

## Knowing God

- Philosophical background
- Arguments for God's existence
- Knowing God

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## Philosophical Background

- Views of God's relationship to the world:
  - Monism – Everything is part of one single reality ("God").
  - Emanationism – The world is an outflow of God.
  - Dualism – The world is eternal, governed by two eternal, equal, and opposite principles.
  - Creation *ex nihilo* – The world was created by God out of nothing.

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## Philosophical Background

- Part of natural theology = arguments for the existence of God.
- To understand these arguments, we need to understand Plato and Aristotle on the nature of reality.

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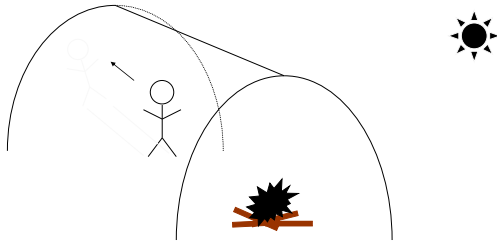
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## Philosophical Background

- Plato's myth of the cave



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## Philosophical Background

Plato

Aristotle



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## Arguments for God's Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm) - Platonic
  - *A priori* (prior to sense experience)
  - Ontology = being
  - Existence is required by the *idea* of God.
  - God is "that [being] than which no greater can be conceived."
  - A being that exists is greater than a being that does not exist.
  - To be the greatest of all possible beings, God must exist.

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### Arguments for God's Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm) - Platonic
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
  - *A posteriori* (subsequent to sense experience)
  - Argument from first cause
  - God is the Uncaused Cause who started the chain of causation in the universe.
  - Similar to the argument from motion: God is the Unmoved Mover who began motion in the universe.

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### Arguments for God's Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm) - Platonic
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Teleological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
  - *A posteriori*; *telos* = goal.
  - The universe demonstrates purposeful order.
  - Purpose requires intelligence.
  - Argument from design.
  - Watchmaker analogy (a watch requires a maker).

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### Arguments for God's Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm) - Platonic
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Teleological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Anthropological or moral argument (Kant) - A.
  - *A posteriori*, based on human moral sense.
  - We have a moral imperative that often isn't rewarded in this life.
  - This imperative must come from someone and must be rewarded in an afterlife.

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### Arguments for God's Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm) - Platonic
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Teleological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Anthropological or moral argument (Kant) - A.
  - Modern version of this argument uses terms like self-transcendence and openness to the world; human desire for self-transcendence must have a transcendent origin.
  - Pascal's "God-shaped vacuum" in human hearts.

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### Arguments for God's Existence

- Ontological argument (Anselm) - Platonic
- Cosmological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Teleological argument (Aquinas) - Arist.
- Anthropological or moral argument (Kant) - A.
- Congruity – Theism makes the most sense of reality.

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### Arguments for God's Existence

- What is at stake in these arguments?
  - Intellectual coherence of the faith.
  - Confirm faith of believers; show them that the faith is intellectually credible.
  - Defense of the faith to unbelievers.
  - Note that none of these arguments attempts to prove the existence of the *Christian* God.

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## Knowing God

- Other perspectives on belief in God:
  - Feuerbach: God is a projection.
  - Marx: Religion is the opiate of the masses.
  - Freud: God is an illusion.
  - Kierkegaard: Leap of faith.
  - William James: Does it work? (Pragmatism)

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## Knowing God

- By what means do we know God?
  - Reason?
  - Religious experience?
  - Revelation?
- Approaches to apologetics are based on how people can know God.
  - Evidentialist - show me the proofs.
  - Fideist - accept it on faith.
  - Presuppositionalist - test the hypothesis.

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## Knowing God

- S. Grenz: “God is subject, not object.”
  - God isn’t a subject matter we can master.
  - We can know God only through revelation.
  - Knowing God means primarily having a relationship with God, not knowing about God.
  - God knows us before we can know him.

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## Knowing God

If you had a friend who was an atheist but was open to discussing religion, how would you approach the subject with him or her?  
If you have done this, what approach(es) seem to be helpful?

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