

Phil 23 Guide for Writing Exam 2

Eliade: See Guide for The Sacred and the Profane

Miller: (Go through steps 1-6 fairly quickly using the Chapter Summaries then focus on 7. There is some quick overview material just before Chapter 8 Summary that can help)

Include a discussion that builds on these issues in this order:

1. Throe of Inquiry and Wonder
2. The meaning of "world." (and how postmodernity has revealed this more clearly, thus opening to the sacred)
3. The meaning of "rupture."
4. Other/otherness
5. Horror as an Intimation of Nothingness and fundamental contingency (that we can *not be*). Nothingness opens us to "otherness." (ordinarily, otherness is shut out or absorbed into a world so we do not have to confront our nothingness)
6. Chapter 7: Temporality as Rupture. (You can skim this quick summary **then see a shorter recap** in *Ch 8: Absolute Other*)
7. CHAPTER 8: The necessary OTHER to temporality and worlds is the **ABSOLUTE OTHER or ETERNITY**. The God of metaphysics is dead. But the absolute other must be presupposed and can be experienced as LOVE. What follows is from Ch 8 Summary:

In Chapter 7, temporality was shown to be the constant rupture of the sense of presence, the constant turn from a "from-which" to a "toward which" that we call past and future. Awareness can only take place as such a rupture, constant difference imposing itself as we constantly try to make it the same, fit it in to the ordinary, into commonsense, into our theories, into our abstract notions of time and space. But the so-called past and future are only ways of talking about immediacy; they are an attempt to articulate something about presence, that it is revealed as an awareness of difference, heterogeneity, objectivity. That we can have abstract concepts of past, present, and future, and theories about time, history, cause and effect, etc., has no bearing whatever on the *experience* that leads to the question of time to begin with. Experience has nothing to do with such abstractions, rather such abstractions are ways of attempting to make the felt sense of the turn of temporality intelligible, manageable, and controllable. A true experience of difference has no identity except as unknown. The basic feature of temporality, of being distended in time, is that it is a felt sense of vulnerability possible only in an already meaningful world, a meaning in which we attempt to bring the rupture of temporality under the control of the same by imposing meaning on otherness making it the same, even if a "new" but understandable feature of and in our world. But that basic feature of rupture or turning which is temporality, opens us to the possibility of nothingness or radical contingency, that our world or meaning could be completely undone, completely an illusion of permanence and security in the utter impermanence of temporality. That in turn, implies a radical otherness to temporality that makes such turning possible, utter not-time or eternity. Temporality without such rupture would be utterly homogenous and would have no otherness by which to produce the possibility of distinction necessary to a subject/object awareness and thus to any possibility of knowledge in which we can distinguish and make assertions about what is objectively true.

The radical other of temporality can only be eternity (utter non temporality) and such an Other is a necessary condition for the essential turn or rupturing that temporality is *existentially*, aside from any abstract conceptions of time. Temporality is not an abstraction, but the immediacy of conscious awareness as the experience of the constant turn from the "from-which" to the "toward-which" that we experience as fundamental to "the world." Anything that happens can only happen in a world. "A world" makes the experience of temporality intelligible. That experience is more fundamental than any world we construct to make sense of the experience of temporality. But, as we have seen, we reify this into a metaphysics of presence and the myth of the given of a reality that we can count on being there independently of our meaning so that the objectivity of the world is guaranteed so we do not have to face our basic condition of contingency and vulnerability to nothingness.

Temporality is the constant opening in which "the same", homogeneity, or meaning, can be ruptured by otherness, the condition of possibility of the experience of wonder and horror in which an already meaningful world can be ruptured. Otherness or difference does not erupt in a world, but happens to a world. A world is a kind of homogeneity, or sameness and true otherness must come from "outside" be utterly unlike this same. In the most profound way, eternity is this ultimate other of temporality that sets in motion the possibility of any rupture as in wonder and horror. Such is the possibility of being caught in the throe of inquiry when the same becomes most deeply and most rationally questionable (Note that it is NOT a kind of irrationality, but only seems to be such to a consciousness that craves the security of sameness, answers, systems, theories, etc., .

When this deconstruction of a world is taken far enough, the sense of one's radical contingency or nothingness is no longer an intimation, it is the experience of complete destitution with only the barest sense in which anguish itself can be a possible experience. That in turn sets the condition for awe. Awe is an experience in which one's world and one's sense of self has been obliterated and it is only in such a condition that through such nothingness and emptying out of meaning while

remaining in the most minimal sense a being to whom things matters, that the sacred is encountered. Most people run from such experiences and are fully engaged in the ongoing task of maintaining an impregnable meaning that would make the self impossible to be nothing.

But since and impregnable world and undeconstructible self are both fictions (this was demonstrated in Chapters 1-7) The Other is a necessary condition for temporality was shown in Chapter 7. These provide the basis for concluding in Chapter 7-8 that we can reasonably posit an Absolute Other as the rupture of time that is the experience of temporality. Chapters 1-7 provide the basis for Miller's attempt in Chapter 8 to make a judgment about the radical Other or Absolute Other.

Ultimate Other of the subjective acknowledgment of vulnerability and need to be let be, to be free, to be oneself (freedom is God's greatest **gift**, whether you believe in God or not!).

But that objectivity of ultimate otherness is not in space and time as just another object. You cannot get in a spaceship and fly out until you find LOVE. Love comes from "outside" but not in space. It comes subjectively in time in LOVE, not loving and not being loved by another subject, though this may be the way we first come to know it. The possibility of LOVE and its transformative power is a mystery. It comes by the salvation from vulnerability that ultimately does not reside in the body but in meaning and attitude toward vulnerability that is no longer localized in mere physical or emotional pain and can no longer be a **loss**.

Freedom from loss and fear of loss- No desire to possess, to hold on to control. Just the overflowing gift-giving squandering of love w/o expectation, love overflowing, no longer and economy of quid pro quo, but over abundance.

Arguments from p. 191 (That we are nothing has already been established repeatedly in the text)

If we are nothing, yet exist, then we are derivative beings

We are nothing

We are derivative (We derive our being from something Other)

If we are Derivative, then we are not being

We are derivative

We are not being

Being is not nothing

Since we are nothing

We are not being

If we are not being, then some Other is being

We are not being

The Other is being

If beings that are nothing exist, then they exist only by some Other

We do exist

We have being only from the Other

For the Other to be the source of our being, that Other must be

We are not the source of our being, some Other is.

The Other must be

If there were not the Other, there would be no being

There is being

There is the Other

If we exist, it is only as the derivatives of a reality radically other than us, being itself.

AWE: p 188: AWE AS THE TOWARD WHICH OF WONDER AND HORROR

Awe in the face of the sublime can become astonishment that being is the wholly other; our awareness of our poverty can become our confession, that in and of ourselves, we are nothing.

If we could not experience wonder and horror that lead through anguish to awe, we would not be able to be aware of the sublime and it would not be able to overwhelm us. If we could understand it, it would not be superior to us. Awe is

possible only because we can be aware of what is beyond us AS beyond us. Whereas wonder can lead us to think that we have awakened to the absolute other itself that becomes the center of our world, as being itself where we worship what we love as ultimately sacred---until we begin to realize that it is liable to nothingness (reveals its contingency and vulnerability). The horror of that recognition drains awe out of our wonder because it makes us realize that what we love is liable to nothingness and that nothingness is more ultimate and more devastating than what we love. \this realization turns us away from being entirely by making us face the nothingness to which all beings are liable. Awe differs from horror in that even when horror exposes us to nothingness, it allows us to keep on thinking of ourselves as beings who are superior to it (we still inhabit a world). Awe, in contrast, instead of allowing us to look down at nothingness from a superior, even if disturbed position , put us in a radically inferior position and requires us to turn toward what is superior to us. But this implies that we cannot experience awe in its purest form, until we are in that destitute condition to which horror can lead. We cannot experience awe fully until we are devastated by the loss of the being which wonder led us to love as being itself. For only in that loss do we experience nothing intrinsic to beings and thus their absolute difference from being itself. The anguish of losing everything is itself the awful breakthrough to being itself.

Awe is thus more profound than either wonder or horror. It radically differentiates being from beings and it does so by requiring of us a confession of our nothingness which even the experience of horror does not ask of us. Wonder inspires us, horror devastates us: but only awe can radically humble us. And while humility is the attitude toward oneself which is developed from a confession of one's nothingness, worship is the attitude toward the Other which develops from the affirmation of its transcendent Otherness. Humility and worship are conceived together in the crux of the conversion that turns on anguish and awe. This experience of awe alone cannot sustain humility and worship. For neither can mature until a conclusion is reached and a position taken on the question of whether the reality of the absolute Other should be affirmed. The experience of awe initiates and provokes further inquiry. Is the wholly Other real? Certainly none of what awe opens up to us is real if one equates the real with what is given, or with what is to be know through analogies to the given. If we try to employ the correspondence criterion of truth, we will find no evidence of what the experience of awe points to. But wonder, horror and awe are not copies of what is already available in the given.

When reason examines the experiences of anguish and awe it finds not merely emotive states but something deeply disclosive about ourselves and from this something deeply disclosive about being.

Awe, horror, and wonder cannot be merely emotive non cognitional states when all the questions we ask and all the inquiries we pursue, originate in the breakthrough to the unknown as unknown which these experiences make possible.

The intimations of awe are more revolutionary than those of wonder or horror because they don't just surprise or devastate us: they call upon us to humbly acknowledge our nothingness and to worship being itself as our radical Other. We can dismiss its intimations as we can dismiss those of wonder and horror only by repressing our own intelligence and the throe of inquiry and refusing to be questioners.

Only the experience of anguish sets in motion the deeply personal question of our status as nothingness, yet we have being, we exist, which requires the affirmation of the Absolute Other which is being.

Only awe can radically humble us and provides the context in which its full import can be realized.

pp. 178-83 **Nothingness versus absence:** Absence: the experience of losing an object that once was present and meaningful within one's world. Nothingness: the experience of the loss of the center of a world that is the condition of possibility of meaning and orientation. Nothingness is as different from absence as being is from presence. (180) Just as being becomes accessible to us only because wonder draws us away from the present-at-hand toward an unknown other, so nothingness becomes accessible to us only through those intimations of horror from which we would like to recoil. Nothingness is no mere absence because it is not the loss of an object that was merely present. It does not remove an object; it deconstructs a world. For that reason it is NOT experientiable by, and will not be understandable to, someone for whom nothing matters ultimately, someone whose life is not centered on any being—someone who has no world to lose because he treats everything, even himself, as something merely present-at-hand. **[Comment:** The ultimate theoretical way of doing this is to believe everything, including we ourselves, are nothing but homogenous materiality, for example, atoms. All there are is atoms. Atoms are real and everything else, sensation, emotion, value, purpose, goals, attachment, love, fear, decisions, judgment, etc. are unreal epiphenomena, mere accidental unreal by-products of the motion of atoms in the void. The idea of holding anyone accountable for their actions is an absurd stance from this view and would have to be jettisoned as completely non-sensical.]

If we do not take such a stance, which itself is completely absurd, and instead begin with our immediate experience that things are meaningful which allows such a theory of atoms to even arise at all, then Nothingness has an ultimate significance for us, as the possible end of a meaningful world, since meaning is more basic than any particular meaning we may adhere to, such as our theories and all the habits of meaning we take for granted that our theories are invented to explain... The very desire to explain anything belies the primacy of need and vulnerability over any account we give of things.

Absence is something recognizable in a meaningful world as something that was present that is no longer objectively in the world. Nothingness is not something in the world. No world can approach nothingness, certainly not as an absence in a world, which itself is not even objectively available as an object. Rather, nothingness is ONLY something that can be experienced as happening TO a world as a rupture from outside, the shattering of a world by an other not graspable IN a world except as an intimation in the experience of horror. That intimation is only the felt recognition of the POSSIBILITY of the nothingness of a world, not nothingness itself. Even that intimation comes from a rupture of the same, of the ordinary sense of being, by something completely other. Nothingness is the event of the end of a world as a whole. It is the discontinuation of the meaningful context a world provides for the recognition of meaningful events at all. The complete end of a world is the impossibility of going on at all, thus nothingness cannot be experienced in a world. It is the end of a self that operates at the undeconstructible center of a world. Yet, something must be in order for nothingness to be presupposed and that something is vulnerability itself which is present in any and everything that is meaningful, but can continue to the point of an unworlding in which there is almost nothing left of the self and its world, only the barest remnant in which an experience of anguish that turns to awe can take place, which in turn is the possibility of new worlding. Such new worlding, however, may constitute a transformation of one's relation to meaning and to being, the source that makes meaning possible. This might be variously described as the unity of Nirvana/Samsara or dwelling in Christ, being *in* the world, but not *of* the world of mere presence, etc.. in which vulnerability now issues in overflowing self-overcoming love, rather than ego-driven love lack and motivations are fundamentally different. One is still a fundamentally temporal vulnerable being, but this is undergone in a radically different way. One dwells in the nothingness one is that opens one to being, the absolute mystery, rather than fleeing it at all costs that leads to so much damage to oneself and others.

pp. 136-41 Horror discloses the possibility of nothingness but nothing becomes fully one's own only as one become completely one with it. The process of being devastated leaves nothing of one's world intact; it costs, in Eliot's words, "not less than everything." How are we to understand such an experience philosophically, coming to it, as we do, from that Heideggerian vanishing point between our horizon of meaning and the abyss which the experience of anguish takes away... The shift which occurs when one moves from understanding oneself as being *toward*-nothingness to understanding oneself AS nothingness.

Presence itself is completely derivative. It gets its importance, its character as presence, from the I that is experienced as the absolute reference point of the universe, the arche of all meaning falsely experienced and presumed as the undeconstructible center in reference to any radiating center has its power and significance. What is this capacity for something to mean the world to us where we are most alive? What does it open us to if we get to the point that we are no longer absorbed in the object of our love after its loss and confrontation with our nothingness? Rather than just a meaningful radiating center that means everything, you need to address the even deeper and more central issue of the illusion of an undeconstructible self that makes such a radiating center possible. What happens when that self that mistakenly is taken as being itself gets deconstructed by the experience of anguish? The will to be an undeconstructible self underlies and sustains the entire metaphysics of presence which is no longer sustainable once the self has this confrontation with its own illusions through the experience of horror and anguish: the loss of the privileged position of the self opens one to the awareness of one's nothingness that makes one realize being is not at all the same as oneself and all the beliefs and theories one subscribes to in sustaining one's world and one's illusion of the self as the arche.

I realize I have never had even my own being firmly in hand, let alone being itself. I did not know what I am fundamentally but rather thought all my beliefs and the theories I subscribe to captured being and my being as something just given, rather than the radically unknowable other that ruptures and makes possible the temporality of my thought in which I have a meaningful world with all its beliefs and theories that in principle makes everything knowable and controllable. The idea of my nothingness and the experience of destitution is not open to me in my world as long as it does not get deconstructed either through experience of loss or through the throe of inquiry. *The embrace of the metaphysics of presence and myth of the given is the fundamental project of the "I" itself: its desire to be perfectly undeconstructible* (remember Parmenides process of self-overcoming which then is the only possible source of genuine law and justice that comes from this OTHER, rather than the ego driven desire and delusion of the undeconstructible self (one thinks of Stalin and Hitler as high examples of the latter, along with most politicians to a lesser degree). The law givers, to be genuine law givers, had to be capable of a high degree of self-overcoming as a prerequisite to wisdom about human possibility, rather than actual ego driven states that call for immediate narrow judgment.

Anguish is the heartfelt acceptance of our ontological condition. In opening to it, we finally embrace our nothingness, instead of evading it. Horror and anguish shatter the dream of an undeconstructible self that fancies itself as being or as just one more object in the being of what is present, rather than the vulnerable source of ordinary finite meaning

susceptible to nothingness, and thus not being at all. It opens one for the first time to an encounter with being as the radically unknown other that necessarily precedes and gives rise to the finite temporal meaningfulness susceptible to nothingness that we are. Being thought of in the myth of the given and the metaphysics of presence is an impossibility, logically impossible, and experientially nowhere to be found.

p. 183-86, no being that wonder ever leads us to discover, no world we enter, however radiant its center, will be exempt from the liability to nothingness of which horror gives us an intimation.. **Nothingness** in this sense is deeper than being, horror deeper than wonder, the loss of life deeper than the celebration of it. The end of all worlds is more ultimate than the genesis of any of them. Whatever might begin again from nothingness would still be liable to it and unable to contain it. We would like to think that, in the face of nothingness, that life goes on, but this would be true only if being were presence and nothingness a mere absence. Life can go on as before only for those who lost what did not mean the world to them and thus is a mere absence.

183-86 Is nothingness itself the final ultimate most radical other?

Are our feelings merely subjective in responding to and recoiling from nothingness? Can our feelings be more or less appropriate? Any judgment expressed in a feeling that says "I ought not be liable to nothingness" depends on whether I can justify the implicit claim that I deserve a metaphysical exemption from the possibility of nothingness. But such a claim is indefensible. I cannot recoil from something in surprised horror that is not. Even if I am mistaken about it, the recoil itself presupposes the very thing I deny, that I am susceptible to nothing and feel that it ought not be. Any recoil in horror is an implicit recognition of my nothingness and implicit judgment that it should not be so. Otherwise, I would not have any such horrified surprise and unexpected rupture. What makes such a rupture and surprise possible is that I take being to be presence and nothingness to be merely absence. For I am the one whose absence I can never experience; my presence is the precondition for the possibility of anything being present, and is the foundation without which nothing could exist as presence, as objectively available to me. That is why, in the metaphysics of presence, the existence of the I cannot be doubted without the doubt being undermined by the very performance of the doubting. The I is the be-all end-all reference point more fundamental than anything it can experience or think, as we see in Descartes.

Any recoil from the realization that I am liable to nothing is possible because this liability radically calls into question the indubitable givenness of the I itself. (phil 1)

214n, 215n: the self's identity with nothingness: **radical contingency**. This is the premise Miller proceeds from to move toward the Absolute Other. This Absolute Other cannot be experienced but only inferred from its necessity to the **experience of temporality**. **If we did not experience the rupture of temporality, we would not exist or think at all, would not be, and so the question of this rupture and the implication of eternity can ONLY occur in time for a temporal being.**

Guerriere: (in every case, do not just list the items below, but explain and support them)

PART 1: Essence of Religion:

1. Remedy to Felt Need/Suffering/vulnerability to loss and non-being. This felt need is fundamentally an experience to which religion is a response (the the reason religion exists) and is therefore the fundamental existential problem to which religion is a possible response.
2. Our being is our freedom to grow, our possibility to be/become.
3. What undermines this is often named "evil." This just means harm to my being.
4. But it is the evil I commit (iniquity) that religion is a response to. Religion is the hope for a **remedy** to my iniquity that I do not have the power to undo or heal.
5. This remedy is the salvational **power** to heal, cure or make whole, to make new. It is salvation from a condition that I do not have the power to heal, namely my past actions.
6. A minimal philosophical definition of religion is made possible by the preceding investigation:
 1. To acknowledge our condition of iniquity, our need for a salvational power and the hope for this
 2. If this does appear in experience, to acknowledge it as what it is, to let it do its proper work, indeed to celebrate it. This definition excludes any particular features associated with historical religions but is not proper to religion, for example, a particular social structure or even a particular moral code. **The religious is the salvational** however it may appear concretely in history.
7. Given the definition of LOVE (see the article), this power must be personal AND atemporal (outside time). Because it is a temporal it will only appear in symbols (see article).

8. This EXPERIENCE of a salvational power is fundamental to religion.
9. **Definition of Religion:** (86) A witnessing to and a practical articulation of a specific experience of salvation, and thus of a salvational Power in effective presence.

PART 2: How is Religion True?

1. Does a salvational Power exist? Is any affirmation justifiable? Does this power appear in experience in a personal and symbolic way? Is the experience genuine? Is the nonexperience of this Power genuine? (86) Is there a standard for the interpretation of symbols? Are the primary and derivative symbols genuine or illusory? Are the traditions, the praxis true? How? What does it mean to say a particular religion is true? Can one religion be more true than another? Is religion as a whole true? All these questions are united in the question of the truth proper to religion. What could religious truth be? What is the essence of religious truth? How does it arise? In what way is anything religious true at all? If there is truth at all, **what is proper to religious truth?**
2. **Aletheia** (not propositional truth or speculative philosophy): This is fundamental to the whole article and picks up the very first argument about experience and phenomenology at the beginning of the article. Read p 86-92 carefully to understand aletheia and why this is the only way to a truth proper to religion.

PART 3: Truth and Nontruth (not falsity) of Religion (Sacred versus Profane)

1. The sacred (what is lethe or hidden or covert) and the profane (what is immediate and overt, the “ordinary” world of objects)
2. Why there are degrees of truth regarding religion (p. 92-94)

PART 4: Truth and Untruth (Falsity) of Religion

1. **Falsity for Religion** (p. 95-96): The threefold *nontruth* proper to religion (the profane, the overt, and the lethe) is the condition for the possibility of degrees of truth. (95)
 - A. One may be uncritical with regard to the ***distinction of the sacred and the profane***.
 - 1) ***Fetishism***: takes the profane as if it were the sacred.
 - 2). ***Infidelity or paganism*** when the response is uncritical in that it does not find the sacred at issue within the profane.
 - B. One may be uncritical in regard to the ***appropriateness of the overt to the covert***.
 - 1) ***Overinterpretation***: Takes the overt to be more revelatory than it is and to that extent **substitutes** the overt for the covert. Religious experience then becomes ***idolatry***.
 - 2) ***Underinterpretation***: Takes the overt to be less revelatory than it is and to that extent ignores the covert; religious experience then becomes ***impiety***.
 - C. Adequacy of the manifestation of the Lethe.
 - 1) ***Gnosticism or presumption***: takes the manifestation to be more expressive of the Lethe than it is
 - 2) ***Meiosis or laxity***: takes the manifestation to be less expressive
2. **Falsity in Religion**: Arises in function of the finitude of truth (the arrogance of finitude). In the estimation that a particular religion has of itself, untruth is the failure to recognize the limits of truth. Falsity may lie in the archaic experience itself, in the proclamation of the experience, in the tradition of the proclamation, or in the theology of the tradition. In religion,
 - A.** the falsity proper to the ***archaic experience*** is **enthusiasm**, religious experience that takes itself to be more full-of-God than it is. It does not recognize its own limitation and hence authenticity; **THIS IS TRUTH FORGETFUL OF ITS FINITUDE.**
 - B.** the falsity proper to ***proclamation*** is **disloyalty**, proclamation that differs from and does not recognize its source, the archaic experience, and thus its own limitation; **THIS IS TRUTH DEFIANT OF ITS FINITUDE.**
 - C.** the falsity proper to ***tradition*** is **heterodoxy**, tradition that presents itself in one instance or another as more proclamatory than the rest of itself—does not fit right with the acceptances (*doxai*) that define the tradition **as a whole**, does not recognize the extent of orthodoxy and thus its own limitation: **THIS IS TRUTH IMPATIENT OF ITS FINITUDE.**
 - D.** the falsity proper to ***theology*** is **ideology**, theology that presumes itself to be more comprehensive than it is, that does not **recognize the other theologies that show the limitation of its own truth**; **THIS IS TRUTH PROUD OF ITS FINITUDE.**

SUMMARY of Truth and Falsity in Religion: Thus in religion truth is not easy to secure. Truth in a particular religion would be authenticity in experience, loyalty in proclamation, orthodoxy in tradition, and criticism in theology. It is always to be achieved NEGATIVELY, through suspicion about enthusiasm, denunciation of disloyalty, definition of orthodoxy, and vigilance against ideology. POSITIVELY, truth in religion is always to be achieved by total attention (meditation or even mysticism) in archaic experience, constant reversion to the source of proclamation, preventive patience in tradition, and modesty in theology.
3. **Falsity of Religion (This will relate to Taliafero and the New Atheists):**

1. Religion in general may be untrue.; the manifestness proper to religion may be a pseudo manifestness, only a *pure subjective projective* (e.g., Hume, Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, Russell, Rorty, etc.) (Nietzsche? Buddhism? Confucianism? Taoism?). In that case,

- A. the experience of salvation would be **illusion**; (For and in religion this would be: **unbelief**)
- B. proclamation would be **fraud** (For and in religion this would be: **skepticism**)
- C. tradition would be **superstition** (For and in religion this would be: **secularism**)
- D. Theology would be **mystification** (For and in religion this would be: **indifference**)

2. Is religion true or false? In speculative terms: Does god exist?

p. 97: **The crux is whether there is an experience of salvational. The truth or falsity of religion is a question of experience.** It is not a question of argumentation that starts with non-God and concludes to God. After all, arguments are arguments about experience; they begin with it, clarify it, and end for the sake of it. That is to say, the speculative arguments for the existence of God presuppose religious experience and only subsequently clarify it (in terms of Being of some equivalent thereof.) **Experience alone counts.**

Syllogism:

Major Premise: Being (Good, Form, the One, the eternal, infinite, etc)

Minor premise: Being if and only if God (problematic)

Conclusion: God

Being and the salvational Power are identical in that they are both eternal, and eternity can only be one.

Main problem with such speculative arguments: Presuppose something quite tenuous: religious experience. An argument for God that starts outside experience can never conclude to its content (God). Only an experiencing can reach, in a factual way, an experienced. It is in the experience that we have the conclusion God exists that makes the argument unnecessary. However, some people challenge the experience. Hence the experience demands a reflection that defends it and even confirms it. This reflection may be called either fundamental theology or religious philosophy. (p. 98)

Is the experience illusory?

Speculative arguments about theism or atheism **obscure** the relevant argumentation. They start with non-God then try to argue to the conclusion of theism or atheism. Genuine argumentation with regard to the salvational Power begins with an announced experience, this is challenged, and is followed by the attempt to defend or confirm. It begins with Theism (affirmation of the salvational Power). Then the challenge progresses from nontheism to agnosticism to antitheism.

ONLY TWO POSSIBLE POSITIONS: THEISM: from an experience. NONTHEISM: from lack of an experience

Theism: affirms an experiential God. **Nontheism** indicates lack of an experience thus absence of an affirmation.

p. 98: **Most of us are nontheists most of the time; even those highly conscious of their religious commitments do not usually experience salvational Power.** To interpret the sacred in the profane is an uncommon act. So the lack of an experience is unobjectionable. But the lack of an experience is not the same as the experience of a lack. Some nontheists, however, go beyond nontheism and interpret their lack of an experience as either agnosticism or antitheism.

Agnosticism is the interpretive claim by one who lacks an experience of the salvational Power that NOBODY CAN experience what he does not. This is the universalization of one lack of experience. "It is impossible to know if there is God or not." The refutation is the report that someone else **has** the experience or even **could** have it. The agnostic has two choices: Acknowledge that his one lack of experience is not normative and hence he must revert to nontheism.

Antitheism: is the interpretive claim by one who lacks an experience of the salvational Power that everyone must experience a lack, the categorical denial of any power for salvation and of any experiencing of it. "God does not exist." Critique: antitheism is nontheism become militant (New Atheists). The refutation is the report that someone else **has** the experience or even **could** have it. The challenge is that the theist has an illusion.

The antitheist argument is built as it must be on an experience. One experiential content must be judged illusory only on the basis of another that is judged to be incompatible with the first. Standard arguments use the experience of **EVIL** or of **FREEDOM**. How is it possible for an all good God to allow evil? How is it possible that I could have freedom if God is all powerful and all knowing?

As a syllogism:

Evil/Freedom exist (are experienced).

God is incompatible with evil/freedom

Therefore, God is non-existent

CONCLUSION to Falsity of Religion: ONLY TWO POSSIBLE POSITIONS: THEISM: from an experience. NONTHEISM: from lack of an experience (explain why: p. 97-100) The antitheist to actually argue against the theist **must** deny EXACTLY what the theist affirms. But he does not. Rather, he only denies a God who is incompatible with evil/freedom. The theist agrees this argument is valid. But the theist does not claim that God is compatible with evil. As authentically religious he knows that no system of God and evil or freedom is possible. His salvational Power is neither compatible nor incompatible with evil or freedom; and he must maintain a **modest silence**.

The antitheist argument presupposes a complete knowledge of "God" and of evil in order to deny one on the basis of the other, to know they are definitively incompatible. However, God who is completely knowable is not LETHE, whom the

theist affirms. Furthermore, the claim to totally comprehend evil is presumptuous in the extreme: nobody understands evil completely. Ironically, in denying the divine, the antitheist must claim for himself a kind of “divine omniscience.” Hence, the antitheist argument fails. (see the whole argument from p 97-100)

CONCLUSION TO ARTICLE:

What remains is experience. What about illusion? That is determined according to the criterion for truth: **fruitfulness**. If a salvational presence makes itself effective for a person who thereby deepens in personhood, then the religion founded upon and continued in this manifestation is, to that extent true. The test of whether an experience is not true does not become evident by any a priori denial of a possible salvational Power. *It becomes evident in a critical reflection on experience according to the criterion for the truth proper to religion.* The untruth of a religious experience is not the conclusion of an atheistic speculation. But it may well be the conclusion of a rigorous examination of concrete experience. **Nontheism** neither affirms nor denies the truth of religion; it maintains a **modest silence**. Agnosticism which imputes this modesty to itself and antitheism, which would impose an aggressive silence, are uncritical and untenable. In the end, the only tenable positions are theism and nontheism: critical experience and the lack of it.

As a possibility for human decision, religion is the possibilization of man. That a salvational Power would advent to make the fulfillment of human beings possible beyond their condition of iniquity is the truth of religion.

But does the Power indeed become manifest? Is religion true? Philosophy as such, cannot decide: phenomenology maintains a modal (possibilistic) neutrality.

A religion is an experience of salvation and of the implications of it (proclamation, etc). At its simplest, religion is—given interpretation of the relevant symbols—***the life lived as if love and not evil were invincible***. That is why those who profess a religion may be falsely religious and those who do not may be truthfully religious.