



Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Hermeneutics and Epistemology

Torrance Kirby

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From Greco-Roman Antiquity through to the European Enlightenment, philosophy and religious thought were inseparably interwoven. This was equally the case for the popular natural or 'pagan' religions of the ancient world as it was for the three pre-eminent 'religions of the book', namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The lengthy and involved encounter of the Greek philosophical tradition - and especially of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic strands of that tradition - initially with the Hellenistic cults and subsequently with the three Abrahamic religions, played a critical role in shaping the basic contours of Western intellectual history from Plato to Philo of Alexandria, Plotinus, Porphyry, Augustine, and Proclus; from Aristotle to al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Gazali, Aquinas and the medieval scholastics, and eventually to Meister Eckhart and Nicholas Cusanus and such modern philosophers and theologians as Richard Hooker, the Cambridge Platonists, Jacob Boehme, and G.W.F. Hegel to name but a few. The aim of the twenty-four essays comprising this volume is to explore the intellectual worlds of the three Abrahamic religious traditions, their respective approaches to scriptural hermeneutics, and their interaction over many centuries on the common ground of the inheritance of classical Greek philosophy. The shared goal of contributors is to demonstrate the extent to which the three Abrahamic religions have created similar shared patterns of thought in dealing with crucial religious concepts such as the divine, creation, providence, laws both natural and revealed, such problems as the origin of evil and the possibility of salvation, as well as defining hermeneutics, that is to say the manner of interpreting their sacred writings.

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