Toronto Philosophy of Religion Working Group
Fall 2024 Conference Schedule

Please note: All times are listed in EST.

Tuesday, December 10th

	Zoom Room 1: [Click here to enter] Hosted by Klaas Kraay	Zoom Room 2: [Click here to enter] Hosted by Daniel Rubio
12:00-1:00	**"Neo-Islamic Occasionalism and Free Will"** Youssef Aguisoul (Lisbon) Abstract: Time-honored Islamic occasionalism views all instances of diachronic causes and effects as nature-free divine creations. For example, rather than God installing dispositional powers in pebbles – such that, if thrown up in the air, they subsequently fall down naturally – He constantly re-creates pebble-throwing events and the subsequent pebble-falling events. This purely theological view of causation faces problems, the most notable being that it denies humans the power of will and ultimately their accountability. In response, Islamic occasionalists famously distinguish between creative and acquisitive will-power: God's will is creative and un-bestowed; the human will is acquisitive and divinely bestowed. Some complain that this creative/acquisitive solution does not guarantee that humans are truly free. This complaint, however, jars with the Holy Qur'ān, which is clear about the human will being contingent on God's. Still, I will propose a modern version of Islamic occasionalism that satisfies the spirit of the complaint – that humans should be truly free – while keeping the view that God is the sole creator of diachronic events and causes. The proposed version adds into the picture the currently popular idea of grounding, i.e., synchronic causation. According to this version, which I call "neo-Islamic occasionalism," when it comes to diachronic causation, God alone who has creative will-power, but when it comes to synchronic causation, both God and humans have creative will-power.	**"Are Religious Claims Fuzzy? The Case for Alethic Religious Pluralism"** Jashiel Resto Quiñones (Purdue) Abstract: The alethic challenge of religious diversity raises the question of whether inconsistent religious claims can be true. Alethic exclusivists argue that inconsistent religious claims cannot all be true, maintaining that there must be a unique, consistent set containing all and only the true religious claims. By contrast, alethic pluralists assert that inconsistent claims, such as "God is perfectly triune" and "God is perfectly one," may both be true, albeit in some relevant sense of 'true.' In the debate between these positions, the principle of the excluded middle seems to give logical support to exclusivism, as it holds that for any proposition p, either p or ~p must be true. This principle, combined with minimal realism—the claim that a set R contains all true religious claims—leads to the conclusion that R is a unique, consistent set, reinforcing alethic exclusivism. This paper challenges this argument by rejecting the first premise and proposing that religious claims are better understood as ""fuzzy,"" meaning their truth-values fall within a continuum (the interval [0, 1]). I draw on the apophatic tradition to argue that ultimate reality is ineffable, and that religious claims, while they can describe reality to some degree, are never entirely accurate (i.e., their truth-value is less than 1). Additionally, I argue that religious predicates are inherently vague. Key doctrines from various religious traditions, such as the divinity of Christ or the identification of Brahman with Atman, employ predicates that resist precise definition, which complicates their truth-value assessments. To strengthen this argument, I apply fuzzy logic, specifically Lukaszewicz continuum-valued logic, to demonstrate how truth-preservation and entailment can work in religious contexts. This allows for the possibility that inconsistent claims may both hold some degree of truth, thereby supporting the pluralist stance in the alethic challenge of religious diversity.
1:15-2:15	**"A Fresh Approach to Omnisubjectivity and Impassibility"** Anna Judd (Baylor) Abstract: In recent work, Linda Zagzebski has argued that we ought to ascribe to God a previously unrecognized divine attribute called omnisubjectivity, or perfect grasp of creaturely subjective experience. Though she defends omnisubjectivity on the basis of certain traditional divine attributes, including omniscience and omnipresence, it has been argued that it is incompatible with others, including impassibility. In this paper I will argue that omnisubjectivity and impassibility are indeed compatible. Though impassibility is an important doctrine in classical theism, it is not a fundamental one. Rather, it is shorthand for the perceived incompatibility	**"Punishment, Forgiveness, and Pardon"** Graham Renz (Marian University, Indianapolis) and William Bell (Washington U, St. Louis) Abstract: Theories of divine forgiveness must (i) provide an informative account of the nature of God's forgiveness, and (ii) explain that in virtue of which God, qua third party, has standing to forgive. This paper develops the beginnings of a punishment forbearance, or pardon-based, account of divine forgiveness that answers (i), (ii), and other challenges to such accounts in general. Assuming a broadly Lockean framework, we argue that divine forgiveness is best understood in terms of punishment forbearance. Moreover, we contend that while divine forgiveness lacks any significant deontological power in this life, it will carry the same normative weight as political pardons in the eschaton. The general idea is that in the present

of other divine attributes with most of the subjective experiences the existence of which was recognized by theologians. As Zagzebski observes, the idea of omnisubjectivity depends on categories which were not fully recognized by philosophy or theology until very recently, and therefore could not have been fully factored into historical theology. For this reason, I tackle the question of omnisubjectivity and impassibility indirectly. I consider three claims about God that motivate the doctrine of impassibility – that God is impervious to external causation, that he is immutable, and that he exists in a state of perfect blessedness – and argue that divine experiences of creaturely subjectivity are compatible with all three. Thus, omnisubjectivity is compatible with the spirit, even if not the letter, of impassibility. This requires no revision of classical theism, since it does not require us to admit any divine emotions or other affective states of a kind that classical theologians have already ruled out.

age, the right to punish wrongdoers is shared between humanity and God. Indeed, we believe that a sophisticated theory of punishment should hold that punishment meted out in this life is aggregative with divine punishment—i.e., that punishment exacted by earthly executive authorities impacts how much God may punish a wrongdoer later. Importantly though, we believe that the right to punish will be non-competitive in the eschaton, belonging exclusively to God. The reason for this is twofold. First, we believe that members of the eschatological community will voluntarily relinquish any competitive claim to exact punishment against wrongdoers to God. Second, we believe there are compelling practical reasons to think that God must have exclusive control over the doling out of punishment and/or negative deserts if certain goals relating to the perfection of the final community are to be realized.

| 2:30-3:30 | **"Divine Simplicity and the Theory of Action: Extrinsic Willing and Knowing Against the Modal Collapse Argument"**
Clemente Huneeus (Universidad de los Andes, Chile)

Abstract: The modal collapse argument states that the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity entails God to necessary will to create whatever He actually creates, and also to necessary know whatever He actually knows about particular creatures, and therefore suppresses all contingency from creatures. As a response to these objections, many authors have defended that willing to create this precise world and knowing everything about individual creatures are at least partially extrinsic or Cambridge properties of God (i.e., the truthmaker of the respective propositions is in part a fact about something contingent other than God). This paper argues for a general view of action where such properties can turn out to be at least partially extrinsic not just in the case of God but also in other agentes. Section 1 will explain why responding to the modal collapse argument requires that a part of the truthmaker relating God to contingent facts is extrinsic to God, and it is only in that part that there is contingency. Section 2 will argue that this can be generally so in certain class of causal relations, where the agent remains intrinsically the same no matter the precise effect produced. Section 3 will show that free volition is at some level one of those relations, and section 4 will make some brief remarks about the difficulties that still remain in the case of knowledge. | **"An Atonement Theory that Satisfies"**
Meghan Page (Loyola University Maryland)

Abstract: Many theories of atonement (e.g. ransom, satisfaction, penal substitution) understand Christ's sacrifice as repayment of a debt accrued by humanity on the divine register. Debt-based atonement theories have been heavily criticized by womanist and feminist theologians for the picture they sketch of God's nature. For example, is God truly forgiving if God only forgives in response to debt satisfaction. Similarly, is a God who requires his innocent son to satisfy this debt truly loving and generous. While the motivating idea behind debt-based theories is that Christ's sacrifice resolves the demands of justice, many have argued that exchanging the blood of an innocent person as "payment" for the sins of offenders is itself a violation of the very notion of justice. In this paper, I argue debt-based theories of atonement all implicitly assume that humanity and God (and perhaps the devil) are situated in a zero-sum game. Zero-sum games describe competitive situations where one person's win is equivalent to another person's loss. I further suggest we should reimagine debt-based accounts, specifically Anselm's, in the context of a positive sum scenario. In a positive sum game, the total amount of available resources can be increased through cooperation. However, this net increase cannot occur if one party withholds. In the context of atonement, then, the problem is not that humanity owes God an unpayable debt, but expansive and eternal life can only be generated through humanity's full cooperation and sharing of the life they have received. Prior to Christ, no human fully returns God's gift of life, preventing the surplus life from being created. However, in Christ's full return of the gift of life to God, a new kind of life is generated, and all of humanity is invited to partake. I argue this resolves many of the aforementioned objections to satisfaction theories. |
| 3:45-5:00 | **Keynote Address #1**
Zoom Room 1: [Click here to enter]

"Free Will in Anselm's Theory of the Atonement"
Katherin Rogers (Delaware)

Abstract: Arguably Anselm of Canterbury is the first philosopher to propose a well-developed, libertarian theory of human free will. Considering his *Cur deus homo* – his argument for why God had to become a man – with his views on freedom in mind, helps to illuminate his theory of the atonement and possibly make it more attractive than is often supposed. I will look first at the motives for his libertarianism and offer a quick sketch of his theory of human freedom. Then, keeping this theory in mind, I will address concerns about his understanding of the atonement. I'll end by raising two problems involved with Anselm's theory of the atonement in light of his libertarianism and (tentatively) propose some solutions. | |

Wednesday, December 11ᵗʰ

	Zoom Room 1: [Click here to enter] Hosted by Klaas Kraay	Zoom Room 2: [Click here to enter] Hosted by Daniel Rubio
12:00-1:00	**"Faith Because of Evil"** Brian Ballard (Princeton) Abstract: This essay explores a new response to the problem of evil. This response can grant that evil makes theism less likely. But as long as we should not be certain theism is false, it can still be rational to hope theism is true, and to structure our lives around that hope. Such life-structuring hope is a form of faith. So faith might be rational even if the argument from evil succeeds. Indeed, I argue we should hope theism is true precisely because of evil, for only a God can set evil right. This does not require God to defeat evil, that is, to bring some good out of the evil that outweighs and requires it. Instead, it is enough for God to give sufferers lives that are good for them on the whole. This requires that suffering is managed—prevented from posing an ongoing challenge to the sufferer's well-being—but managing evil does not require defeating evil. To advance this argument, I lay out a model of the afterlife in which God manages suffering through eight redemptive interventions: I. God restores our losses; II. God soothes our pains; III. God establishes us in concrete well-being; IV. God brings us to moral and psychological maturity; V. God facilitates reconciliation between victims and perpetrators; VI. God presents sufferers with opportunities for making meaning out of their suffering (which helps manage their suffering even if it does not defeat it); VII. God reveals his reasons for allowing evil, which we, being morally and cognitively matured, can understand and embrace; VIII. God leads us into loving union with Him. This vision of the afterlife is the rational object of a life-structuring hope, I argue, as long as it is not known to be false. An agnostic should—and at least may—respond to evil with theistic faith.	**"Open Inclusivism in Jewish Philosophy"** Barry Kleinberg (Haifa) Abstract: Alan Race (1983) proposed a taxonomy for relating Christianity to other faiths. He introduced the terms exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Alan Brill (2010) applied this taxonomy to the Jewish tradition. These terms lack the nuance needed to relate to other faiths ('Alien Faith(s)') from the perspective of one's own faith ('the Home Faith'). I will concentrate on inclusivism and seek to show the limitations of Race and Brill's definitions. Exclusivism and pluralism have been described as "the most fully developed positions" for dealing with issues of religious diversity (Meeker and Quinn, 2000). Inclusivism has received far less attention. Kvanvig (2009) suggests it is "the most difficult position to clarify in this scheme." Providing a more exact account of inclusivism proves to be difficult, for reasons I shall explain. I will propose that there is only one coherent definition of inclusivism based on Irlenborn's 'open inclusivism.' I will argue that a religious inclusivist must accept that her Home Faith cannot contain all the truth. She would not be forced to judge all alien truths against the truths of her own faith (which seems to be the position of Race and Brill). She would accept that non-shared truths from Alien Faiths can help her to understand/expand her Home Faith. I would even go as far as to suggest that she is obliged to seek out those truths found in Alien Faiths to help illuminate her Home Faith. Finally, I will argue that both Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook and Rabbi Sacks accepted this form of inclusivism.
1:15-2:15	**"Two Puzzles of Non-Doxastic Faith"** Yun-Cheng Dylan Wang (Rochester) Abstract: A class of non-doxasticist views about faith suggests that the cognitive component of faith need not be belief but can be an attitude that is more or less voluntary and evidentially impervious, such as acceptance, assumption, and more recently imagination. This paper considers two puzzles for this class of non-doxasticist views. The class of views is often thought to enjoy the advantages that it explains the coexistence of faith and doubt and explains away the apparent irrationality of religious people who hold their faith despite contrary evidence. My two puzzles recommend that we reconsider these advantages. The first puzzle I dub the puzzle of religious doubt. I argue that it is puzzling as to how religious people can	**"Hopeful Universalism and the Goodness of God: A Fittingness Approach"** Aaron Davis (St. Andrew's) Abstract: Is hopeful universalism a coherent belief for a Christian to hold? Recent criticism of the view has suggested in may not be. Most incisively, Michael Rea has highlighted how hopeful universalism seems to require a Christian to desire a state of affairs "that conflicts with what she believes to be the perfectly good will of God." While there are versions of the view which are guilty of exactly what Rea alleges, it is not necessary for the hopeful universalist to hold to them. Particularly, hopeful universalism can be understood to consist in a fittingness claim about one's understanding of God's will which requires no desires in conflict with said will. Put

have doubt about their faith if they merely accept, assume, or imagine their religious ideas, when the functional profiles of these attitudes seem to hinder appreciation of counterevidence to one's religious ideas. I will explore possible solutions and conclude that the most plausible one requires us to attribute a faulty metacognition to religious people where they misrepresent themselves as believing their religious ideas. I show that this solution creates another puzzle I call the metapuzzle of religious rationality. If religious people have a false metacognition about their faith, and yet, as I'll argue, they accurately represent their attitudes with regard to their non-religious evidential beliefs, then it follows that they represent themselves as having incoherent beliefs, which seems to indicate a second-order irrationality on their part in need of explaining away. The upshot is that non-doxasticism does not obviously have the advantages it is commonly thought to enjoy, and more research into non-doxastic religious rationality is called for.

differently, the hopeful universalist can believe that non-universalist and universalist soteriological outcomes are co-equal goods God can discretionarily actualize. Therefore, in this paper I argue for such a position, here termed "fittingness hopeful universalism" or "FHU." I begin by sketching Rea's critique to outline what we aim to avoid here. Next, I offer a brief survey of universalism's place in theological history to highlight why Christians might prefer hopeful universalism to a more dogmatic version of the view. I then construct FHU to demonstrate one way Christians can avoid the problem Rea highlights while heeding historical theological norms. Finally, I anticipate and respond to several potential objections. Namely, that there are no co-equal goods, that universalism and non-universalism cannot be co-equal goods, and that the co-equality of universalism and non-universalism undermines divine goodness.

| 2:30-3:30 | **"Divine Hiddenness: Evidence and Transcendence"**
 Katelyn O'Dell (Notre Dame)

 Abstract: Since J. L. Schellenberg introduced the "Hiddenness Argument" against the existence of God 30 years ago, he and many others have presented various versions of it. Recent work by Charity Anderson and Jeffrey Sanford Russell has taken note of a number of evidential versions of the argument that have arisen, according to which facts like Many people do not know or believe there is a God constitute evidence against the existence of God. Anderson and Russell provide important clarifications for an expansion of the debate in this direction. But they don't provide adequate motivation for a shift in the focus of the debate, from deductive to evidential arguments. This is conspicuous, given that Schellenberg emphasizes his argument's deductive formulation, calling his inferences "watertight". I locate support for such a shift in the hiddenness debate in Michael Rea's recent work on transcendence, in which he argues against Schellenberg's particular deployment of divine love. I show that one unnoted upshot of Rea's work is that the hiddenness argument is best formulated evidentially, rather than deductively. Interestingly, Anderson and Russell interact with Rea's work in their own, but they conclude that appeals to transcendence like his are out of place in this debate. I argue that they miss something important about the role that transcendence has to play: because of my argument, Anderson and Russell should take transcendence moves like Rea's more seriously; and because of arguments like Rea's, Schellenberg should take evidential arguments like those explored by Anderson and Russell as hiddenness' best route forward. | **"Resisting Fatalism in the Petitionary Prayer Debates"**
 Amy Seymour (Rutgers)

 Abstract: In making petitionary prayers, we make requests of God and attempt to make a difference in the world. But it looks impossible for us to make such a difference: Either a state of affairs I prayed for is the best or it is not. If it is the best, then my prayer is not efficacious—God was already going to bring that state of affairs about. If my prayer is not for the best, then God will not bring it about. Either way, my prayer makes no difference to the outcome. This is a fatalist argument. But surprisingly, this point has gone unnoticed in the literature. I rectify this oversight and show what follows. Proponents of the puzzle assume that there is already a fact of the matter about what is best for God to do. They additionally assume that what is good for God to do cannot depend in the right sorts of ways on our requesting it. Both of these assumptions can be rebutted using the kinds of strategies used to respond to fatalism. Thus, the problem of petitionary prayer can be defused without reference to particular issues regarding why God did not answer specific prayers. Some in the petitionary prayer debate insist that nothing can make a difference to God's reasons because God is immutable. But this understanding of immutability commits one to fatalism more generally. The central issue in petitionary prayer debates appears to be whether we can ever give God (additional) reasons to do something. This depends on God's reasons and what it takes for God to be reasons-responsive to our requests. If we are unable to give God reasons to potentially respond to, then we have found a way in which theological fatalism does not simply collapse into logical fatalism. |
| 3:45-5:15 | **Keynote Address #2.**
 Zoom Room 1: [Click here to enter]

 "The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Consciousness"
 Yujin Nagasawa (Kingfisher College Chair of the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics, University of Oklahoma)

 Abstract: The problem of evil and the problem of consciousness occupy central positions in the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of mind, respectively. On the face of it, these problems seem to be fundamentally distinct. The problem of evil is concerned with whether the existence of evil in the world undermines belief in the existence of God while the problem of consciousness concerns the nature of consciousness and how it can arise from physical processes in the brain. In this paper, however, I defend the following novel thesis: the problem of evil and the problem of consciousness are versions of the same problem, which I term the "problem of ontological expectation mismatch." I argue that, by recognizing that they stem from the same root, we can gain a fresh perspective for evaluating existing approaches to both problems in a systematic manner. I conclude my discussion by utilizing this thesis to critically examine panpsychism, a response to the problem of consciousness that has recently gained significant popularity. | |