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*John H. Lavelly (1967)*

## PERSONS

### INTRODUCTION

This entry is on personhood and the general philosophical question that will be treated is: What is a person? Common use of the term *person* makes reference to adult human beings. Typical examples of sentences in which this term is used are: "Descartes is the person most

responsible for inaugurating the Modern Period in Western thought"; "No person can be President of the United States unless he/she was born in the United States"; and "Human fetuses may be considered persons." As the controversial last example should make clear, the term *person* is not used exclusively to refer to adult human beings. In much of the literature on persons, the term is used in a non-species-specific way. Many authors take *human being* to be a term of biology and leave the definition to science. Given that, here is a restatement of the initial question: What must a being be like to be a person?

There are many categories into which the term *person* fits. People refer to social persons, moral persons, metaphysical persons, legal persons, religious persons, and so on. While no one category of personhood can be considered the correct category, philosophers have tended to concentrate on either the metaphysical or the moral aspects of personhood. After a few words on the other categories, the metaphysical and moral notions of *person* will be the primary focus of the present entry.

The principal use of the concept of a *person* in the Christian community is that of God's personhood. This comes out most clearly in the tradition where the Holy Trinity is referred to as "three persons in one God." Although the concept of the Holy Trinity defies comprehension for many, one of the ideas spawned by this is that there is some way humans are like God, which is that they are both persons. Aquinas affirms that the term *person* applies to God as well as to human beings, though it does not apply in the same way. His definition of *person* is "a subsistent individual of a rational nature" (Aquinas 1945, p. 290). As applied to humans, Aquinas takes his lead from the use of *person* as one who is dignified, of high standing (in the community). He says that each individual of a rational nature is a *person*. However, since the dignity of God is greater than every other dignity, therefore, *person* applies preeminently to God. It is perhaps obvious that Aquinas is applying cultural as well as metaphysical attributes in his definition of the term.

As used in the legal sense, *person* refers to any being, object, or organization that has standing before the law. Perhaps the most enlightening example in the literature of law is that corporations are persons in the legal sense. This is because corporations have legal rights and responsibilities (some have also argued that corporations should be considered moral persons with moral rights and responsibilities). Legal rights would include equal protection, freedom of the press, due process, and so on, all of which can certainly be applied to corporations. Some

legal findings have not, however, extended full personhood to corporations, denying the following: pleading the Fifth Amendment in order to avoid self-incrimination, and Fourth Amendment rights of protection of persons.

Other interesting cases in the *legal persons* category are those of the fetus and the newborn. While these beings are protected under the law and, therefore, may be claimed to be legal persons, many philosophers have taken the position that fetuses are not persons in the moral sense of this term. Michael Tooley (1983) has argued that late-term fetuses and even newborns are not persons in the moral sense of this term. Tooley takes the side of caution here with newborns and says that since our knowledge of their development is limited, we need to agree on some cut-off point or other; he settles for a week, after which we can with clear conscience consider the newborn a person.

The social person is not so clearly defined, it seems, as persons of the other categories. The general framework for someone being a person in the social sense is for that being/person to be recognized as a person by those who are recognized as persons within the social community. Here, thoughts run to some of the ideas of Richard Rorty (1979, 1982), who takes the view that persons will be decided upon and not discovered. This is a provocative, and for some a rather radical, view, leaning toward relativism (though this is denied by Rorty) because if someone or some group in a society is judged by the society to be nonpersons, and if personhood is a matter of decision and not discovery, then said someone or the members of said group are, in fact, simply not persons. Ultimately, Rorty's position is that the concept of personhood is something that has been, and is still being, worked out in the *conversation* that is the history of the world.

## METAPHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section is devoted to the metaphysical aspects of the concept of personhood.

**CONDITIONS FOR PERSONHOOD.** Over the centuries, necessary and sufficient conditions for personhood have been laid out by various philosophers. John Locke is usually the starting place for any serious philosophical study of the concept of personhood because he seems to be the first to make explicit what he meant by the term. He writes that a person "is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential

to it." (Locke 1975, p. 335) Although Locke is here working on the idea of personal identity, there are at least three important concepts he introduces that would seem indispensable conditions of personhood proper, namely, reason, a first-person perspective, and consciousness. These characteristics of personhood arise in virtually all of the literature on the topic.

There is also the sense in which Locke uses person as a legal (forensic) term that may be useful to consider. Again, Locke is working on the issue of personal identity; however, what he says is important for thinking about persons in both the metaphysical and moral senses of the term. He writes:

*Person*, as I take it, is the name for this *self*. Where-ever a Man finds, what he calls *himself*, there I think another may say is the same *Person*. It is a Forensic Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery. This personality extends it *self* beyond present Existence to what is past, only by consciousness, whereby it becomes concerned and accountable.

(LOCKE 1975, p. 346)

While it can easily be seen that Locke is here referring to concern and accountability in the legal sense, the reference to happiness and misery may naturally lead one to contemplate what it means to be a person in the moral sense of the term. The section "Moral Considerations" herein will be devoted to this discussion.

**P. F. STRAWSON'S THEORY OF PERSON.** What was at one time *the* dominant paradigm on persons is the British philosopher P. F. Strawson's theory. While there are moral overtones, his is primarily a metaphysical theory. He gives the following definition: "the concept of a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation, etc., are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type" (Strawson 1963, pp. 101–102).

Strawson argues that a person is not some sort of compound of two different kinds of substance: (1) a pure consciousness/ego, and (2) a corporeal entity. These exist together in one being, according to Strawson. He is doubtful that there could even be such a thing as a pure consciousness existing on its own, devoid of any connection with a "physical situation." When he says that a person is not an "animated body" or an "embodied anima," he is here speaking to the idea that person refers to an

individual who must be analyzed as a unified individual of whom both types of predicates can be ascribed.

The predicates referred to here are as follows: *M-predicates*, on the one hand, are applicable to material bodies, to which there is no question of applying states of consciousness. Examples are: “is in the park,” “is blue,” “is flat.” *P-predicates*, on the other hand, are all other predicates ascribed to persons. These are various, says Strawson. His examples are: “is smiling,” “is going for a walk,” “is in pain,” “thinking hard,” “believes in God” (Strawson 1963, pp. 104).

It is interesting to note that some P-predicates imply the having of consciousness by the subject of reference. Strawson’s example is *posted a letter*. One consequence of this is that, theoretically, there are ways to tell when to ascribe P-predicates to others as well as to oneself. That is, there will often be indicators of the presence of P-predicates. What are they? One cannot just argue from one’s own case. Strawson holds that one can ascribe a P-predicate to oneself only if one can apply it to others. On many occasions, one ascribes P-predicates to others on the basis of observing their behavior. He is not saying that others’ behavior is a *sign* that P-predicates may be ascribed but, rather, that the criteria of observed behavior is logically adequate for the ascription of P-predicates. Further, some P-predicates one ascribes to oneself are not ascribed by using self-observation. This would seem to call into question the adequacy of Strawson’s criteria for ascribing P-predicates in which he says that the same criteria for ascribing P-predicates to others must be/is adequate for ascribing P-predicates to oneself.

His conclusion on this point is that the character of P-predicates is such that one uses behavior criteria for ascribing to others and both behavior and nonbehavior criteria for ascribing to oneself. For him, to have the concept of a person is to be a “self-ascriber” as well as an “other-ascriber” of P-predicates.

**THE CONSTITUTION VIEW.** Lynne Rudder Baker is a leading proponent of this theory of personhood. In her closely argued book *Persons and Bodies* (2000), Baker tells us that while persons are constituted by their body, a person and a person’s body are not identical. Her definition of *constitution* amounts to this: Where *x* constitutes *y* at time *t*, *x*, and *y* must be spatially coincident; *x* must be in a circumstance where *y*’s primary-kind property can be realized (where a primary-kind property is the property or characteristic an individual has by virtue of the kind of thing it is; for example: Secretariat’s primary-kind property is that of being a horse); it is necessary that if any-

thing (*z*) has some property at *t* that is *z*’s primary-kind property and if *z* is in a favorable circumstance to have *y*’s primary-kind property, then there is some individual *u* such that *u* has *y*’s primary-kind property at *t* and *u* is spatially coincident with *z* at *t*; it is possible that: *x* exists at *t* and there is no individual *w* such that *w* at *t* has *y*’s primary-kind property and is spatially coincident with *x*; *y* being immaterial implies that *x* is immaterial. Recall here that Baker is setting up her definition of what it means to be a person and hence has in mind (at least) what is usually taken as a clear example of a person, to wit, the adult human being, with a physical body.

A principal theme in Baker is that of the nonidentity of the person and the person’s body. She draws an analogy between a thing and that of which it is constituted, and a person and that which a person is constituted, by using the example of Michelangelo’s work of art *David* and the material of which it is constituted. Baker claims that the marble (called *Piece*) is not identical with *David*. Part of the argument runs as follows: If *David* and *Piece* are identical, then there is no property had by one and not had by the other. *Piece* has the property of being able to exist in a world without art whereas *David* (having as its primary-kind property that of being a statue, a work of art) does not have this property. Hence, constitution does not entail identity. (This is a very lean version of Baker’s argument and the reader is advised to study the longer work for important details.)

This much said, Baker goes on to distinguish the person from the person’s body (as that of which the person is constituted). Her argument hinges on the fact that the body (*qua* body) fails to possess what can be called the person-making property, that is, possession of a *first-person perspective*. The first-person perspective quite simply is the perspective by which one is/becomes conscious of oneself as oneself. Baker distinguishes two grades of the first-person perspective. An example of the *weak grade* would be referenced by someone uttering “I am 6 foot, 2 inches tall.” The person (P) who utters this sentence is thought to have the ability to distinguish P from others. However, this is only half of what a full-on first-person perspective can be, according to Baker. If P utters the sentence “I wish I were 6 foot, 2 inches tall,” this indicates that P sees not only that P is distinct from others, but also that P sees P as P. Following Castañeda, Baker uses the asterisk/star on the pronoun indicating first-person perspective to indicate as much. Hence, the sentence uttered would be written as “I wish I\* were 6 foot, 2 inches tall.”

To restate the important conclusion, the upshot of all of this is that since a person's body cannot take the first-person perspective, and since a person is a being who does or has the capacity to take the first-person perspective, a person's body and a person are not identical.

According to Baker, the first-person perspective underlies all versions of what it means to be a person, which rely on self-consciousness as the person-making characteristic. One example of a self-consciousness-based theory of personhood is one that Tooley (1983) writes about. On his interpretation, a being is self-consciousness to the extent that it is in possession of a concept of a self as a continuing subject of experiences and other mental states, is such an entity itself, and believes that it is itself such an entity. Tooley's important analysis of this, and other concepts, will be treated in the next section because Tooley's program revolves around the concept of personhood in the moral sense.

**OTHER SUGGESTED CONDITIONS FOR PERSONHOOD.** One of the most widely considered conditions for personhood is freedom of the will. A unique and pivotal contribution to this subject comes from Harry Frankfurt (1971), who argues that freedom of the will, in the guise of what he calls "second-order volitions," is a sufficient condition for personhood.

Consider an individual who smokes a pipe and is addicted to pipe smoking. A "first-order desire" here might be the bare desire for the sensation of filling one's lungs with smoke from the tobacco burning inside the pipe bowl. There may also be other, associated first-order desires, such as the desire for sensing the aroma present when one is filling the bowl; the feeling and taste of the pipe stem on one's lips, teeth and tongue; and so on. This bare, first-order desire to smoke can take the propositional form "R desires to *x*."

A "second-order desire" is to be construed as a desire referring to the first-order desire. For example, where R desires to smoke but also has the desire to not desire to smoke (say, for health reasons), the desire to not desire to smoke is a second-order desire. In a situation where R experiences both desires but is moved by and acts on the second-order desire, Frankfurt says that R's second-order desire is the *effective* desire. Frankfurt understands this as R wanting R's second-order desire to be R's will. In this case, where the second-order desire comes to be R's will, Frankfurt terms this a "second-order *volition*," which he says is a sufficient condition for personhood. In Frankfurt's terms, a "wanton" (W) is someone who doesn't care about W's will, which is clearly not the case for R. Wan-

tons have first-order desires but are not persons because they have no second-order volitions (albeit it is possible that they have second-order desires). Freedom of the will amounts simply to making one's second-order volition(s) one's will.

A chief benefit, according to Frankfurt, of this interpretation of freedom of the will is that it implies moral responsibility for the actions that R takes when acting on R's second-order volitions. Where R has the will R wants to have, and acts on this will, R is taken to be morally responsible for the actions R commits.

Another important contributor to the literature on persons is Daniel Dennett, who makes a distinction between metaphysical persons ("roughly, the notion of an intelligent, conscious, feeling agent") and moral persons ("roughly, the notion of an agent who is accountable, who has both rights and responsibilities") (Dennett 1976, p. 176). Though Dennett focuses for the most part on the conditions for metaphysical personhood, he does say that the concept of a person is "inescapably normative." Shy of drawing the conclusion that *the* set of necessary and sufficient conditions for personhood will never be fully articulated, he does lend some voice to a few of the conditions he considers necessary.

The six conditions Dennett delineates are: consciousness (being the subject of intentional predicates); rationality; being the object of a certain attitude (having a *personal* attitude taken toward one); the ability to reciprocate this attitude; verbal communication; self-consciousness. According to Dennett, to be rational is just to be Intentional, and to be Intentional is just to be the object of a certain attitude. These three conditions, says Dennett, are themselves necessary, though not sufficient, for the ability to reciprocate the personal attitude, which is itself necessary but not sufficient for the capacity for verbal communication, which is itself a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for self-consciousness, which is itself a necessary condition for moral personhood.

Some would say Dennett's last word is overly skeptical. Not only does he not believe the set of sufficient conditions for personhood will ever be known, and not only are the chosen conditions in some sense arbitrary, and not only is it sometimes impossible to recognize just who are persons, when problems of moral responsibility arise, "we cannot even tell in our own cases if we are persons."

## MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section is devoted to the moral aspects of the concept of personhood. One important aspect of the topic of

personhood is the use of person in a moral sense. The central question, that is, What is a person? can be translated into the question, What must a being be like to have moral rights (and moral responsibilities)? Setting off “and moral responsibilities” in parentheses here is meant to highlight the problem of assigning moral responsibilities to such beings as human infants; many, if not all, nonhuman animals; and perhaps those humans who are, say, in the late stages of Alzheimer’s disease. While there are many who argue that these *persons* have moral rights, there is scant literature proclaiming their having moral responsibilities. This suggests a further question about moral personhood, to wit, whether a person can be the bearer of rights but not responsibilities.

**MICHAEL TOOLEY’S THEORY.** Tooley writes: “The question of what beings it is seriously wrong to destroy is one of the central questions of ethics.” The question covers human as well as nonhuman beings. It applies to human fetuses, newborns, the mentally/cognitively challenged, the criminally insane, sociopaths, and those in the throes of diseases that impair brain activity. It also covers dogs, cats, giraffes, dolphins, whales, chimpanzees, gorillas, trout, sharks, trees, birds, and alligators. The question is distinctly *not* kind-, type-, or species-specific.

While the final goal in Tooley’s work on the concept of personhood appears to be discovering whether abortion and infanticide are morally permissible, his work is distinctively metaphysical. He seems to believe that a person may be defined as a being who possesses at least moral rights (and perhaps moral responsibilities), and he sees that the analysis of these concepts requires laying out the concepts closely associated with these. However, Tooley has certain other questions in mind as he analyzes various conditions for personhood. Take the example of *rationality* as a suggested condition for personhood. He asks whether a being could rightly be thought a person who lacked the capacity for rationality. On the heels of this is the pointed question about whether it would be seriously wrong to destroy a being who was rational (staying with the example). It is this question that places his work squarely in the area of the moral aspects of personhood rather than the metaphysical. Or, if one prefers, any analysis of the moral aspects of personhood will automatically require metaphysical analysis as well.

Tooley runs through many of the suggested conditions for personhood, analyzing them in terms of whether they are necessary and/or sufficient conditions. Four of these suggestions are that a person is: (1) a subject of nonmomentary interests; (2) an entity that pos-

sesses rationality; (3) an entity that is capable of action; (4) an entity that possesses self-consciousness.

A brief sketch of Tooley’s treatment of these conditions is as follows: As a subject of nonmomentary interests, an individual will have the capacity for a host of desires, the total set being in some sense “unified.” While Tooley is not identifying interests with desires, he is making the case that desires may be inferred from interests. This is as it should be when interpreting interests in such a way that the subject can be said to *be interested*, as in “Don is interested in astronomy.” However, it is more difficult to make sense of the idea of interests here when the meaning of *interest* has to do with what is in an individual’s benefit, as characterized by the sentence “As an astronomer, it would be in Don’s interest to study mathematics.” While the former meaning of interest, allowing the inference to desires, would not seem to have the relevant moral sense, Tooley brings in moral significance by associating this concept of interest with the representation of the item of interest in consciousness. In the end, Tooley says that persons may be identified with “entities that have desires that are interrelated in such a way that the entities can be viewed as subjects of nonmomentary interests.”

As to whether a being in possession of rationality is a person, Tooley takes the view that the relevant sort of rationality to be discussed has to do with what is called *agency*, where an agent is an enduring substance of a mental nature, with the capacity for deliberative reason-based action. Rightly claiming that there is little disagreement that this sort of rationality is insufficient for personhood, he argues that neither is it necessary. Though Tooley does not believe it plausible that rationality necessitates personhood, he does allow that any being who is rational and possesses nonmomentary interests is a person. Even the addition of a relevant form of free will, or the capacity for rational deliberation, is not enough to make rationality itself a necessary condition for personhood.

Tooley’s third suggested condition for personhood is that of having the capacity for action. The name for anyone capable of action is *agent*, and Tooley claims there is little disagreement whether being an agent is a sufficient condition for being a person; it is. It is not, however, a necessary condition, according to Tooley. One important concern he brings up here is that if agency involves what is called a libertarian free will, then if universal determinism should turn out to be true, even normal adult human beings would not be persons. Tooley’s reasoning on this is that even if it should be the case that all events are deter-

mined, that fact would not lead to the conclusion that it is not seriously wrong to destroy a normal adult human being. But now, on an account of agency that does not necessarily involve the possession of free will, Tooley presumes that the agent will possess nonmomentary interests. Since these sorts of interests have already been argued to be unnecessary to confer personhood, adding these to agency will not have the result of necessitating personhood on an agent so characterized.

The last suggested condition for personhood analyzed by Tooley is self-consciousness, which he argues is neither necessary nor sufficient for personhood. It is not necessary because there could be an individual who was aware of a continuing self but not in possession of this awareness *qua* individual continuing self. Self-consciousness is not a sufficient condition, according to Tooley, because it is conceivable that some individual may well be self-conscious but not be a subject of either momentary or continuing interests. For all this, however, it appears that Tooley would agree with the general consensus that it would be seriously wrong to destroy such an individual.

**OTHER AREAS, OTHER CONCERNS.** The area of medical ethics has produced by far the greatest amount of work on the concept of personhood. And within this field, the question of the status of the fetus has generated the most debate. The issue here is whether or not a fetus is a person in the moral sense of that term, that is, whether the fetus has a right to life. As is clear, this is but one issue in the abortion debate; yet it has generated as many books and papers as any topic in contemporary moral philosophy. The question of the moral status of the fetus characteristically revolves around discussions as to whether the fetus possesses any of the suggested conditions for personhood. Early term fetuses, whose brains have not developed sufficiently for, say, consciousness and rationality, are widely agreed to be nonpersons (with the notable exception that the religious contingent—specifically Roman Catholics—will not accept this conclusion, arguing that a fetus is a person from the moment of conception). A great controversy still surrounds mid- and late-term fetuses because it is simply unclear what their capacities are, and it appears an important question whether these individuals are more or less like nonhuman animals usually denied personhood.

Another interesting debate centers on the fetus being a *potential* person. The issue is whether a being who is going to be a person in the natural course of events should be treated as a person prior to becoming what it

will be. One of the considerations that makes this question so significant is that there seems to be little relevant difference between a very-late-term fetus and a newborn infant. If such a fetus is not a person, that is, fails to possess self-consciousness, rationality, free will, and so on, then it would appear that the newborn is not, either. But this conclusion is one very few people have been willing to draw. (Tooley's work on potential personhood, in *Abortion and Infanticide*, is crucial reading.) A significant point made by some people on this topic is that the infant, upon birth, becomes a member of the specific community into which it is born whereas the fetus is not yet a member. It is somehow thought that having seen, held, and fed the infant are *attachment factors* leading to the community seeing the infant as a person. Such is not the case with even a late-term fetus.

Another question one can ask is whether people who commit heinous crimes lose their status as persons in the moral sense. This sort of case brings out clearly a distinction between the legal and moral senses of the concept of personhood. Under the law, a murderer/rapist can, in certain circumstances, retain the right to life (that is, not be sentenced to death). One argument many opponents of the death penalty have used is the following: premise 1: the individual sentenced to death under the law has a moral right to life, premise 2: no law can abridge a moral right, conclusion: the death penalty violates an individual's moral right to life. It is easy to see how this argument might be run if one accepts the conditions for personhood outlined above, to wit, self-consciousness, rationality, the ability for complex communication, free will, and so on. The committing of atrocious crimes would not appear incompatible with the agent possessing these characteristics.

However, if other necessary conditions are added to the list, such as the concern for others and respect for persons, it is more difficult to see how anyone could commit such crimes and at the same time maintain this person also had respect for others. Where the moral sense of person is defined as "a being with moral rights and responsibilities," the way would be open to argue that the death penalty *is* morally permissible. From this perspective, the conditions of personhood have significant practical impact.

Finally, the issue of animal rights has become one of the most widely debated issues of our time. Opponents argue, to a person, that nonhuman animals are nonpersons, though no one this writer is aware of argues that therefore we can treat nonhuman animals anyway we want (such as causing unnecessary pain). Proponents

sometimes argue that many nonhuman animals display characteristics matching a fair number of the suggested conditions for personhood. For example, some will say the neighbor's dog is conscious, displays rational behavior, can engage in fairly complex communication, and has a large measure of free will. This is to say that these animals possess very important characteristics thought to be relevant for designating adult humans as persons. Unless people will assent to some form of speciesism, they say, people must admit that these animals need to be treated as persons. This is at least sufficient, it is believed, to make it seriously wrong to harm the animal.

An interesting topic in animal rights, where the concern is whether nonhuman animals are, or should be, considered persons, is the question whether persons, in the moral sense, are beings who do have both moral rights as well as moral responsibilities. It is never argued that the neighbor's dog has moral responsibilities. This being the case, proponents of animal rights are never proponents of animal responsibilities. Even if there are cases where a person seemingly has a right without there existing a corresponding responsibility, it remains an open question whether these cases speak to the essential issues regarding the questions of personhood.

**See also** Abortion; Baker, Lynne Rudder; Dennett, Daniel C.; Frankfurt, Harry; Locke, John; Rights; Strawson, Peter F.; Thomas Aquinas, St.

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## PERSPECTIVE REALISM

See *Realism*

## PESSIMISM AND OPTIMISM

"Pessimism" and its opposite, "optimism," are only secondarily philosophical theories or convictions; primarily they are personal opinions or attitudes, often widely prevalent, about the relative evil or goodness of the world or of men's experience of the world. As such they vary with the temperaments and value experiences of individuals, and with cultural situations far more than with philosophical traditions.

Both pessimism and optimism in the above sense may be reactions to experiences that vary in scope and content. Four types of reactions or judgments may be distinguished: (1) psychological or anthropological (involving judgments about the dominance of evil or good in one's own experience or in human experience generally); (2) physicalistic (judging the physical world to be dominantly evil or good); (3) historicistic (based on appraisals of the evil or goodness of a historical or cultural period or of the forces and institutions that determine history); and

(4) universal, or cosmic (involving judgments about the dominance of evil or good in the universe as a whole).

Since the issue of the goodness or evil of human life involves belief in beneficent or malevolent forces upon which man's well-being is dependent, optimism and pessimism are prominent aspects of religious beliefs, and these beliefs may involve many or all of the above types of judgments.

Philosophical pessimism and optimism result from the critical analysis and clarification of judgments of the dominance of good or evil, an evaluation of the experiences upon which these judgments are based, and the presentation of reasons to justify or refute such statements. There is widespread doubt whether the terms *optimism* and *pessimism* are sufficiently precise for philosophical purposes and also whether optimistic and pessimistic beliefs are philosophically justifiable. This article will be concerned chiefly with philosophical formulations and arguments for optimism and pessimism with some reference to their manifestations in religion.

Optimistic and pessimistic attitudes and theories are much older than the terms used to describe them. The term *optimisme* was first used in the Jesuit journal *Mémoires de Trévoux* in 1737 to designate Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's doctrine (which appears in his *Théodicée* and in other of his philosophical writings) that this is the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz himself used the term *optimum* in a technical sense that applied to the unique maximal or minimal instance of an infinite class of possibilities, and he held that this principle of the optimum was applied by God in the creation of the world. *Optimisme* was admitted by the French Academy to its dictionary in 1762. The first known appearance of the term *optimism* in English was in 1759, also in reference to the system of Leibniz. *Pessimism* came into general use only in the nineteenth century, although its first known appearance in English was in 1795 in one of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's letters.

The superlative form of the Latin adjectives *optimus* and *pessimus* is not generally justified by any form of philosophical optimism or pessimism. It is true that Leibniz defended an optimal position in the formula "the best of all possible worlds," but this use of the superlative did not prevent his acknowledging the existence of much evil—indeed, the necessity of evil in all finite existence. Similarly, Arthur Schopenhauer affirmed that this is the worst of all possible worlds, but his chief philosophic concern was with finding a way of salvation from the evil of the world through art, a morality of sympathy, and philosophic and religious contemplation. The most thor-