

PALGRAVE FRONTIERS IN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

# Contemporary Debates in Negative Theology and Philosophy

Edited by Nahum Brown  
and J. Aaron Simmons



# Palgrave Frontiers in Philosophy of Religion

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# Contemporary Debates in Negative Theology and Philosophy

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# 1

## Introduction: Old Questions and New Frontiers in the Philosophy of Religion

J. Aaron Simmons

One way to tell that a discourse is facing serious uncertainty (and potential internal instability) is from the increasing frequency of scholars who ask about its “future.” Over the past decade or so, there has been a burgeoning literature in the field that attempts to explore possible futures for the philosophy of religion. Volumes have appeared with titles such as *The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion*,<sup>1</sup> *Renewing Philosophy of Religion*,<sup>2</sup> *Paul’s New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology*,<sup>3</sup> and *Rethinking Philosophy of Religion*,<sup>4</sup> and other scholars have written books that are announced as “envisioning a future for the philosophy of religion,”<sup>5</sup> providing “a route for philosophy of religion,”<sup>6</sup> and even offering a “manifesto” for the discipline as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

Varied interpretations could be offered for this abiding concern with the future of philosophy of religion. On the one hand, the field

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has grown substantively in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the wake of serious challenges to positivism and strong foundationalism, and so perhaps the concerns about envisioning futures reflect the decided flourishing of philosophy of religion itself. Indeed, that an area of inquiry can have so many different possible futures seems to be a good reason to view it as healthy due to both the number of participants and also the range of debates occurring within it. As evidence of this increasing disciplinary well-being, consider that philosophy of religion is no longer restricted to a narrow conception, but has flowered enough to yield entire subfields focused on issues in feminism, cognitive science, queer theory, post-structuralism, phenomenology, existentialism, epistemology, linguistics, and race theory. Yet, with such expansion comes new challenges. Although speaking specifically of Christian philosophy of religion, perhaps we could expand Alvin Plantinga's claim that "a danger we now face, perhaps, is triumphalism,"<sup>8</sup> to apply to philosophy of religion more generally.

Given this picture of the current state of affairs, philosophy of religion would seem to be a discourse no longer *fighting for legitimacy* (as was the case in the mid-twentieth century), nor simply *on the ascendancy* (as was the case in the analytic tradition in light of the significant influence of thinkers such as Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and William Alston, and in the continental tradition in light of new phenomenology and particular threads of critical theory), but *having arrived in power* and now facing the task of how to handle the weight of the crown, as it were.<sup>9</sup> Envisioning possible futures is one way of recognizing that the responsibility is now on one's own shoulders to move forward in particular ways, rather than a matter of struggling to be able to move forward at all. So, maybe all the "future-talk" is reflective of a truly promising present for philosophy of religion.

On the other hand, it could be alternatively argued that one only really gets concerned about the future when the present is in some sort of turmoil. For many folks, it takes a crisis to motivate the self-critique required to realize that one's house is not entirely in order. So, alongside the varied considerations of the "future" of philosophy of religion, there have also emerged a number of scholars either declaring or worrying about the "end" of philosophy of religion. Perhaps reflecting the

underbelly of the diversity of methodologies, participants, and debates in the current literature, the scholars attending to the possible terminus of the discourse present neither a unified diagnosis nor a coherent prescription for returning to health. For example, in *The End of Philosophy of Religion*, Nick Trakakis suggests that philosophers should move away from the objectivizing tendencies of much of analytic philosophy and begin to embrace the more poetic and existential aspects of continental philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, in *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*, Timothy Knepper argues for nearly exactly the opposite conclusion. For Knepper, philosophers should become more objective in their attention to the world's religious traditions in order to have more in common with such areas as sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, and comparative religious studies.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, while many scholars are encouraging a more decided "theological turn" in philosophy of religion (in both the analytic and continental traditions), others promote the opposite outcome by decrying the "theologization" of philosophy of religion in a variety of directions.<sup>12</sup>

Importantly, then, envisioning futures is not unconnected from theorizing the very possibility of having a future at all. As Aristotle understood so well, "ends" can speak either to the termination of a discourse (*terminus*) or to its ultimate goal (*telos*). When it comes to the philosophy of religion, we should not just inquire into what future is worth pursuing, but instead ask a more basic question, as Wesley J. Wildman does: "Is there a future [at all] for philosophy of religion?"<sup>13</sup> How we answer this question is important not only for the field of philosophy of religion, but also for the broader questions of how philosophy and theology stand in relation to each other, whether "religion" names an appropriate object of academic study, and how the academy bears the traces of the ideological forces of secularization, globalization, modernization, and technologization that combine to create the cross-cultural dynamics in which philosophy of religion occurs as not only a professional discourse but also a historical community of inquirers.

When faced with an existential concern about the future of this discourse, rather than merely a conceptual or logistic concern about how its future will unfold, we are confronted by the realization that the instability of the discourse itself presents problems regarding what it is

that one takes to count as “philosophy of religion” in the first place. It very well might be that there are a variety of philosophies of religions and so asking into the very possibility of the future of philosophy of religion requires taking deliberative stands about either what should be viewed as uniting these different threads as a particular discourse, or why asking about the future of a singular discourse in this direction is already a misguided strategy. Debate here is reasonable and important, but there is value in trying to figure out what *could*, and perhaps *ought to*, underwrite all the different philosophies of religion in ways that would allow for different approaches, methodologies, and questions all to be taken as legitimate attempts toward understanding the truth within the *same* field. With this in mind, irrespective of how one articulates the shared discursive identity across such practical differences, it is crucial to confront overriding issues in the field that contribute to the difficulty of finding common ground.

There are a variety of places one could turn for critical accounts of the state of philosophy of religion. Perhaps the most serious set of objections comes from Kevin Schilbrack, who rightly worries about the *cognitivism* (i.e., it is too focused on belief, to the exclusion of a concern for practice and ritual), the *narrowness* (i.e., it is too focused on Christianity, to the exclusion of other global religious traditions), and the *insularity* (i.e., it is too focused on disciplinary hegemony, to the exclusion of collaborative engagement with other disciplines) of philosophy of religion (in all its forms).<sup>14</sup> In response to these worries, the present volume engages different cultural and religious traditions (see especially the chapters by Sai Bhatawadekar, David Chai, William Franke, and Bruno B eu) and intentionally thinks across the traditional disciplinary boundaries of philosophy, literature, poetry, and theology (see especially the chapters in Part III). Most importantly, however, through an engagement with the complex history of negative/mystical/apophatic traditions of thought and practice, all of the chapters in this volume attempt, in various way, to interrogate the different valences in which cognitivism might show up in traditional philosophy of religion. In this way, the contributors to this volume, though representing a host of views that are often at odds with each other in productive ways, are

all committed to exploring new frontiers for philosophy of religion by asking a couple very old questions:

- *How can we speak of that which seems to lie beyond all language?*
- *How can we think about that which eschews any claim we might make regarding conceptual adequacy?*

These questions bear directly on Wildman's own question regarding the very possibility of a future for philosophy of religion because if it turns out that what has been called "religion" is, in one way or another, expressive of that which would resist expression, then perhaps philosophy is simply the wrong disciplinary home for inquiry regarding it. However one comes down on this point, it is important that philosophers be more attentive to, and draw much more deeply on, the work occurring in the academic study of religion. Philosophers would benefit greatly from more engagement with the critical theory of religion regarding what the category of "religion" even attempts to name in the first place, and what work it does within our scholarly discourse as a result. Such category questions are often overlooked in traditional philosophy of religion, but as Schilbrack rightly realizes, unless we can first answer the question "What *isn't* Religion?" then it doesn't seem like we could ever begin to study something called "religion" as a discrete object/subject of academic focus.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, Schilbrack's point about the necessity of definition can be applied to philosophy of religion itself. Although philosophy can take on a variety of forms and styles—consider the significant difference between thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard and Martha Nussbaum, for example,—there must be some historical commitment within the community of scholars who identify as "philosophers" in order that "doing philosophy" be a practice in which one can engage or not engage. If "philosophy" is allowed to name (and thereby capture) pretty much anything, and "philosophy of religion" is conceived so broadly that any human discussion of questions of ultimate meaning, say, counts within its domain, then it seems that *nothing* would be philosophy of religion because nearly *everything* already is.

As important as the meta-philosophical debates in this direction are, however, this volume is not a direct contributor to them, but instead implicitly explores the inheritance of negative/mystical/apophatic cultural traditions that force us to confront not only the limits of language and thought, but also the edges of our professional practice as philosophers of religion. In other words, the central concern, here, is not “what is philosophy of religion?” but instead, “how can philosophers of religion continue to do philosophy of religion in light of negative theology?”<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, these two questions are not unconnected. The possible ramifications of drawing more deeply on apophatic resources involve transforming the field in ways that are hardly predicable from where we currently find ourselves.

Accordingly, if the philosophy of religion is going to be able to overcome the problems highlighted by Schilbrack, then we all (whether continental or analytic, resistant to theology or desiring more confessional approaches, committed to strictly propositional expression or open to poetics as legitimately philosophical, etc.) must find ways to overcome an apparent dichotomy that has for too long characterized much of the scholarship in our field. Simply put, and with many notable exceptions, the vast majority of philosophers of religion over the past few decades have seemed *either* to give in to the temptation of overstating the linguistic and conceptual determinacy of God/the divine/the transcendent and the ability of human knowers to understand this determinacy as compatible with propositionally formulated, justified beliefs that would lead to secure knowledge (hence the rampant cognitivism in the field), *or* to give in to the temptation of overstating the absolute indeterminacy of God/the divine/the transcendent to such a degree that it seems that all knowledge is impossible. Faced with these alternatives, the difference could hardly be starker between those seeking to know things “as God does,” say, and those who recommend the task of what has traditionally been termed “unknowing.” For examples of the first sort of commitment, one might turn to the claims of some analytic theologians who call for the minimization of metaphorical flourish in philosophical discourse. For examples of the second sort, one might turn to the work of philosophers advocating “theo-poetics.” Yet, in either direction, similar epistemic (and potentially theological) problems confront us:

How would we ever get outside of our own social, historical, linguistic, conceptual, and embodied frameworks to claim such seeming clarity about what God/the divine/the transcendent is or is not?

The point is *not* that we just need to be humble (which we certainly do!), but more that we need to recognize the potential excesses that can occur in unreflectively moving too far toward determinacy (knowing/speech) or toward indeterminacy (unknowing/silence). As John Sanders and I have suggested elsewhere, philosophers of religion ought to take seriously the possibility of something like religious truth (or the truths of a particular religion) while also displaying philosophical rigor regarding the linguistic and conceptual expression of that truth.<sup>17</sup> It is entirely possible (and maybe even probable) that if God/the divine/the transcendent exists or functions in ways traditionally described in the world's religious traditions, then it is unlikely that we would ever be able to circumscribe God/the divine/the transcendent within philosophy. However, to claim that God/the divine/the transcendent is such that nothing at all can be said is to go so far as to face either *minimally* the idea that philosophy of religion is a failed discourse (since we cannot say anything about that which the discourse is supposedly attempting to consider), or *maximally* the idea that all God-talk, as it were, is straightforwardly incoherent (and self-refuting).

This volume takes as its starting point the hope that neither of these troubling outcomes is necessary—that is, the contributors to this volume are committed to the proposition that *philosophy of religion does indeed have a future*. Yet, this future is most likely to be a space of confident humility when we realize that “How (not) to speak of God?” is a question asked not only by Jacques Derrida and Peter Rollins,<sup>18</sup> but also by Thomas Aquinas, Marguerite Porete, Maimonides, Nagarjuna, Al-Ghazali, Shankara, and many others. Moreover, it hits on a concern of religious existence and expression that ruptures any easy distinction between continental and analytic philosophy (indeed, William Alston and Nicholas Wolterstorff, both offer sustained reflections that are as deeply concerned with negative theology as those more continental thinkers critiquing onto-theology in the direction of revelational excess, Christina Van Dyke has done excellent work on medieval mysticism, and Graham Priest has substantively explored the ramifications

of paraconsistent logic in ways that seemingly open onto apophatic awareness).<sup>19</sup> Wrestling with this question forces us to wrestle with the liminal aspects of linguistic adequacy and phenomenal excess that are highlighted especially well within the philosophy of religion. Ultimately, by tarrying a bit further with the negative dimensions of religious and philosophical traditions, we are helpfully confronted with the difficult fact that there is always a decision to be made regarding what will count as “philosophical” speech. It may be that one of the upshots of attending to the hiddenness/transcendence of God, as it were, is the realization that precious little in our scholarly lives is hermeneutically obvious.

One only moves toward the future by continuing to explore the boundaries, to play at the horizons, and to push against the limits of where one finds oneself. By asking traditional questions that animate the various traditions of negative theology and philosophy, we are not encouraging that philosophers all begin to practice mindfulness and somehow to speak only by remaining silent. Instead, this volume emphasizes the value of walking the fine line between epistemological arrogance and theological vacuity while still consciously engaging in philosophical writing and thinking. It is unclear exactly where the contemporary debates in negative theology and philosophy will take us, but it is important that we find out—otherwise, silence threatens to be nothing but the end of philosophy, and philosophy threatens to be pretty much anything. Neither prospect offers much of a future for the philosophy of religion.

In the attempt to articulate possible alternative ways forward, this volume unfolds in three parts. In Part I, “*A Philosophy of the Unsayable: Interpretations and Consequences*,” Kevin Hart, J. Aaron Simmons, William Christian Hackett, Sai Bhatawadekar, and Stephen R. Palmquist all engage William Franke’s recent book, *A Philosophy of the Unsayable*, which is perhaps the most sustained attempt in the literature to sketch the contours of a thorough-going apophatic philosophy of religion, if such a thing is possible.<sup>20</sup> For years, Franke has been among the vanguard of scholars trying to find ways for apophaticism to speak to our current situation. Although he is certainly not the only person to move in this direction—many other scholars in various disciplines have also been working in similar areas, for example, consider the work of

Wendy Farley, Catherine Keller, Denys Turner, Andrew Louth, Bernard McGinn, Amy Hollywood, Hent de Vries, and Roger Ames, just to name a few—Franke’s *A Philosophy of the Unsayable* stands out as of particular relevance to the way in which such apophatic strains in human cultural traditions can be brought to bear on contemporary philosophy of religion.

The contributors to this first part of the volume are not unified in their assessment of Franke’s project. Some offer substantial criticisms and express worries that a philosophy of the unsayable seems to try to do what philosophy is unable to do and so faces insurmountable self-reference problems. Alternatively, others share Franke’s frustration with the propositional restrictions that might unnecessarily characterize too much of philosophical reflection in this area. Despite such philosophical disagreements, all of the contributors in Part I are committed to the project of overcoming objectivist reductionism within the philosophy of religion. Frequently inspired by phenomenological insights regarding the importance of attending to the excess of phenomenality, the conditions of revelation, the different modes of givenness, and the relationship between belief and practice, these scholars all explore liminality in order to take seriously the lived experience of transcendence as a philosophical question.

In Part II, “Thinking the Apophatic: Hegel and Postmodernity,” we find chapters that follow on the heels of the broadly phenomenological orientation of Part I. These essays all move in a generally historical progression through Hegel’s legacy of what we might term “negative postmodern philosophy.” Nahum Brown bridges the first two parts of the volume by thinking about Franke’s work in light of the different ways that negation shows up in Hegel’s complicated authorship. Then, Andrew Hass extends the engagement with Hegel by thinking about what negating negation might mean as a “generative” philosophical task. Peter Kline moves from Hegel to Kierkegaard and argues that the notion of “infinite reduplication” offers important resources for thinking about Kierkegaard’s (non)concept of God. Elliot R. Wolfson then offers an extended consideration of the way in which Heidegger displays a commitment to philosophically expressing the “Unsayable.” Directly responding to some of these themes in Wolfson’s chapter,



Lissa McCullough brings Wolfson and Franke together as critical interlocutors in a shared project. Subsequently, David Chai suggests that Derrida and Zhuangzi can be productively considered as mutually engaged in the task of apophatic hermeneutics. Finally, William Franke attempts an exercise in cross-cultural negative philosophy regarding the idea of universality in light of the work of François Jullien.

Having explored the limits of philosophy of religion in Part I and the implications of apophaticism in postmodern thinking in Part II, Part III goes one step further and considers what might lie beyond disciplinary borders when negation in philosophy opens onto literature and poetry. Here, Sabine Lenore Müller, Bruno Bécu, and Anthony Curtis Adler all press at the limits of expression in ways that remain critically aware of the importance of being responsible simultaneously to one's reader (by saying clearly what needs to be said) and also the subject/object of one's inquiry (which might overflow attempts at speech and so require some sense of unsaying whatever one does say). Through sustained readings of William Butler Yeats, Rainer Maria Rilke, Fernando Pessoa, and Philip K. Dick, these scholars push philosophy of religion in different, more literary, directions as concerns the act of writing, the task of reading, and the necessity of speaking.

The volume concludes with a final chapter by William Franke that responds to the ideas and claims offered in the rest of the book. It is appropriate that Franke offers such a response not only because his work has been so influential on the field (and specifically influential on the scholars included here), but also because he consistently works at the disciplinary boundaries explored in this volume. That said, Franke's concluding chapter is the last in the volume, but should not be viewed as the last word on the topics under consideration here. It stands, rather, as an attempt by a leading figure in these areas to give some sort of overarching coherence to the contemporary debates in negative theology and philosophy. As they should in any vibrant philosophical discourse, differences remain and disagreements abound among the scholars in this volume, but they are most effectively able to be part of a shared conversation when they occur according to a framework of directional coherence. Franke's authorship has been a sweeping example of how spending a great deal of time thinking about "what cannot be said" can

lead to saying quite a bit, and so it is fitting that he provides this timely chapter not to end the conversation, but to propel it forward.

Given the wide diversity of views, methods, styles, and commitments represented in this volume, two important qualifiers are necessary to avoid any misunderstanding about the editorial aims of the project. *First, and quite simply put, this book does not claim to be comprehensive.* The decisive strengths of the volume are, admittedly, accompanied by other shortcomings. In particular, the contributors generally share continental proclivities when it comes to philosophical methodology and style. As previously mentioned, there is excellent work being done on apophatic philosophy of religion by serious analytic philosophers that are, regrettably, not represented here. Yet, no one book can do everything and so, as editors, we decided to invite these particular scholars in the effort to provide more conceptual coherence regarding the intellectual traditions in which the central guiding questions of the book could be approached. As we see it, this continental emphasis ultimately serves as one of the book's strengths because it demonstrates how thinking in light of negative theology requires thinking *within* historical traditions—whether philosophical, theological, literary, linguistic, or ideological, etc. By bringing together primarily continental thinkers to consider these traditional questions in the philosophy of religion regarding expression, divine excess, and the stakes of transcendence, we aim to show how traditional differences in philosophical methodology and style do not need to stand in the way of seeing those working in different traditions as resources for one's own work. Shared questions can yield mutual understanding. Yet, it is important that such questions be asked and considered with as much precision, rigor, and clarity as possible—hence the editorial choice to minimize some differences among the contributors in order to highlight others that may have wider traction in the field as it currently stands. For example, this volume is a performative example that continental approaches to the philosophy of religion are not necessarily opaque (though they sometimes are), unconcerned with arguments (though many seem to be), and disconnected from mainstream debates (though frequently this is the case). In this way, perhaps the volume can, itself, be read as a contribution to analytic philosophy of religion insofar as it challenges assumptions about

continental philosophy that all too often stand as further obstacles to productive engagement.

In the name of such engagement, though, it is important to note that, *second, we hope that this book demonstrates the significance of apophatic thinking for contemporary philosophy of religion without, thereby, indicating that apophatic discourse is self-sustaining.* Said slightly differently, the point is that it is important that philosophy of religion be *philosophical*. When we attempt to play at the edges of speech, it is imperative that we do not simply fall off the precipice into stagnant silence. Similarly, appreciating the inescapable role of metaphor, for example, in embodied human thinking should not lead to erasing the distinction between philosophy and poetry. While appreciating the value of lived experience, we must be careful not to give in to the temptation to abdicate our responsibilities as scholars to pursue truth with hermeneutic awareness and yet with appropriate self-criticism.

No single book can guarantee a future for an entire field of inquiry. However, the future is what we make of it in relation to how we inherit the past that we have been given to us. By reengaging these questions regarding how to think, speak, and write about God/the divine/the transcendent, we are optimistic that paths for philosophy of religion will emerge that are equally epistemically (and theologically?) responsible. Without question, such responsibility must honestly and humbly present whatever it is that turns out to be the most compelling case regarding religion, God, the divine, transcendence, and the lived faith that so many historical individuals and communities have expressed so deeply—even if it turns out that atheism is more warranted than theism, that religion ends up being more of a problem for human society than a boon for it, and that faith is more a matter of appropriate existential risk than affirming particular beliefs about the world.

May we all be open to pursuing truth in whatever form it ultimately takes, but also may we never forget that the pursuit must occur as we stand among others also engaged in it. In the end, yes, philosophers should indeed be wary of confusing philosophy with poetry, but unless our philosophy speaks to the poetic dimensions of the human condition that we confront as a result of the trust required of finite beings, we risk missing the truth that we seek. In this way, and in this volume, we

ask old questions about negative theology and philosophy in order to explore new frontiers for the philosophy of religion.

## Notes

1. Clayton Crockett, B. Keith Putt, and Jeffrey W. Robbins, eds., *The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 2014).
2. Paul Draper and John Schellenberg, eds., *Renewing Philosophy of Religion: Exploratory Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018).
3. John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, and Creston Davis, *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press 2010).
4. Philip Goodchild, ed., *Rethinking Philosophy of Religion: Approaches from Continental Philosophy* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press 2002).
5. Wesley J. Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry: Envisioning a Future for the Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 2010).
6. Joseph J. Godfrey, *Trust of People, Words, and God: A Route for Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 2012).
7. Kevin Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley Blackwell 2014).
8. Alvin Plantinga, "Response to Nick Wolterstorff," *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (July 2011): 267–268.
9. I develop this idea further elsewhere and suggest that philosophy of religion is facing something of a "mid-life crisis" (see J. Aaron Simmons, "Cheaper than a Corvette: The Relevance of Phenomenology for Contemporary Philosophy of Religion," *Sophia* 56, no.1 (2017): 33–43).
10. Nick Trakakis, *The End of Philosophy of Religion* (London: Continuum 2008).
11. Timothy D. Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion: Terminus and Telos* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan 2013).
12. For more on "analytic theology," see Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea, eds., *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009). For the most famous critique

- of the “theological turn” in the continental tradition, see Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” trans. Bernad G. Prusak, in Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Paul Ricoeur, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press 2000), pp. 16–103. For another version of the critique of the “theologization” of philosophy, see Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, eds., *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2010).
13. Wildman, *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry*, ix.
  14. Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions*, Chapter 1.
  15. See Schilbrack, *Philosophy of and the Study of Religions*, Chapter 5.
  16. Importantly, I am using the term “theology” here as more of a placeholder than a specific referent. Part of what is at stake in these meta-debates is how even to understand the difference between theology and philosophy. It is worth noting here that the contributors to this volume are often at odds regarding such distinctions and the rationale for them.
  17. See J. Aaron Simmons and John Sanders, “A Goldilocks God: Open Theism as a Feuerbachian Alternative?” *Element* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 33–53.
  18. See Jacques Derrida, “How To Avoid Speaking: Denials,” trans. Ken Frieden, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold G. Coward, Toby Foshay (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1992), Chapter 3. See also, Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press 2006).
  19. See, for example, William Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1991); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995). See also, Christina Van Dyke, “Self-Knowledge, Abnegation, and Fulfillment in Medieval Mysticism,” *Self-Knowledge*, ed. U. Renz (Oxford Philosophical Concepts Series, ed. C. Mercer, Oxford University Press 2016), pp. 131–145; and Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995); Graham Priest, *Doubt Truth to be a Liar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2006).
  20. William Franke, *A Philosophy of the Unsayable* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 2014).

# Part I

*A Philosophy of the Unsayable:*  
Interpretations and Consequences