural religion is that revealed religion has more problems to solve, because, by adding truths which are above reason, it has more things about God to defend, such as the notion of God’s election of some, and not others, to salvation (see *PREDESTINATION*). Indeed, Leibniz states that, in a sense, the defense of God in natural religion is quite simple: one first needs merely to show that God exists using a cosmological argument which begins from the Principle of Sufficient Reason (the claim that everything that exists has a sufficient cause determining it to exist; see *PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON*). After that one simply recognizes from God’s nature that God would always choose the best world, and then concludes that this world is the best of all possible worlds, despite appearances to the contrary. Because the way in which something that is bad in itself, like an earthquake or a pandemic, could be a part of the best world is not available to us, one is not bound to give a justification of individual evils, but can merely point to the rational a priori proof of an all-good and all-powerful God. One can also try to show, where necessary, that there is no contradiction between God’s goodness and some specific concern. One such concern to which Leibniz devotes a great deal of attention is God’s foreknowledge and predetermination of events, and how they interact with human freedom (see *DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE; PROVIDENCE; ETERNITY AND TIMELESSNESS OF GOD*).

Leibniz does the same with revealed truths, seeking to show that on his system none of them contradicts God’s goodness. While Leibniz does not argue that Christian revealed doctrines are provable by reason, he does suggest that Christians are better positioned to interpret and apply the truths of natural religion than others. In particular, he defends the doctrine of the predetermination of events against the

charge that it removes our free will by assimilating this charge to a view he claims is typical of Muslim Turkish soldiers: they risk danger because they believe that what they do will not affect the future. He calls such an incompatibilist view of predetermination *Fatum Mohametanum* (Muslim fate). *Fatum Christianum* (Christian fate), on the other hand, is in his eyes the healthy recognition that God is in control, in a way that is compatible with free actions by rational creatures. By thus associating Christianity with a compatibilist version of predetermination, Leibniz bolsters both his religion and his philosophical view at once (Leibniz [1710] 1985, 54–55).

One of the remarkable predetermined features of our world, for Leibniz, is the Preestablished Harmony of soul and body. While Leibniz does not believe in a Cartesian account of matter (his infinitesimal monads at the fundamental metaphysical level makes him closer to Conway, as noted above), he nevertheless believes that the soul and body do not causally interact, because no two monads causally interact (and the soul is simply a sort of preeminent monad, more awake than those surrounding it). Thus God, in creating the world as a whole once and for all, chose a world in which each of the infinitely many monads that make up our bodies operates according to its own principles, yet in which the coordination is so perfect that it is *as if* bodies (and minds) are causally interacting. The resulting view of this harmony is somewhat like Spinoza's in that *apparent* soul–body interaction arises from a more fundamental order, one key difference being that, for Leibniz, the harmony comes from God's free *choice* (of the best possible world), whereas for Spinoza it follows necessarily from God's nature. Leibniz also differentiated his view from Malebranche's. He emphasized that on his account God chooses the order of nature once for all, by choosing a world that contains this order, whereas Malebranche (in Leibniz's eyes) required God to miraculously step into space and time at each instant to coordinate the two. Leibniz asserts that such continuous miracles make the world less orderly and elegant, and therefore less perfect. However, since Malebranche saw God's intervention as ordered by general laws rather than as individual miracles, it is fair to ask how great the difference between the two thinkers really is here – aside from the difference in ontology between Leibniz's monads and Malebranche's soul–body dualism.

Even though Leibniz asserts that the best of all possible worlds doctrine is established a priori and that we need not *see how* a given event could be a part of the best of all possible worlds, this did not stop Voltaire (1694–1778) from ridiculing it in his *Candide*. In this classic novella, every bad thing in the story becomes an opportunity for a bizarre metaphysical justification – such as when a man drowns in the Bay of Lisbon and it is said the bay must have been shaped just as it is so that he could drown there – as a way of implying how ridiculous Leibniz's doctrine is. In the end, though, Voltaire does not attempt a final refutation of the doctrine, but implies the worthlessness of metaphysical questions (and, perhaps, religion), having *Candide* end by pushing aside a justification of all that had happened to him, saying “All that is very well ... but let us cultivate our garden” (Voltaire [1759] 1991, 87).

George Berkeley (1685–1753)

Berkeley emphasizes a theme already found in Locke, namely that not all natural religion is created equal, because it does not all do an equally good job of opposing atheism. In fact, Berkeley worries that in his own time a lot of natural religion (such as the proto-deistic doctrines of Shaftesbury [1671–1713]) is merely a disguise for atheism, and over time moves further and further away from Christianity, gradually carrying the public along with it (see DEISM). One of the diagnoses Berkeley gives is that, while metaphysics and natural religion are quite clear, various philosophers have made them obscure, and so have encouraged the belief that philosophy leads to skepticism. “[W]e have first raised a dust,” he writes, “and then complain, we cannot see” (Berkeley [1709–1733] 1975, 66).

What was Berkeley’s great solution to return philosophy to simplicity and to harmony with religion? He decided to get rid of *matter* – that is, he tried to say that the “stuff” underlying bodies was no-thing at all.

This is a surprising position. However, there are ways into Berkeley’s position (as he himself saw) from the views of several preceding thinkers. One can arrive at Berkeley’s view by starting with Malebranche’s picture and noting that God’s work to coordinate mind and body in Malebranche’s system seems to make the body itself otiose. If all of the body’s interactions with the mind are mediated by God, why should God not dispense with body altogether? Why should an all-powerful God be satisfied with being a middleman when the good delivered (sensible qualities) can just as well be given directly? Such a view does not deny that the objects of our senses are real, Berkeley thought, but only the “materialist philosophers” view that they have an unperceivable something (*matter*) underlying them.

Berkeley also traces a path into his view from a refusal of Locke’s Cartesian distinction, mentioned briefly above, between qualities which are really in an object, like extension and solidity, and those which are merely in us, like color. For Locke, those which are merely in us rest on undetectably small configurations of extension in an object which give it a power to produce, say, the sensation of blue in me. But Berkeley’s exploration of the particular nature of vision leads him to conclude that there is no reason to privilege qualities like extension over those like color as more essential to reality. Based on this and a range of other arguments, he concludes that there are no qualities at all which are fundamentally “in” things themselves, and thus that our ideas give us no reason to believe in the existence of a real substance called matter. There are only spirits, and the ideas which spirits communicate to each other, paradigmatically through language.

All of this leads Berkeley to a remarkable argument for the existence of God: his divine language argument. The argument begins from the idea that we can reasonably infer the presence of another mind from the rationality displayed in their actions, especially in the use of language (thus connecting language to personhood, as Descartes had done). Berkeley then proceeds to note that the motions people perceive in nature also show evidence of rationality – indeed, by their regular interaction

with our senses such that various patterns of color and light come to be signs for certain objects and distances, our sensory experience constitutes a language. When one reflects on the degree of order and power present in the speaker of that language, one sees that “an infinitely wise and powerful Spirit” is communicating with oneself (Berkeley [1732–1744] 1871, 144). This, Berkeley concludes, is God.

The reason Berkeley prefers this argument over others (though he does not deny them some value) is that he thinks it makes God more present to people, and thus is a better foundation for natural religion. For example, he claims that believing in God’s existence on the basis of an argument like the cosmological proof means for practical purposes relying on one’s memory of having once understood the proof. By contrast, as Berkeley sees it, making every moment of sense experience an occasion of divine speech means that, once one learns to recognize one’s sense experience for what it is, one can always be reminded of God’s presence (see *OMNIPRESENCE*). Also, although Berkeley’s argument is a type of teleological, or design, argument for God’s existence (i.e. one which infers God from some features of what exists; see *TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT*), it differs from many other versions. In particular, it is incompatible with deistic pictures according to which God set up the universe and then left it to run, again because divine speech is ongoing.

Notice also how this argument fits with Berkeley’s claim that extension and motion are not really *in* things, and thus are not clearly and distinctly perceived by us. The structure of everything we perceive – including distance, and hence motion – rests on arbitrary signs chosen by God and learned by the finite mind. If God had chosen a different language, we would experience things differently; hence, only repeated experience of a given kind of sensation allows us to begin to make sense of the world.

As already mentioned, Berkeley saw much of the natural religion around him not as a resting point but as a transition from Christianity to atheism (and he considers not only Hobbes and Spinoza, but also Bayle and even Leibniz, as such threats to religion) (Berkeley [1709–1733] 1975, 233). However, his divine language argument shows that there are forms of natural religion with which he feels more comfortable. He offers a number of justifications specifically for Christianity in his dialogue *Alciphron*, many of them similar to Locke. He claims that Christianity is well-suited to inculcate natural religion, that the documents passed down from antiquity make it reasonably likely that Christianity is true, and also that it can be shown that the Christian mysteries, though not provable, at least do not contradict reason.

David Hume (1711–1776)

If Berkeley had described in detail the sort of work in natural religion that he most feared arriving on the scene, one which reeked of concealed atheism, he might have described the *Dialogues* of Hume. “Doubtless that atheist who gilds and insinuates, and even while he insinuates, disclaims his principles, is the likeliest to spread them,” Berkeley observed, and this is exactly how many have read Hume (Berkeley [1709–1733] 1975, 232). And indeed Hume would famously say of Berkeley’s philosophy, in a sort of backhanded praise, that his arguments “admit of no answer

and produce no conviction” (Hume [1748] 2000, 116). And yet Hume’s philosophy owes a great deal to Berkeley in particular, not least in the notion that much of our experience of qualities like extension is owing not to clear and distinct perception but to “custom or habit” (Berkeley [1709–1733] 1975, 238; Hume [1748] 2000, 37). One of his crucial innovations is in extending this notion of custom or habit, that our perceptions are like a learned language in which words are arbitrarily made into the signs of ideas, to the idea of cause and effect itself. Thus for Hume, an event is like an arbitrary series of characters having no necessary relation to any “meaning” (another event it points to as its cause or effect), and it only comes to be associated with some cause or effect, indeed with causes and effects in general, through its constant conjunction with other things in our experience (Hume [1739–1740] 2007, 65). This doctrine greatly weakens people’s ability to make rational inferences about anything beyond the scope of ordinary experience.

In particular, Hume’s *Dialogues* display one clear effect of this change, namely that the similarity of our experience of the world to a learned language no longer provides such a clear inference to a divine cause authoring it. Hume offers, through the “mystic” character Philo, that any inference to a cause of the order we find in the world can give only a very vague intimation of that cause and its likeness to human minds, because the product, nature, is on such a grander scale than anything a mind has been observed to produce. Among other challenges, he also raises the concern of whether a deity inferred from nature alone could be considered infinitely good or powerful, given the suffering in the world. Interestingly, Hume also seems to use a notion we saw in Locke and Berkeley, that arguments in natural religion ought to support the practice of religion, to turn Philo’s conversation partners against each other: Cleanthes, who endorses the argument for God’s existence similar to Berkeley’s, and Demea, who supports a cosmological argument drawn from Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) (see CLARKE, SAMUEL), both side with Philo against each other, claiming that the other’s argument will do little to reinforce religion against the atheists (Philo finally does express belief in an argument like that of Cleanthes, but it is unclear what motivates this).

Hume’s claim that cause and effect is simply custom or habit turns the problem of the interaction of soul and body into the general problem of how one can perceive any two things to interact. The answer, as already mentioned, is that we “see” them causally interacting only because we have become accustomed to their constant conjunction. Regarding the soul in particular, Hume asserts that nothing can be known of it (and even claims, drawing on Bayle’s article on Spinoza, that the kind of substantial soul that other thinkers believed in was a metaphysical monstrosity akin to Spinoza’s God).

On the value of revelation, Hume’s *Natural History of Religion* (1757) (henceforth *History*) seems to suggest, contrary to Hume’s brief assertions elsewhere, that revelation adds very little to religion. One might infer this from the idea in *History* that humankind, after beginning with polytheism, vacillates between polytheism and monotheism, and is best lifted out of this by consideration of rational arguments for God’s existence, or from the assertion that revealed monotheisms in many respects

mold people into a worse character than polytheism does (though he couches this in the maxim that “the corruption of the best things begets the worst”) (Hume [1757, 1779] 1976, 64). Hume nevertheless does not assert that revelation has no impact, and is careful to turn his critiques of monotheism, insofar as they touch on Christianity, into critiques of Catholicism, which were commonly found in Protestant writings on religion in the period (see *PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF RELIGION*).

Indeed, perhaps Hume’s most famous critique of a religious argument, one which touches on whether there can be a reason to accept a revelation, takes its starting point from one such critique of Catholicism. The argument, “Of Miracles” in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), starts from Anglican priest John Tillotson’s (1630–1694) claim that the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation in the Eucharist (the doctrine which Descartes had been proud to be compatible with) was irrational. Even if it were revealed by God, the argument went, the doctrine still could not be admitted as true, because it contradicted our senses, which tell us that bread is and remains bread. A revealed doctrine could provide no more evidence than our senses do, since any evidence of revelation would come from the miracles that authenticated it, which themselves were shown to us through the senses. Since this evidence only decreased as the report of the miracle passed from witnesses to others and into documents, the evidence against the doctrine had to win out.

Hume extends this argument to the miracles themselves. Miracles, he suggests, are only allegedly capable of supporting some revelation because they themselves contradict nature (and so had to be the work of a deity). To “contradict nature,” though, means to contradict the uniform evidence people have built up over many years, using their senses, of how nature works (or how else would someone know that the allegedly miraculous events were not natural?). But since “a uniform experience amounts to a proof,” we have “a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle” (Hume [1748] 2000, 87). So why believe that the miracle occurred? In this way, Hume turns a miracle’s ability to provide evidence into an argument against the miracle itself. Adding to this concerns about many competing miracle reports from different purported revelations (contrary to Locke’s assertion that such reports were few and far between) and about the unreliability of witnesses in marvelous matters, Hume concludes that belief in miracles (and in divine revelation perceived by the senses) itself requires the miracle of faith, and cannot be proved by evidence or reason.

Although parts of Hume’s argument would seem to apply whether an alleged miracle is seen for oneself or merely heard about, all the examples he gives are of receiving reports of miracles. *Would* it make a difference if a miracle were seen face to face? Lessing will say yes in his essay “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power.”

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) is worth mentioning here for several reasons. The debate about his alleged Spinozism (which kicked off shortly after his death) between his friend Moses Mendelssohn and the writer F.H. Jacobi (1743–1819) greatly influenced the course of German philosophy (see *IDEALISM, GERMAN*). Further, Lessing’s publication of fragments by H.S. Reimarus (1694–1768)

raised key questions about the biblical texts that portray Jesus as divine. But his importance in philosophy of religion is perhaps most owing to the short essay just mentioned. There Lessing notes that he can never submit his reason to revelation on the basis of a miracle report. Although, unlike Hume, he does not raise doubts about the occurrence of the purportedly miraculous event, he asserts that he cannot take a *historical* truth about a miracle as proof of an *eternal* truth about God, or jump over the “broad and ugly ditch,” as he put it (Lessing [1777] 2005, 87). Lessing did not think that this claim about the “ditch” excluded him from what he saw as the essentials of Christian faith. Rather, he suggested that the miracles had served their purpose by inducing those who witnessed them, and who lacked an appropriate moral compass, to adhere to good ethical teaching. They “help[ed] common sense to find the right track” (Lessing [1777] 2005, 87). But now that Jesus’s ethical teaching had been fully absorbed into the fabric of European society, the belief in his divinity, and hence the need for miracles as proofs, was dispensable.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

Lessing yet appears somewhat regretful, noting that he had earnestly tried to jump over the ditch and failed. Kant, however, offers a clear philosophical justification for staying put. Sooner or later, faith in miracles must be unnecessary, Kant thinks, because “we betray a culpable degree of moral unbelief if we do not grant sufficient authority to duty’s precepts, as originally inscribed in the heart by reason, unless they are in addition authenticated through miracles” (Kant [1793] 1996, 122). Kant’s complex account of knowledge and faith helps to explain how he arrives at this conclusion.

Kant, like Hume and Locke, has confidence in our ability to know above all else the nature and limits of our own cognitive faculties. But when Kant looks at the mind’s structure he sees something quite different, because he focuses not so much on what human faculties are *given* from the world, but on the acts they perform in coming to know it. Thus Kant begins from a consciousness of necessity accompanying certain acts of the mind, and posits pure faculties whose principles could provide that necessity.

There are three key places where Kant thinks we can find this consciousness of necessity in ourselves. The first place is in certain rules which structure our experience in space and time – such as that every event has a cause, or that every material object is in reciprocal, dynamical relations with every other. Kant agrees with Hume that we cannot clearly and distinctly *perceive* a relation like cause-and-effect, but he does not leave such ascriptions up to custom or habit either. Rather, Kant asserts that because it is necessary that every event in our spatio-temporal experience has a cause, and we could never arrive at this claim via inductive generalization, we must conclude that this fundamental structure is *put into* experience by us somehow. He calls the faculty that does this the *pure understanding*, and says that it ensures that all of our spatio-temporal experience will follow “categories” or rules like cause-and-effect, thus making our experience, and empirical science, possible (see TRANSCENDENTAL

ARGUMENTS) (the necessity found in the structure of space and time themselves, which Kant says makes geometry possible, is passed over here).

The second place we find this necessity, Kant thinks, is in our insistence on asking questions about ultimate reality – in particular questions about God, freedom, and immortality. This explains the ineradicability of supersensible metaphysics in human inquiry. What it points to is a faculty of *pure speculative reason* which doesn't just make inferences, as Leibniz and others had said, but has interests of its own which drive it, and lead it to seek the final link in any chain of truths. Our reason is restless, for Kant, until it goes beyond all "conditioned" things and rests in the "unconditioned."

Kant thinks that many wrong answers in philosophy of religion, and philosophy more broadly, arise from confusion about these two sorts of issues – in particular from thinking that concepts and principles from the understanding, which only legitimately apply to the spatio-temporal domain, can be used to find the answer to reason's questions (via Leibniz's cosmological argument, for example). Knowledge of the true scope, nature, and interests of our faculties lets us see the limits on what we can know. "Dwell in your own house," he writes, quoting Persius, "and you will know how simple your possessions are" (Kant [1781, 1787] 1998, 104).

But there is still the third sort of necessity in us, which leads to one more item of knowledge. The third is a consciousness of being necessarily obligated – of being bound by the moral law (Kant [1788] 1996, 163). That such a law commands us unconditionally tells us that we must have a free will – one that is capable of being determined by *pure practical reason*. This in turn means that some part of ourselves stands outside of experience (since nothing within experience could be genuinely free in this way).

This knowledge of our freedom to follow the moral law leads to Kant's natural religion. Kant thinks that a commitment to God and immortality arises from the commitment to morality. He describes this commitment as a kind of rational "faith" – the German term is "*Glaube*," sometimes translated as "Belief" – which he claims to have "made room for" by "denying knowledge" of God (see Kant [1781, 1787] 1998, 117) (see KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH). Although moral duty is binding regardless of whether or not being good makes us happy, morality also enjoins us to will that those who are morally good are *to that extent* happy. This combined state of affairs – moral goodness in precise proportion to happiness – is what Kant calls the "highest good" (*summum bonum*). The highest good cannot be accomplished, obviously, without a God who can make sure that the perfect proportion is in place – in a future life. Because of this, Kant argues, people are rationally committed to Belief (*Glaube*) in God and immortality (implying that humans have some sort of soul, although its relationship to the body is not determined) (see MORAL ARGUMENT). On these truths is founded natural or pure religion, which consists in "recognition of all our duties as divine commands" (Kant [1793] 1996, 177). Notice that morality precedes natural religion, unlike in Locke, where knowledge of these truths rationally grounds morality (see Chignell forthcoming).

How does this natural religion relate to revealed religion? As noted above, Kant, like Locke, thinks that revelation can be a vehicle by which pure practical reason can be awakened, and thus by which natural religion can enter the world. He also thinks Christianity has done a particularly good job, through its stringent moral requirements, of awakening our pure practical reason and spreading natural religion. Furthermore, in his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), he explicates the features of pure religion, including human evil, repentance, and community, in relation to specifically Christian doctrines. What Kant means to suggest by this, though, is not that natural religion provides an approximation to Christianity, but that Christianity approximates the pure, natural religion of pure reason.

Thus while Kant suggests in places that Christianity is preferable to Judaism, Islam, or other historical faiths, this is only because of ways that it (allegedly) taps into and encourages the pure religion of reason. Ultimately, then, all religions are always measured by reason: wherever they conflict, they will separate like oil and water, Kant says, and reason's pure religion will always rise to the top (Kant [1793] 1996, 64). Thus, if someone knows and lives by the pure religion of reason, then even if she witnesses a genuine miracle, she need not lose sleep over what the miracle worker will say. For she already knows with certainty the pure rational essence of religion.

Conclusion

Some of the most prominent movements in philosophy of religion in the early modern period originated in the problematization of the status of revealed religion and bodies. But by the end of the period, the status of reason and the soul, too, had been problematized. Questions about our capacity for rational proof in metaphysics, found in Pascal, Bayle, Hume, and Kant, threatened knowledge-claims regarding both the soul and God. Some authors (like Pascal and Kant) sought to replace theoretical proofs with pragmatic or moral arguments. Others (Bayle, perhaps) rejected reason altogether in this domain, in favor of a fideistic leap. Still others (Hume, on most readings) sought to make us comfortable with skepticism about fundamental metaphysical questions.

One near-immediate response to all this came in the form of G.W.F. Hegel's (1770–1831) ambitious effort to restore certain truths about God to the status of knowledge. Other responses stemmed from the thought that Kant's account of the possibilities for establishing religion was only as secure as his account of our rational faculties. Thus several Christian thinkers, including Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) (see SCHLEIERMACHER, FRIEDRICH) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) (see KIERKEGAARD, SØREN AABYE), built their accounts of revealed religion on an analysis of the faculties pertaining to faith which Kant had left out. Still others sided with Kant. The Jewish tradition of Neo-Kantianism led by Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) endorsed Kant's rational religion and suggested that Judaism is a much better vehicle for it than Kant himself recognized.

See also: AFTERLIFE; ARISTOTLE; BERKELEY, GEORGE; BIBLE, CHRISTIAN; BIBLE, HEBREW; CHRISTIANITY; CONWAY, ANNE; DESCARTES, RENÉ; FREE WILL; HUME, DAVID; ISLAM; JUDAISM; KANT, IMMANUEL; LEIBNIZ, GOTTFRIED WILHELM; LOCKE, JOHN; MALEBRANCHE, NICOLAS; MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION; MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, ISLAMIC CONTRIBUTION; NATURAL THEOLOGY; PAUL THE APOSTLE; RELIGIOUS DISAGREEMENT; RELIGIOUS PLURALISM; REVELATION IN ABRAHAMIC FAITHS; SOUL; SPINOZA, BARUCH

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