

Teaching & Learning Guide for: The Axiology of Theism: Problems and Prospects

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1 | AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Does God exist? This is a question that philosophers have sought to answer for centuries. But consider the following: What is the value impact of God's existence? Would God's existence be good or bad? Should we want God to exist? These are questions that have only very recently garnered attention from philosophers. To date, they have mostly been tackled by comparing a world where God exists to another world as similar to it as possible but where God doesn't exist. Two main answers have emerged. Pro-theism is the view that God's existence would increase the value of the world. Anti-theism is the view that God's existence would decrease the value of the world.

2 | AUTHOR RECOMMENDS

Kahane, Guy. (2011). *Should we want God to exist? Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 674- 696.

This is the article credited with starting the axiology of theism literature. Early versions of arguments for anti-theism based on meaning and other goods are explored.

Kraay, Klaas J. and Chris Dragos. (2013) *On preferring God's non-existence. Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43: 153–178.

This article directly criticizes Kahane 2011. It is also one of the first places to carefully distinguish between the different scopes of axiological judgments and how they impact axiological questions about God.

Kraay, Klaas J. ed. (2018) *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Consequences of Theism. New York: Routledge.*

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This is an edited volume containing contributions from many prominent philosophers of religion, each of whom stakes out a unique position.

Kraay, Klaas J. (2021). *The Axiology of Theism*. Cambridge University Press.

This short book expands the axiology of theism debate by exploring different ways of motivating pro-theism.

Lougheed, Kirk. (2020). *The Axiological Status of Theism and Other Worldviews*. Palgrave Macmillan.

The first full-length monograph on the axiology of theism. It offers a series of arguments for anti-theism.

Lougheed, Kirk. ed. (2020) *Four Views on the Axiology of Theism: What Difference Does God Make?* London: Bloomsbury.

This volume contains four contributors who each take up and defend different positions on the axiology of theism. There are replies and rejoinders for each chapter.

Lougheed, Kirk. (2022). *Ubuntu and Western Monotheism: An Axiological Investigation*. Routledge.

The first extensive discussion of the axiology of theism which makes significant use of African philosophy, including communitarian ethics and Traditional African Religion.

Penner, Myron A. (2015). "Personal anti-theism and the meaningful life argument. *Faith and Philosophy* 32: 325–337.

This is the first place to lay out the meaningful life argument in explicit premise/conclusion format.

3 | ONLINE MATERIALS

Podcast on Lougheed's *The Axiological Status of Theism and Other Worldviews*: Kirk Lougheed [https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cDovL3Jzcy5jYXN0Ym94LmZtL2V2ZXJlc3QvMWFYjcwYTA0YmIzNGRhZjk4NDEyZmE4NDViNjFmNTg0eG1s/episode/YWxidW0tMWFYjcwYTA0YmIzNGRhZjk4NDEyZmE4NDViNjFmNTg0eG1s](https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cDovL3Jzcy5jYXN0Ym94LmZtL2V2ZXJlc3QvMWFYjcwYTA0YmIzNGRhZjk4NDEyZmE4NDViNjFmNTg0eG1s/episode/YWxidW0tMWFYjcwYTA0YmIzNGRhZjk4NDEyZmE4NDViNjFmNTg0eG1s/episode/YWxidW0tMWFYjcwYTA0YmIzNGRhZjk4NDEyZmE4NDViNjFmNTg0eG1s)

Kirk Lougheed walks through a number of questions in sequential order of his book.

Youtube Podcast on Pro-Theism v. Anti-Theism: Klaas J. Kraay. <https://youtu.be/GJYvU5M0SOs>

Klaas J. Kraay walks through the debate between pro-theism and anti-theism.

Youtube Podcast on *The Axiology of Theism*: Klaas J. Kraay. https://youtu.be/KUYQ_vYwb60

Klaas J. Kraay discusses his Cambridge Element, *The Axiology of Theism*.

Youtube Podcast on Should we want God to exist? <https://youtu.be/bZ9dZbgKJ44>

Liz Jackson makes connections between the axiology of theism and epistemology (the study of knowledge and rational belief).

Living Bibliography of the Axiology of Theism. <https://people.ryerson.ca/kraay/Documents/AXBIB.pdf>

This is an online bibliography maintained by Klaas J. Kraay.

4 | SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Week I: What is the Axiology of Theism?

Kraay, K.J. (2018) Invitation to the axiology of theism. In K.J. Kraay, ed., *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Consequences of Theism*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–36.

Lougheed, K. (2019) The axiology of theism. In J. Feiser and B. Dowden, eds., *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Week II: Is the axiological question intelligible?

Lougheed, K. (2020). "The Axiological Status of Theism and Other Worldviews. Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 8–17.

Mugg, J. (2016) The quietest challenge to the axiology of God: a cognitive approach to counterpossibles. *Faith and Philosophy* 33: 441–60.

Week III: Arguments for Anti-Theism.

Kahane, G. (2011) Should we want God to exist? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82: 674–696.

Lougheed, K. (2020). "Chapter Three: The Privacy Argument for Personal Anti-Theism." In *The Axiological Status of Theism and Other Worldviews*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Penner, M.A. (2015) Personal anti-theism and the meaningful life argument. *Faith and Philosophy* 32: 325–337.

Kraay, K.J. (2021). *The Axiology of Theism*. Cambridge University Press. pp.46–53.

Week IV: Arguments for Pro-Theism.

Kraay, K.J. and Dragos, C. (2013) On preferring God's non-existence. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43: 153–178.

Penner, M.A. and Lougheed, K. (2015). Pro-theism and the added value of morally good agents. *Philosophia Christi* 17: 53–69.

Week V: God's Existence and the Axiology of Theism.

Schellenberg, J.L. (2018) Triple transcendence, the value of God's existence, and a new route to atheism. In Kraay, K., ed., *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Consequences of Theism*. New York: Routledge, pp.181–191.

Penner, M.A. and Arbour, B. (2018) Arguments from evil and evidence for pro-theism. In Kraay, K., ed., *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Consequences of Theism*. New York: Routledge, pp. 192–202.

Week VI: Beyond Western Monotheism.

Lougheed, Kirk. (2022). "Chapter Seven: The Axiology of Theism and Differences Between Supernatural Ubuntu and Secular Ubuntu" in *Ubuntu and Western Monotheism: An Axiological Investigation*.

Metz, Thaddeus and Motsamai Molefe. (2021). "Traditional African Religion as a Neglected Form of Monotheism. *The Monist* 104 (3): 393–409.

5 | FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between the existential and axiological questions about God?
2. Why are some sceptical about the intelligibility of axiological questions about God? Describe the challenge based on counterpossibles.

3. Describe what you think is the best argument for pro-theism. Why do you think it's the best? What might the anti-theist say in reply?
4. Describe what you think is the best argument for anti-theism. Why do you think it's the best? What might the pro-theist say in reply?
5. Why is an atheist who endorses the problem of evil as a reason for their atheism committed to pro-theism?
6. Why do some philosophers argue that the truth of anti-theism (a value judgment) entails the truth of atheism (a judgment about exists)?

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Kirk Lougheed is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Faith and Human Flourishing at LCC International University. He is also a Research Associate at the University of Pretoria. He has published over 30 journal articles or book chapters including in such places as *Ratio*, *Res Philosophica*, and *Synthese*. He is the author of *The Epistemic Benefits of Disagreement* (Springer 2020), *The Axiological Status of Theism and Other World-views* (Palgrave 2020), *Ubuntu and Western Monotheism: An Axiological Investigation* (Routledge, 2022), editor of *Four Views on the Axiology of Theism: What Difference Does God Make?* (Bloomsbury 2020), and co-editor (with Jonathan Matheson) of *Epistemic Autonomy* (Routledge, 2022).

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