

# Study asks 'does it really matter if God exists?'

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A new study published by Professor Klaas Kraay explores value of God's existence. This area of focus is also the crux of a two-year research project funded by one of the largest philosophy grants in Canada.

In today's society where social media and technology seem to dominate how people communicate, does religion – or God – really matter?

Ryerson researchers are exploring all sides of one of life's biggest questions in a new research project funded by one of the largest philosophy grants in Canada.

"Religion has been an important part of human history for centuries, and belief in God is very much alive today", says Klaas Kraay, a professor in Ryerson University's Department of Philosophy and the leader of a two-year research project funded by the John Templeton Foundation.

"Through our research, we hope to clarify our intuitions about the difference in value that God's existence makes (or would make) to our lives and to the world around us," he adds. Although plenty of debate and research has been done on God's existence by scholars worldwide, there has been less research focus on the value of God's existence, which is the main reason why Kraay was awarded the \$199,000 grant from the U.S.-based foundation.

As part of the project, Kraay and his co-author, Ryerson master's student Chris Dragos, published a [paper](#) this month in the prestigious *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* that debates whether God's existence does matter.

In the paper, the researchers criticize the claims made by renowned University of Oxford scholar Guy Kahane, who has argued that God's existence would make the world a far worse place in some respects, and would make some people's lives meaningless and absurd.

To refute his argument, Kraay and Dragos propose that philosophers should evaluate the best arguments for and against four key positions:

- Pro-theism: If God existed, the world would be a better place to live.
- Anti-theism: God's existence would make the world a worse place.

- Indifferentism: God's existence would not make the world either better or worse.
- Agnosticism: The effect of God's existence on the world's value cannot be determined.

"People seem to have strong intuitions and feelings about these four positions," says Kraay. "However, this grant will enable us to move beyond intuition and feelings and into rigorous arguments about all aspects of this important issue."

The grant from the John Templeton Foundation will support several visiting research fellows who will conduct research on these four major themes and publish papers in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Public events and a two-day research conference will also be held in 2015 featuring internationally renowned philosophers who will discuss whether God's existence matters.

Provided by Ryerson University

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