ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING:
AFFECT AND THE GOD OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

February 24-25, 2018
Religious Studies, University of Dayton
Keynote Speakers: Elliot R. Wolfson and Amy Hollywood

What do philosophers mean when they use the word ‘God’? Pascal’s famous dictum drew the battle lines: in writing “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob - not of the philosophers and scholars,” a difference is declared, but what the difference is, or what these two gods are, remains unclear. This conference seeks to revisit the gods of the philosophers—from the ancient to the present—to better understand what philosophers mean when they talk about ‘God’.

This conference proposes that the God of the philosophers be revisited from the perspective of affect and emotion. One question orients our investigation: What can we learn about the God of the philosophers when we look at it through the lens of affect? Engaging both philosophy and theology, and using mysticism and aesthetics to warp the boundary between them, the goal is to shed new light on the affective dimensions of the philosopher’s God.

While taken for granted in several theological and philosophical systems and texts, it is rarely apparent what this God of the Philosophers is, or how it differs from more ‘traditional’ concepts of God or gods. Several distinctions between the two sets of gods are taken for granted—in this conference we will challenge one of them: that the God of the philosophers has nothing to do with affect. It is far from obvious that philosophers’ gods are without feeling, or that the philosopher’s God is approached without emotion. We wish to suggest the opposite. We will explore thinkers, philosophers, and mystics such as Whitehead, Spinoza, Al Farabi, Teilhard de Chardin, Ahmed, Berlant, and the Stoics, to see how the elusive ‘God of the philosophers’ can help us better understand affects and the role they play in both religion and philosophy.

Our main orienting question provokes several others: What do philosophers and thinkers mean by ‘God,’ in light of their commitments to reason? Does mysticism offer a different way of framing the problem? Do Asian systems disrupt this distinction? What affective and rhetorical work does the figure of God do for philosophy? Is this figure valuable for understanding non-philosophical religion? Engaging religious studies and philosophy, we want to know both how closely attending to affect can help us better understand the God of the philosophers, and how the God of the philosophers can act as a powerful tool for understanding affect.
POTENTIAL TOPICS:

- What do philosophers mean by ‘God’?
- God, Emotion, and Human Behaviour in Classical Thought
- Mysticism, philosophy, and affect in medieval thought
- Gender, God, and philosophical affects
- Political theology and affect (affect and legitimacy)
- Spinoza, Leibniz, Lessing and a God composed of affects
- After the Death of God: affect and God in critical theory
- Race, God and affect
- Affect in Asian philosophical-religious traditions
- Religious existentialism and its gods
- New religious movements and the philosopher’s Gods
- What is the rhetorical function of the ‘God of the philosophers’?
- The affects of philosophizing

CALL FOR PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS:

We seek papers and projects that spread through diverse and varied religious, philosophical, and mystical traditions. With affect as our focus, we invite a variety of proposals, ranging from (a) traditional conference papers to (b) reading and working groups to (c) live creative and art performances and tasks. Works in-progress are very much encouraged.

Please submit a short abstract (200-300 words) to affectandreligion@gmail.com
Final submission date is Nov 15th, 2017.
Notification of acceptance: Nov 30th, 2017
We encourage those proposing non-traditional presentations to contact us earlier.
For questions on paper submissions, please contact datlas2@udayton.edu

Conference Organizers: Dustin N Atlas (Dayton), Ryan Johnson (Elon, author of The Deleuze-Lucretius Encounter), and Donovan Schaefer (Pennsylvania, author of Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power), with generous support from the University of Dayton’s office of the University Professor of Faith and Culture and The Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society at Elon University.