



EDITORIAL

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND THE FUTURE OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Francis Jonbäck and Mikael Leidenhag

We are thrilled to present the inaugural issue of *Agatheos – European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, a journal we believe has the potential to help fill a significant space in a currently vibrant and expanding field, philosophy of religion. This first issue embodies, in many ways, the broad aims and aspirations of the journal as a whole. It is fitting, therefore, to present these aims alongside an acknowledgement of the dedicated team that has made this journal possible; for it is indeed the result of a team effort.

We think of the journal as a platform for scholarly dialogue where concepts, arguments, and theories associated with religions and worldviews, are explored, developed, and assessed. Thus, with respect to the content we publish, we aim for a wide-ranging journal that houses a plurality of approaches and methodologies. Philosophy of religion has often centred on philosophical theism where the existence and nature of God occupy centre stage - a worthy topic, to say the least. However, in recent years, the field has broadened significantly to include a wide range of religions and doctrines across the globe. We want to further this important expansion by encouraging contributions that engage with diverse religious traditions, but also secular perspectives and worldviews of those who do not identify as traditionally religious or outright atheists, sometimes referred to as “fuzzy religious,” “in-betweeners,” or “post-secular.” Given the journal’s expansive scope, we aim to ensure that our journal is at the forefront of the academic discourse and able to accommodate future developments.

The broad focus of the journal is also suggested by its name. “Agatheos” is the central concept of Agatheology developed by Janusz Salamon. He coined the term “Agatheos” as an abbreviation of the phrase “agathos theos” to capture the idea that religious turn of mind is triggered primarily by human concern with the Highest Good that would transcend the limitations of the human condition. Used in both Attic Greek and Koine Greek, the phrase appears most notably in *The Republic* 379a9-b1 where Plato argues that God being good is unable to cause evil, and, in *Mark* 10:18 and *Luke* 18:19, where Jesus objects to being called good and utters the remarkable: “No one is good but God alone.” It is of significance that Agatheology is envisaged, by Salamon, as a global and transcultural philosophy of religion capable of indispensable

contributions to the global ethical dialogue, since it construes *Agatheos* as the Transcendent analogue of the universally shared human desire for the imperishability of the good as the main source of existential meaning and hope, amidst the tragedy of evil.

In addition to our wide scope of key issues, we are also keen to accommodate various philosophical schools of thought. *Agatheos* operates under the auspices of the Nordic Society for Philosophy of Religion, in collaboration with the University of Gävle and Uppsala University, both in Sweden. The Nordic Society is a section of the larger European Society for Philosophy of Religion, and its members are notably diverse in their methodologies. However, while we welcome papers across various philosophical methods and orientations, we particularly value contributions that pose clear philosophical inquiries, defend distinct theses, and articulate well-supported arguments.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into making this journal possible, and we extend our deepest appreciation to all involved, even though space here does not permit us to mention everyone. However, Janusz Salamon deserves special recognition. As the founding editor of the previous iteration of this journal, he has worked tirelessly to establish *Agatheos*, and has agreed to serve as the chair of our editorial committee.

We also wish to thank all the members of the editorial committee for their dedicated contributions and unwavering support. Our committee comprises leading philosophers and experts from Europe, North America, Australasia, and beyond. It includes specialists in the Abrahamic and Asian religious traditions, as well as in various secular worldviews. Your diverse expertise and commitment are invaluable to us and instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this journal. We also want to thank our regional editors for their invaluable support in various ways. They represent all Nordic countries in the Nordic Society for Philosophy of Religion.

Special thanks also go to Jaana Kurvinen and the University of Gävle. Jaana connected us with the right people and provided gracious support throughout this journey. We are also grateful for the support and advice from Ulf Zackariasson and Uppsala University.

Ramana Fragola and the Royal Library of Sweden have provided a platform and webpage, as well as all the information we needed. We are immensely thankful for their continued support and assistance.

Finally, we are deeply grateful for how *Agatheos* has revived a cherished friendship that began over a decade ago when we were both PhD students at Uppsala University. It's remarkable how life can reunite people unexpectedly. Now we find ourselves being able to pursue this joint passion. With this collaborative spirit and dedication, we are excited to present the articles in our inaugural issue, which focus on the theme of religious diversity and the future of philosophy of religion – a theme that aligns well with the overarching goals of *Agatheos*.

In the opening paper, Robert McKim seeks to expand the scope of philosophy of religion to include future directions for religion, potential progress, and new skills or capacities that may facilitate this progress. Special attention, he argues, should be given to traditions above a certain normative threshold, where moral progress is reflected in their metaphysical posits. Additionally, avoiding excessive confidence and denigrating attitudes towards religious outsiders are essential for qualifying for special attention.

In the second paper, J. L. Schellenberg addresses three interconnected issues: whether philosophy of religion needs to move away from theism, what could replace it, and how nontheistic conceptions of the divine should be incorporated in future discussions. He argues that attention to theism should diminish as a result of this renewed attention to nontheistic topics. Theism's dominance, Schellenberg argues, should be replaced by focusing on the aims of philosophy of religion, including resolving problems in other areas of philosophy and evaluating religious practices. He also suggests that the most potentially fruitful ideas of the divine are not alternative conceptions of it per se but are general frameworks for discussing alternative conceptions, including theism.

In the third paper, Mikael Stenmark explores how individuals should think about and act when choosing a religious or secular worldview and the appropriate attitude toward those with different worldviews. He aims to illuminate the intellectual and existential conditions for selecting or maintaining a worldview amidst significant diversity. Stenmark argues that when we reflect on our worldview and its alternatives, we should follow certain intellectual norms: the principle of epistemic conservatism, the fallibilistic principle of belief regulation, the principle of deep concern, the cautious principle of belief revision, and the principle of weak pragmatism. He specifies these norms, provides examples of their application to worldview formation, and offers reasons for their acceptance.

T. J. Mawson focuses on the relationship between the Abrahamic faiths and argues that if any one of Judaism, Christianity or Islam is true, then the adherents of each worship the same God as one another. The issue is primarily one of reference and on any plausible account of how "God" and what he calls "cognate names" of God work, all refer to God if any refers to God. Thus, anyone who directs worship to what they suppose they refer to with these names directs worship to God if there is a God. Interestingly, there is scope for those with radically misguided views of the nature of God to nevertheless refer to Him and worship Him should He exist.

In the next paper, David Worsley employs recent work on divine ineffability and personal knowledge to argue that specific propositional knowledge is not required for salvation, understood as a person's union with God. He demonstrates that no one can be excluded from salvation merely due to the happenstance of birth and advocates for significant religious humility, as individuals with divergent propositional beliefs, including those of different faiths or none at all, can experience union with the same God. Worsley also contends that this argument supports salvific inclusivity and can

be adapted to defend salvific pluralism, suggesting that multiple, non-fundamental true descriptions of God can coexist, even if they appear contradictory.

In the sixth paper, Mikel Burley addresses the need for philosophy of religion to move beyond its focus on the “rationality of theism.” He critiques religious pluralist theories for often being constrained by theological agendas that prioritize convergence over acknowledging differences. Burley distinguishes between two approaches to the metaphysics of religious diversity: one that seeks to discover the fundamental truth behind specific metaphysical beliefs, and another that highlights the variety of beliefs held by different religious communities. Using the diversity among Hindu conceptions of the divine as an example, Burley advocates for a radically pluralist and critically descriptive philosophy of religious diversity.

In the final paper, Sami Pihlström explores the nature of the philosophy of religion as an academic discipline. While it may seem evident that philosophy of religion belongs to the humanities, given its close ties with theology and religious studies, Pihlström argues that this classification is not straightforward since philosophical investigation can explore fundamental metaphysical questions about the nature of reality. He discusses how philosophers of religion often directly address the existence or non-existence of God. Pihlström contends that resolving the metaphilosophical question of the discipline's nature requires addressing the underlying issue of realism, and from a transcendental-pragmatist perspective, the philosophy of religion is indeed a humanistic discipline, though this cannot be conclusively demonstrated to those who hold metaphysical realist views.

In conclusion, we hope that the first seven papers of *Agatheos* will provoke further analysis of these and other important issues and advance the scholarly dialogue. We invite readers to engage deeply with these contributions and join us in exploring both traditional and novel topics in the ever-evolving landscape of the philosophy of religion.

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