

**NAME- DR. AKANKSHA
GUEST FACULTY
P.G DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
PATNA UNIVERSITY, PATNA
M.A SEMESTER-III
COURSE CODE-Phil CC- 13
PAPER : PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
TOPIC : INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
MOBILE NO: 7839270596, 7979872919
E-MAIL ID : sakanksha806@gmail.com**

Philosophy of religion is the branch of philosophy that deals with the critical investigation on the religion, existence of God, law of karma, problem of Evil, mysticism, morality, tolerance, religious fundamentalism etc. According to thinkers, the very idea of philosophising about religion is blasphemy. Isn't it a form of the most crass arrogance and irreligiosity to submit the notion of the Sacred, of God and of holy writ to the critical probing of finite, limited human intelligence? Would not the only appropriate human response - to the experience of the Sacred be humble - silent and respectful sub-mission and adoration?

In the West, Martin Luther, the fiery German reformer, spear-headed this approach, fulminating against reason as "the devil's greatest whore", averring that it "can do nothing but shame and dis-grace all that god says and does". For him there was a mortal enmity between faith and reasons "Faith strikes dead this reason, and kills this beast, which heaven and earth and all creatures cannot destroy."

Among Eastern thinkers who have championed such a view, perhaps the most out spoken was the mediaeval Islamic scholar and mystic Al-Ghazali who, in his Destruction of Philosophers tells us, in no uncertain terms, what he thought of those who used reason in the course of: their search for

God. Thomas Aquinas, later canonized by the Catholic Church, was more positive in his attitude towards reason and philosophy in the context of religion though he was no “crass rationalist”.

Extreme polarizations are seldom productive and this is quite true of the “pure reason” vs “blind faith” clash over religion. The “faith alone” approach opens the door to uncritical, self-deluded psychotics and fanatics. But “reason alone” is no improvement. Absolute rationalism (“I’ll only accept what can stand up to a rigorous proof.) is both impractical and irrational. Among other things it would exclude any possibility of inter-personal relationships, like love and friendship and not only religious faith. An absolute rationalist, were he or she to act consistently, would be condemned to a, lonely, loveless and friendless (and not just religious faithless) life. And, just for the record, it is interesting to note that the Catholic Church has officially condemned, as heresies, both of these attitudes: “fideism” (faith alone) and “exaggerated rationalism” (reason alone). From the preceding, we may conclude that the most appropriate response, would be balanced “mid-point-between-the-two extremes” approach, which-I would venture to designate as “reasonable risk”. Indeed, what we do to validate any inter-personal commitment, including love and friendship and not only religious faith. We establish some demonstrable ground to justify our commitment. However, since we are dealing with free persons and their invisible interior lives, there can never be fool-proof guarantee as to the certainty and security of the commitment one is making. There is a solid basis of reasonableness, but not absolute rationality. The commitment is not grounded on

blind risk: there is some evidence in favour of one's personal commitment: it can stand up to considerable critical Inquisition. Yet the possibility of being mistaken is not totally rule out: hence, there is an element of risk. It is neither unfounded risk nor indubitable argument, but halfway between both, drawing upon the strengths of each to avoid the excesses of either.

Between these two extremes of fideism and exaggerated rationalism comes philosophy of religion, which holds that religion can be critically examined. So philosophy of religion is an attempt based on reason, to criticize, evaluate and deepen religion. It may explain it, elaborate on it and even propose new theoretical concepts. Thus the American Philosopher, William P Alston, define Philosophy of religion as "a branch of philosophy concerned with questions regarding religion, including the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experience, analysis of religious language and texts, and the relationship of religion and science".

In short, philosophy of religion is a critical response to religion, where the faith of the seeker is bracketed out.