

## **Monothematic Issue: Philosophy of Religion Today**

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### **Guest Editor's Introduction**

For many centuries religious traditions, especially Christianity, played a central role in the cultural life of the Western world. The veracity of religious phenomena was typically accepted without question and their supernatural character was admitted as a fact of life. This situation changed in the 18th century with the Enlightenment. Enlightened thinkers, while not necessarily rejecting these religious traditions, did consider it necessary to subject them, as everything else, to the scrutiny of human reason.

The results of this new critical perspective were varied. One important consequence, however, was the gradual disenchantment and secularization of culture. The supernatural elements of religion—for example, angels, demons and miracles—were transferred from the world to the individual consciousness. In the social context, political life (the state) was separated from religious life (the church). Thus, religion became a private phenomenon, increasingly removed from the public sphere.

In a sense, our own culture in the 21st century has witnessed the continuation of this process of secularization, especially in the West. Scientific reason is usually given more weight than religion, and supernatural experiences—such as prophetic visions or miraculous healings—are often dismissed as superstition and charlatanism. However, other contemporary phenomena have contributed to a reconsideration of the role of religion.

For example, what is perceived as the political failure of the secular state (in its various ideological orientations) to preserve peace or achieve greater social justice has led people to take a more positive view of the return of religion to the political arena. Migration—caused by war, social unrest, violence, persecution and poverty—has resulted in people of different religious traditions coming into contact, making it necessary to reflect on

tolerance and religious pluralism. Globalization, media and social networks also contribute to this.

Moreover, human curiosity seems to have reluctantly endured the limits established by enlightened reason, and feels inclined to explore the untrodden path of spirituality, mysticism or Eastern religious traditions, to mention a few cases. People became increasingly aware that the scientific worldview, despite all its merits and advantages, was incapable of answering the great existential questions, such as what is the meaning of life or what is an ethically correct behavior. This has led not only to dissatisfaction with science, but to a return to religion, which was better suited to address these kinds of issues. This shows the importance of reflecting philosophically on the role of the religious phenomenon in modern culture. The articles in this monothematic issue attempt to contribute to this discussion from different perspectives.

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