

God and the World



Fort Defiance, Arizona, Library of Congress

Meaning of Life and God's Existence

From raising the initial question of Socrates, "What should be your central concern in life?," we have moved to the question of Tolstoy and Camus, "What is the meaning of Life?"

In order to answer this question, another question can be raised first about the existence of God, for this second question is directly related to the first one. The second question can be put in three parts:

Axiologically: Is the source of the meaning of life God?

Epistemologically: Can we prove that God exists?

Ontologically: Does God exist?

Hence, we turn our attention to the arguments for the existence of God.

This task, that of attempting to prove God's existence, is properly in the philosophy of religion; philosophy of religion is mainly an epistemological inquiry. This task involves such questions as whether religious knowledge is a special kind of knowledge, how religious knowledge is obtained, and the implications of religious knowledge or conduct.

Philosophy of religion is not explicitly concerned with the history of religions, comparative religion, or specific religious or church doctrines except insofar as these subjects illumine the epistemological task. Philosophy of Religion does not specifically seek historical facts or interpretations of church doctrine.

Natural and Deductive Theology

Philosophers investigate two broad kinds of religious knowledge claims:

First, *natural theology* is the attempt to prove the existence of God, and sometimes human immortality, from premisses provided by observation of the ordinary course of nature. Natural theology usually involves *à posteriori* proofs.

Second, *deductive theology* involves the attempt to prove the existence of God from premisses known to be true by reason alone; that is the reasoning is done independently of sensory experience and is called *à priori* reasoning.

Index

- à posteriori, 2
- à priori, 2
- epistemology, 1
- God
 - existence of, 1
- philosophy
 - of religion, 2
- religion
 - philosophy of, 1
- theology
 - deductive, 2
 - natural, 2