



Understanding God's Relationship to the World

Panentheism

vs.

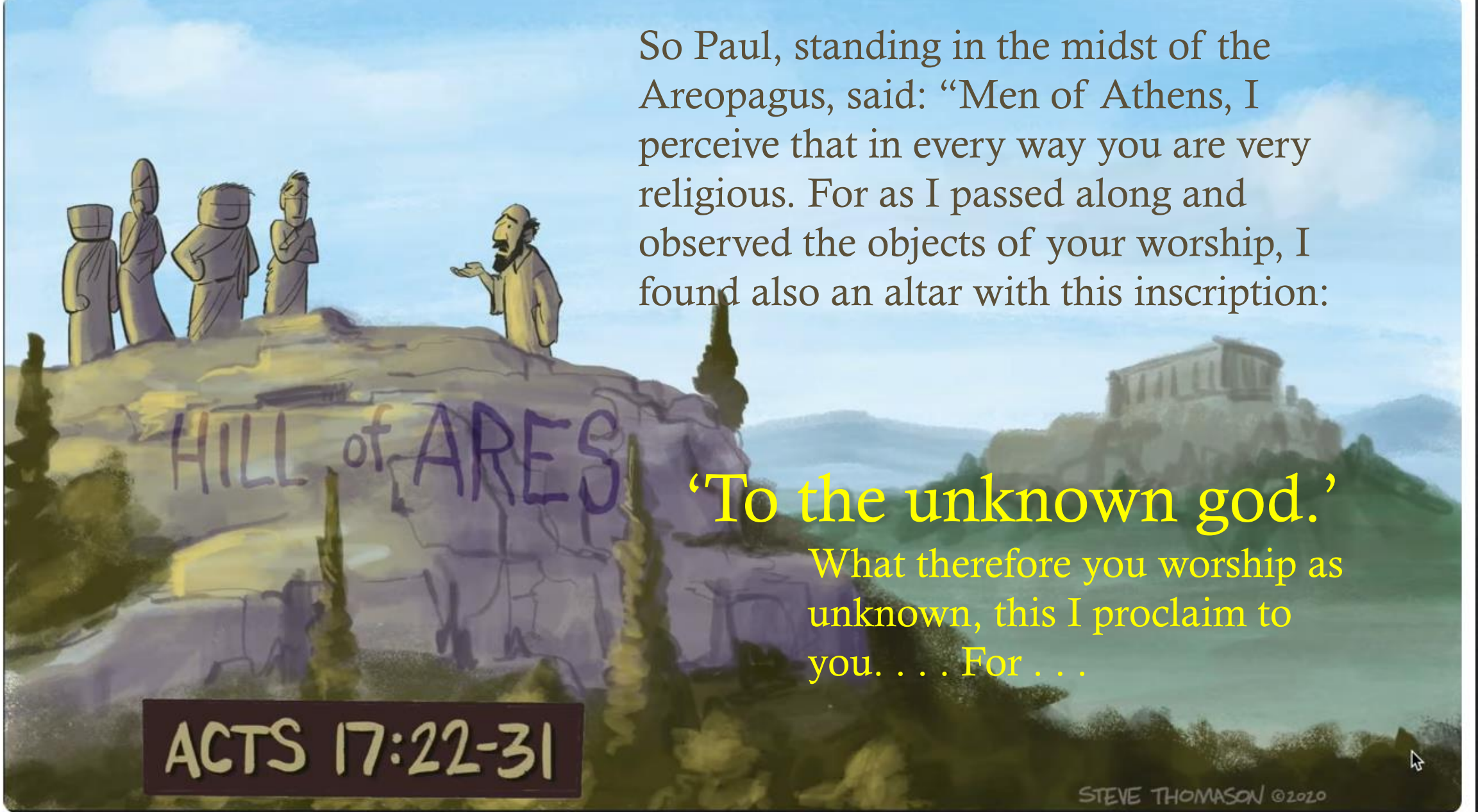
Theism



Christopher T. Haun

March 21st, 2024

<https://cthaun.tech/worldviews>



So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription:

‘To the unknown god.’

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. . . . For . . .

ACTS 17:22-31

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A Bible Study of Paul's Speech on Mars Hill in Acts 17:22-31

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“In him we live and move and have our being’.”

- Epimenides
~600 BC



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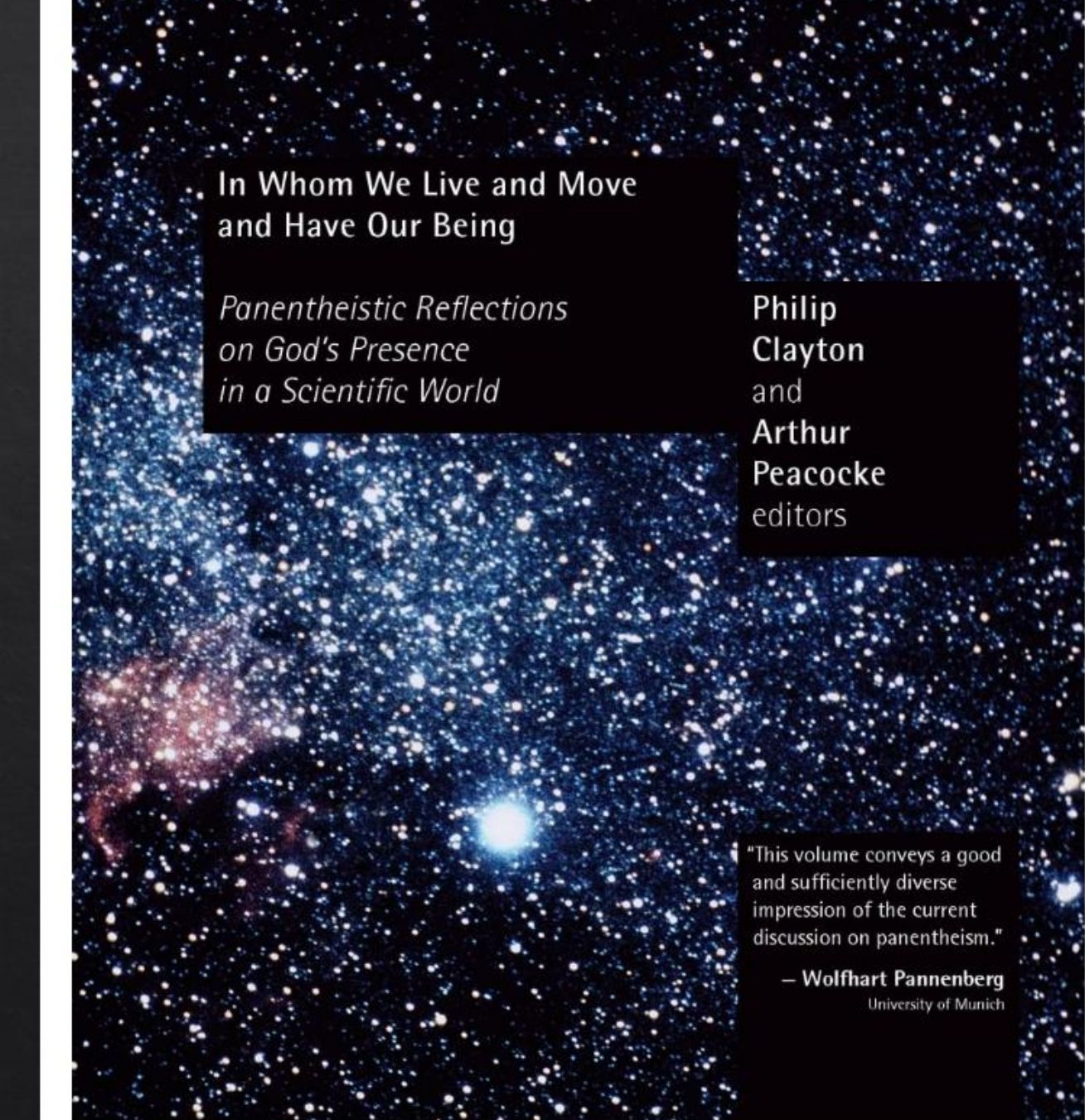
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In Whom We Live and Move
and Have Our Being

*Panentheistic Reflections
on God's Presence
in a Scientific World*

**Philip
Clayton**
and
**Arthur
Peacocke**
editors

"This volume conveys a good
and sufficiently diverse
impression of the current
discussion on panentheism."

— **Wolfhart Pannenberg**
University of Munich

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IN WHOM WE LIVE AND MOVE
AND HAVE OUR BEING

*Panentheistic Reflections on
God's Presence in a Scientific World*

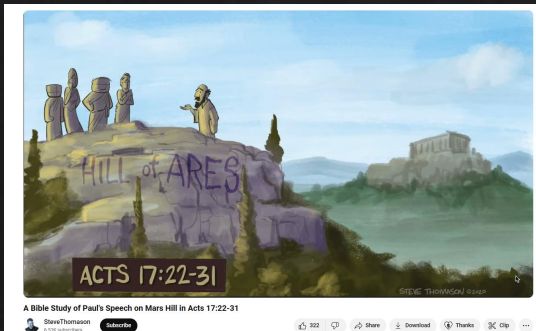
Edited by

Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
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Theists, Atheists, & Pantheists?

1. **Paul = Theist**
2. **Epicureans = Atheists**
3. **Stoics = Pantheists**



Theism, Analogies for













Panentheism - analogies

- ◇ No perfect analogy
- ◇ Seed > bud > flower



Panentheism - analogies

- ◇ God is to world as soul is to body
- ◇ **Mother gestating infant in womb**



Panentheism - concepts

- ◇ Often confused with pantheism
- ◇ Lumped together with pantheism until 1828/1950
- ◇ Greek: All + in + God
- ◇ World is inside of God ($W \rightarrow G$)
- ◇ God is inside the world ($G \rightarrow W$)
- ◇ God also exists beyond the world & is more than the world is ($G \geq W$)
- ◇ Steers a course between pantheism ($G=W$) and theism ($G \mid W$)
- ◇ Process thought, process philosophy, process theology
- ◇ The lines blur between **Creator** and creation

Panentheism – Pros

- ◆ Seems new in contrast to ancient
- ◆ Offers balance between extremes? (transcendence and immanence)
- ◆ Gets the best of Theism and Pantheism? Avoids the worst?
- ◆ Can jive fine-tuning, big bang, ID, and neo-Darwinian macro-evolution
- ◆ God is more personable/relatable, less distant/threatening
- ◆ God isn't to blame for evil. Experiences suffering
- ◆ Lines blur between supernatural/natural. Embarrassing miracles sanitized
- ◆ Fits with the green gospel of ecological Marxism
- ◆ Embraces contradictions with audacity
- ◆ Ecumenical framework for new global religion?

Panentheism – Who?

- ◇ Pharoah Akhenaton??? (1350 B.C.)
- ◇ Rig Vega? (1,100 BC)
- ◇ Bhagavad Gita? (500-200 BC)
- ◇ Upanishads (100BC–400AD)
- ◇ Plato?
- ◇ Neoplatonists (Plotinus, Proclus, etc.)
- ◇ Stoicism
- ◇ Spinoza, Hegel, Bergson, A. N. Whitehead
- ◇ Buddhism???
- ◇ Jewish Kabbalah, Hasidic Judaism
- ◇ Jesuits? Mary Knollers?
- ◇ Claremont Graduate University, CA
- ◇ Mainline Liberal Protestant Theology
- ◇ Westminster John Knox Press
- ◇ Neotheism / Open theism (???)
- ◇ Movies like Avatar, Transformers, etc.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF TERMINATOR 2 AND TITANIC

Avatar

◆ Highest grossing movie of all time

◆ Eywa

◆ Yewa - Yoruban "Mother"

◆ YHWH - Hebrew "I AM"

◆ Gaia

◆ Pandora

◆ Tree of Souls

◆ Tsaheylu











Transcendence

vs.

Immanence

“I didn’t see
God.”



“My Universe
is bigger than
your god!”



I see no god up here.

-Yuri Gagarin (first human in space, 1961)

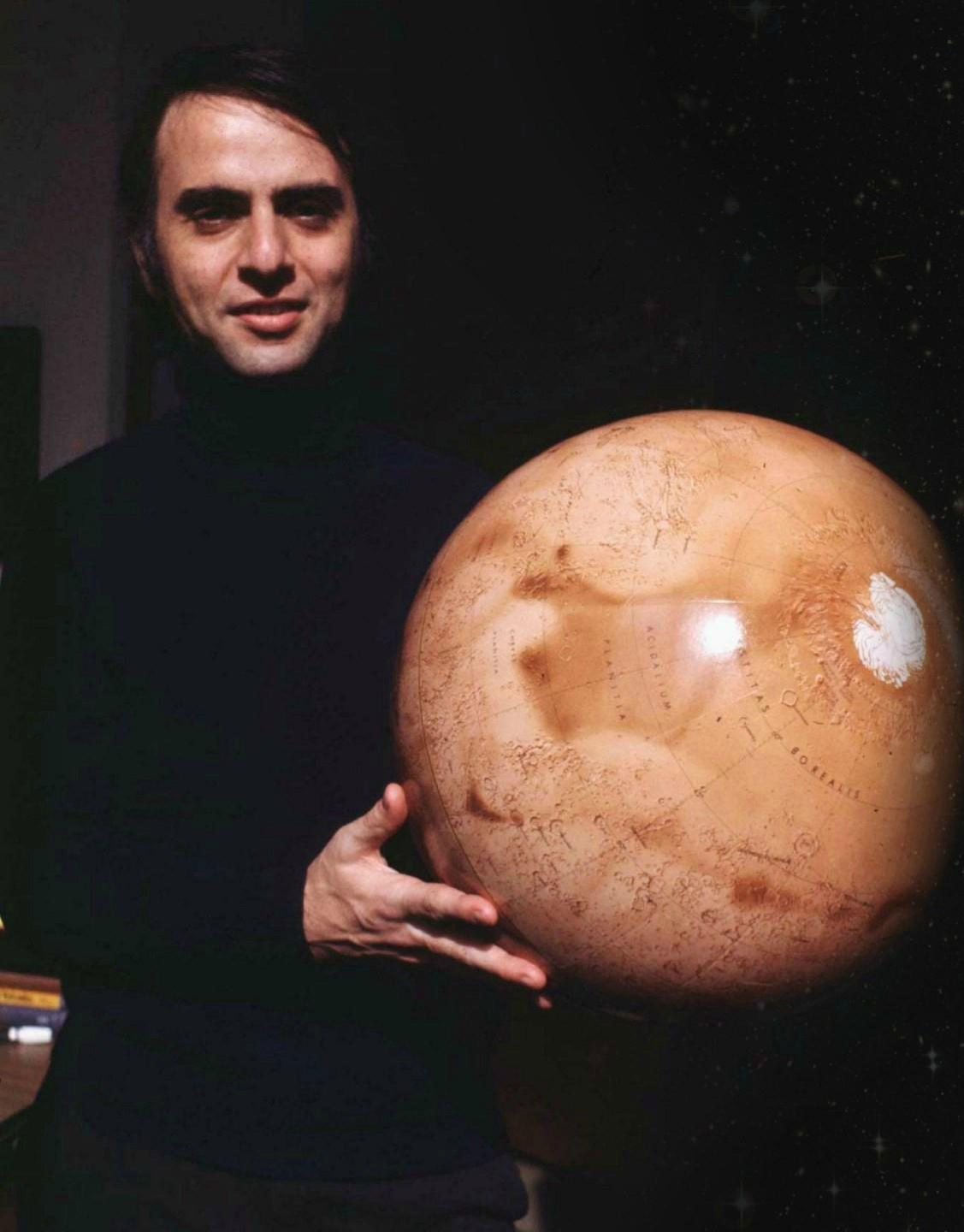


Your god is too small
for my universe.

Carl Sagan

quote fancy





“How is it that hardly any major religion has looked at science and concluded, ‘This is better than we thought! The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said, grander, more subtle, more elegant’? Instead they say, ‘No, no, no! My god is a little god, and I want him to stay that way.’”

-Carl Sagan
Shortly before his death

The bigger the canvas is,
the bigger the Painter has to be.

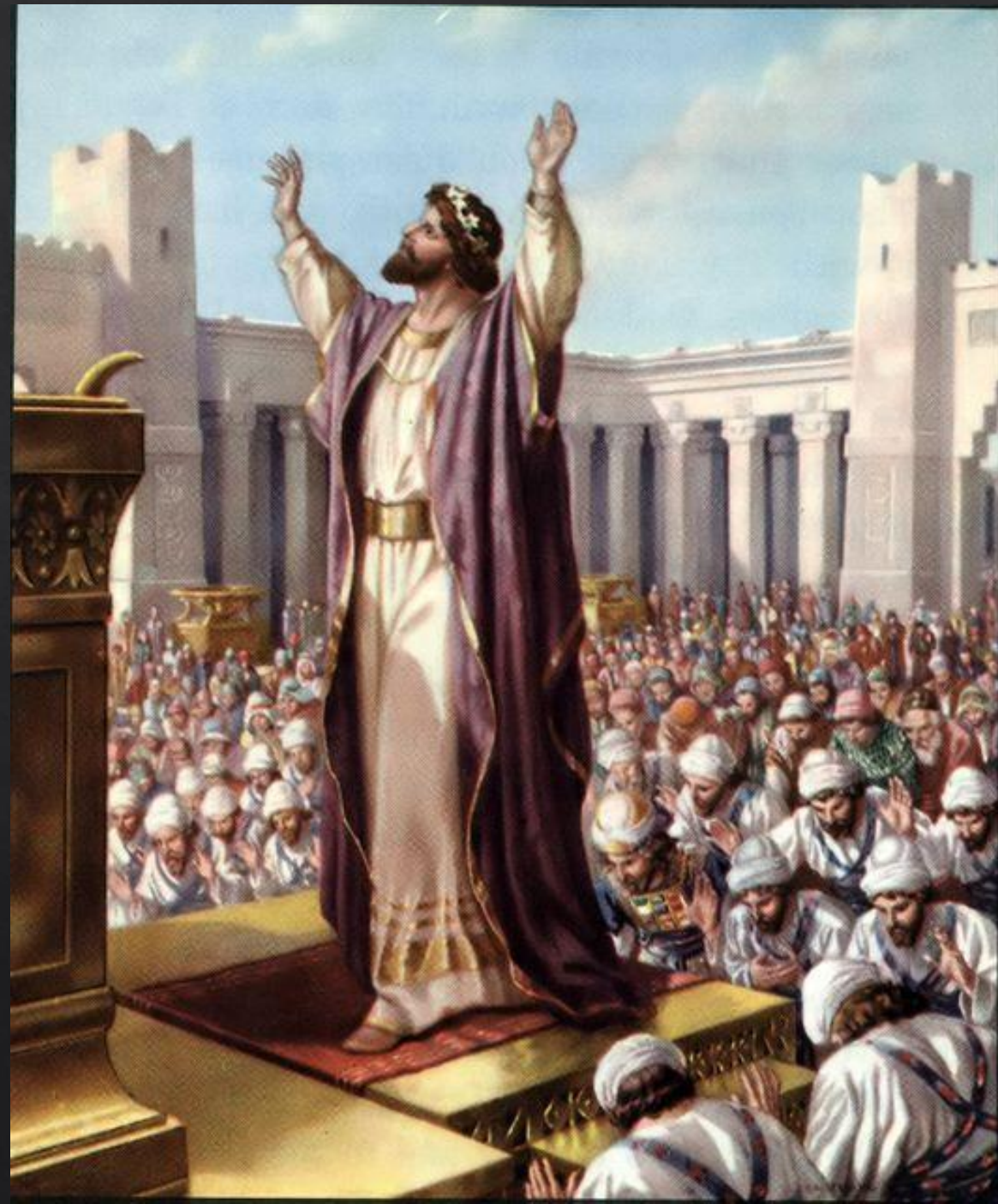
The more amazing the book is,
the more amazing the Author needs to be.

The Creator needs to be *outside of* what it created.



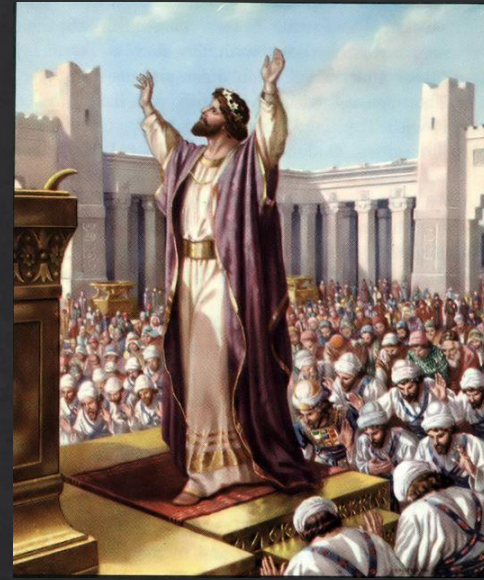
1 Kings 8

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!” – King Solomon



1 Kings 8

... Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and **listen** to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: that Your **eyes** may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may **hear** the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. And may You **hear** the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they **pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place**; and when You **hear**, forgive.



Isaiah 66

Thus says the LORD:

“Heaven is my throne,

And the earth is my footstool;

What is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?

All these things my hand has made. . .”

[Quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:49]



Don't look for God
inside of the throne
he [analagously] sits upon



Psalm 19

The Law of the Lord Is Perfect

To The Choirmaster. A Psalm Of David.

19 ⁱThe heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above ¹proclaims his handiwork.

²Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.

³There is no **speech**, nor are there **words**,
whose voice is not heard.

⁴^jTheir ^k**voice** ²goes out through all the earth,
and their **words** to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for ^lthe sun,

⁵^mwhich comes out like ⁿa bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

⁶Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

⁷^oThe law of the LORD is perfect, ³

^previving the soul;

^qthe testimony of the LORD is ^rsure,

^smaking wise ^tthe simple:

Psalm 19

- ◇ The creation/world/cosmos teaches us about the Creator/Craftsman
- ◇ We can reason from effects to their cause
- ◇ Don't confuse the effects with their ultimate cause
- ◇ Aka "General revelation"
- ◇ Aka "Natural theology"

Romans 1:18-32

- ◇ “Plain. . . Shown . . . Clearly perceived”
- ◇ Invisible attributes
 - ◇ Eternal power
 - ◇ Divine nature
 - ◇ Immortal
- ◇ Exchange immortal God for created things
- ◇ Exchange Creator for creatures
- ◇ God gives them up
- ◇ Pagan philosophers *can* reason correctly to truths about God
- ◇ However, pagan philosophy tends to suppress truth and confuse creation with Creator

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

¹⁸ For ^k the wrath of God ^l is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be ^m known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, ⁿ have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, ^o in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they ^p became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² ^p Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and ^q exchanged the glory of ^r the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore ^s God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to ^t the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for ^u a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, ^v who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason ^w God gave them up to ^x dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, ^y men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, ^z God gave them up to ^a a debased mind to do ^b what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know ^c God's righteous decree that those who practice such things ^d deserve to die, they not only do them but ^e give approval to those who practice them.



“But isn’t God everywhere?”

(Omnipresence
& Omniscience)



Psalm 139

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go **up to the heavens**, you are there;
if I make my bed **in the depths**, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,”
even the darkness will **not be dark** to you;
the night will **shine** like the day,
for darkness is as **light** to you.



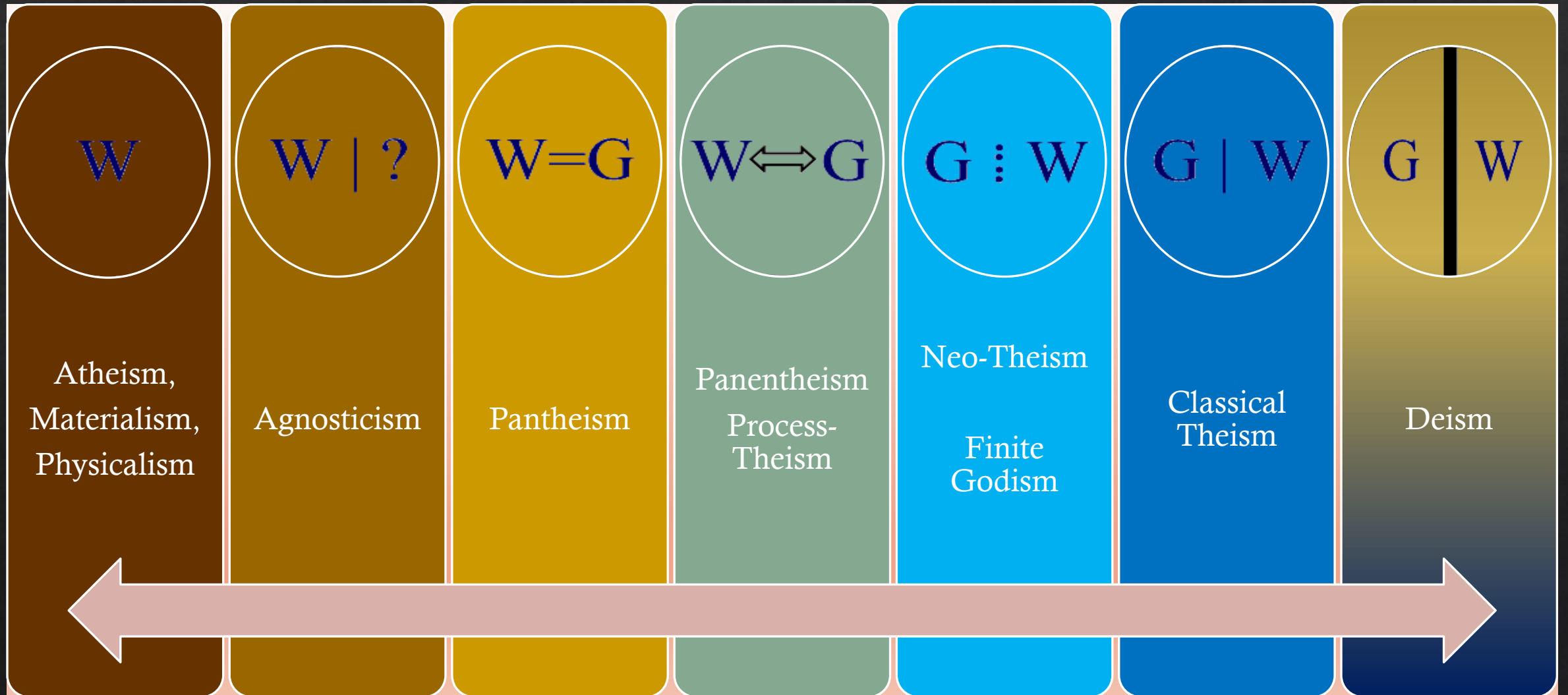
When you're interacting with parts of the world,
you're not interacting with God's essence, nature,
substance, being.

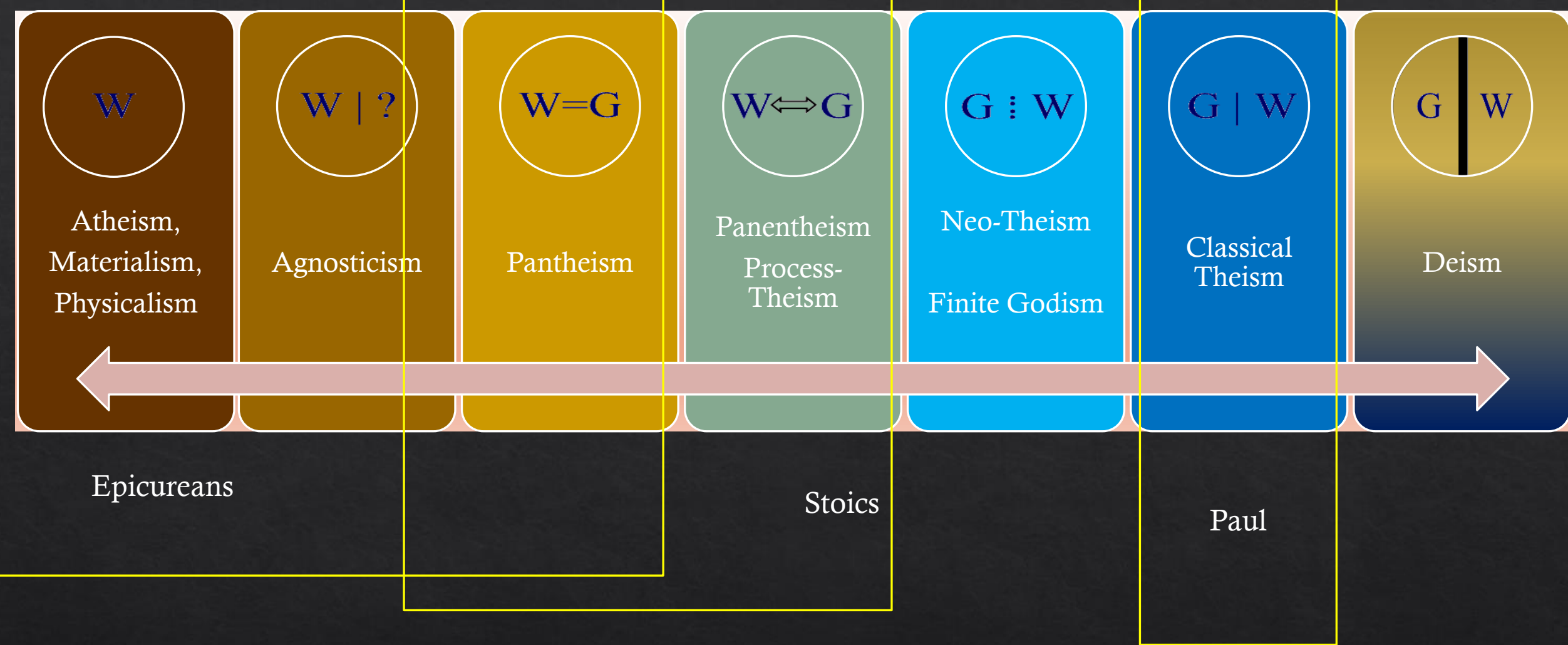
Don't confuse Creator for creation.

(Rom. 1:18-32; Ps. 106:14-21; Dan. 4:16-5:23; Acts 7:42;
Isa. 19; Jer. 2:11, 27; etc.)

God-World Spectrum

(by Transcendence/Immanence)





Acts 17

Paul to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers:

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

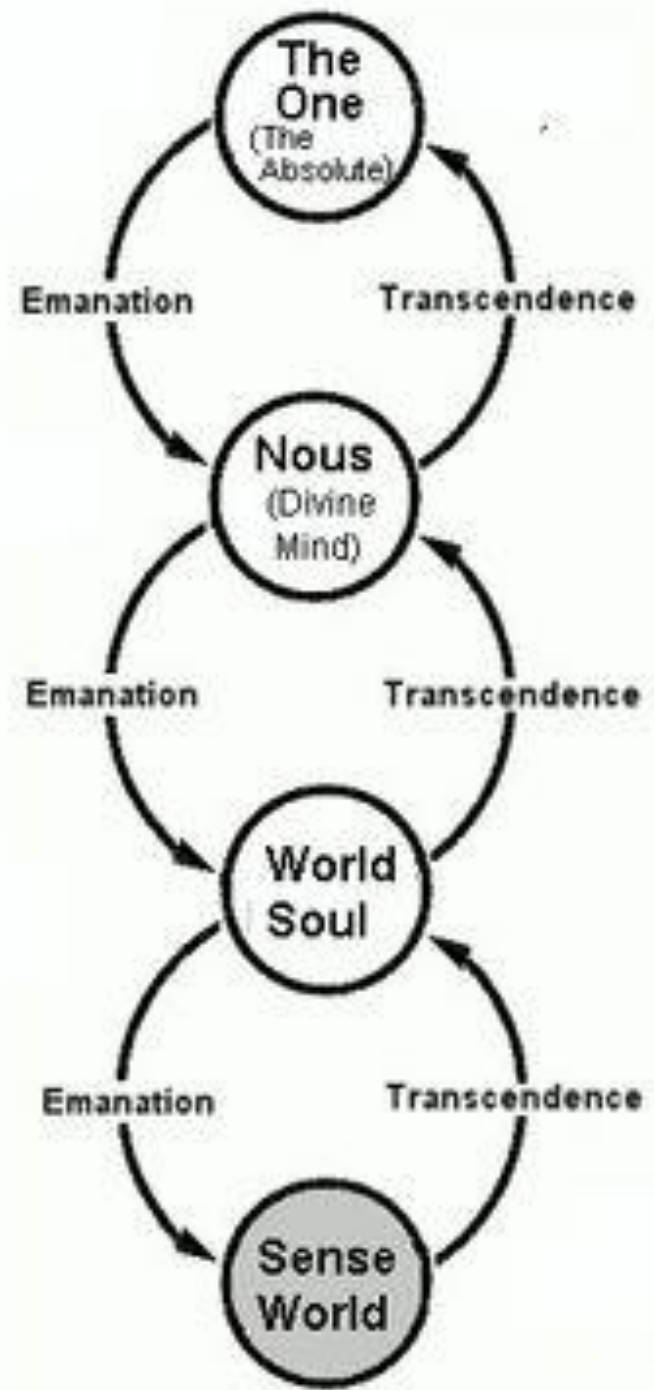
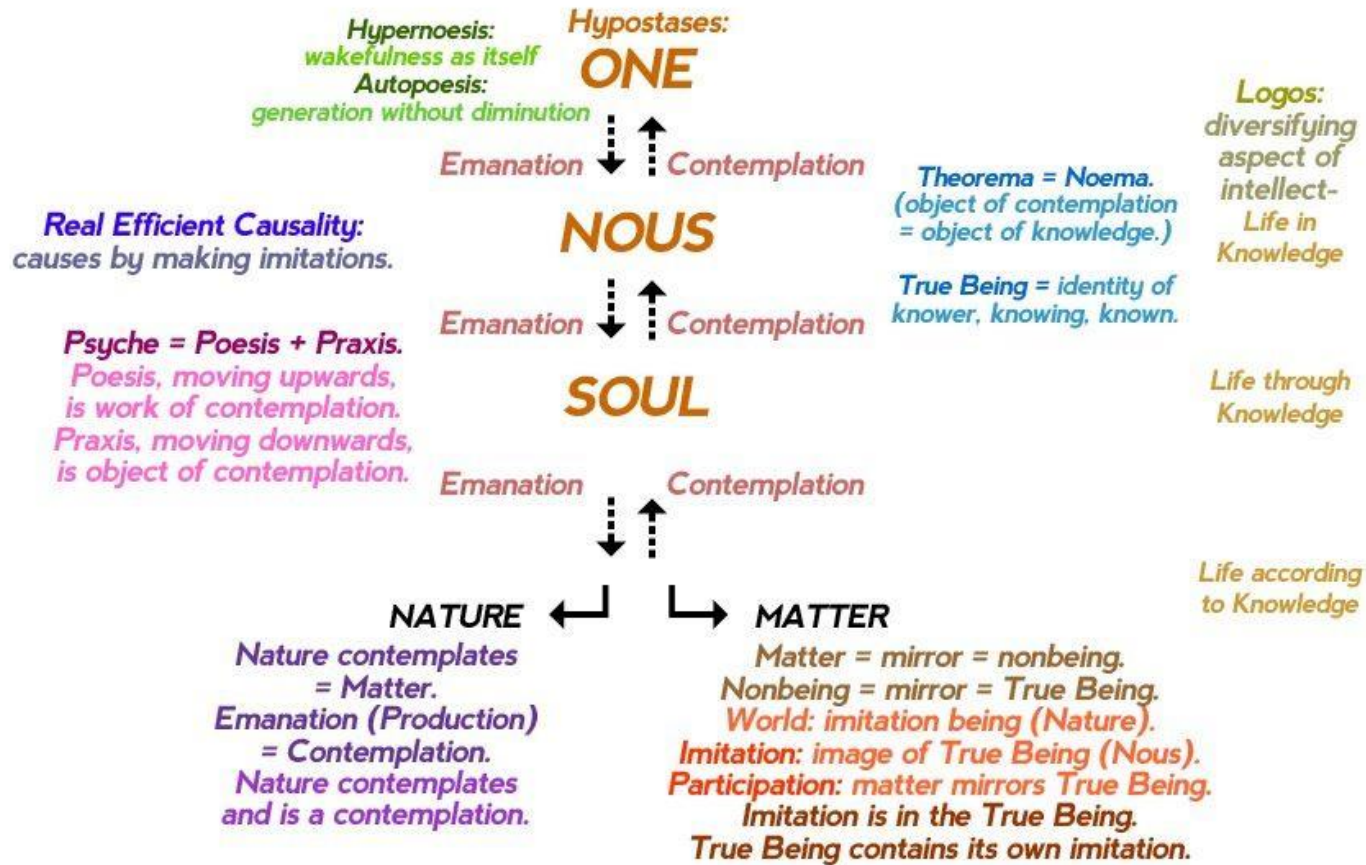
Historical Overview of Western Metaphysics



Historical Overview of W. Metaphysics

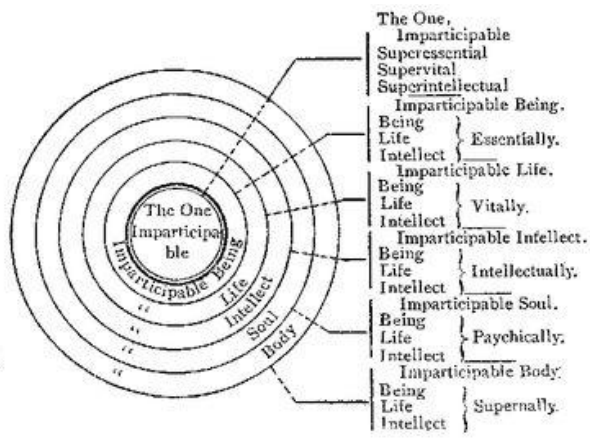
- ◇ **Heraclitus** - 500 BC – All is one. All is flux, process, becoming
- ◇ **Parmenides** – 500 BC – All is one. All is permanence, unchanging
- ◇ **Sophists** – Skeptical. Impasse. Contradictions. Doubt reason. Relativism.
- ◇ **Plato** – 340 BC – Synthesis. Dualistic reality. Substance and shadows.
 - ◇ Proto-panentheist?
 - ◇ “World Soul” > Shelling
 - ◇ Neoplatonists > Hegel
- ◇ **Aristotle** – 322 BC – back down to earth
- ◇ **Neoplatonism** – Plotinus (270 AD), Proclus (480 AD), etc. – Synthesis of Plato, Aristotle, more. The One emanates into the world.
- ◇ **Thomas Aquinas** - 1270 AD – Synthesis with biblical, Christian corrections
 - ◇ First real answer to Parmenides’s problem
 - ◇ Two types of existence: God is being, is simple, one. Creatures are composite beings (act & potency)
 - ◇ Greatest defender of classical theism





The Three Hypostases

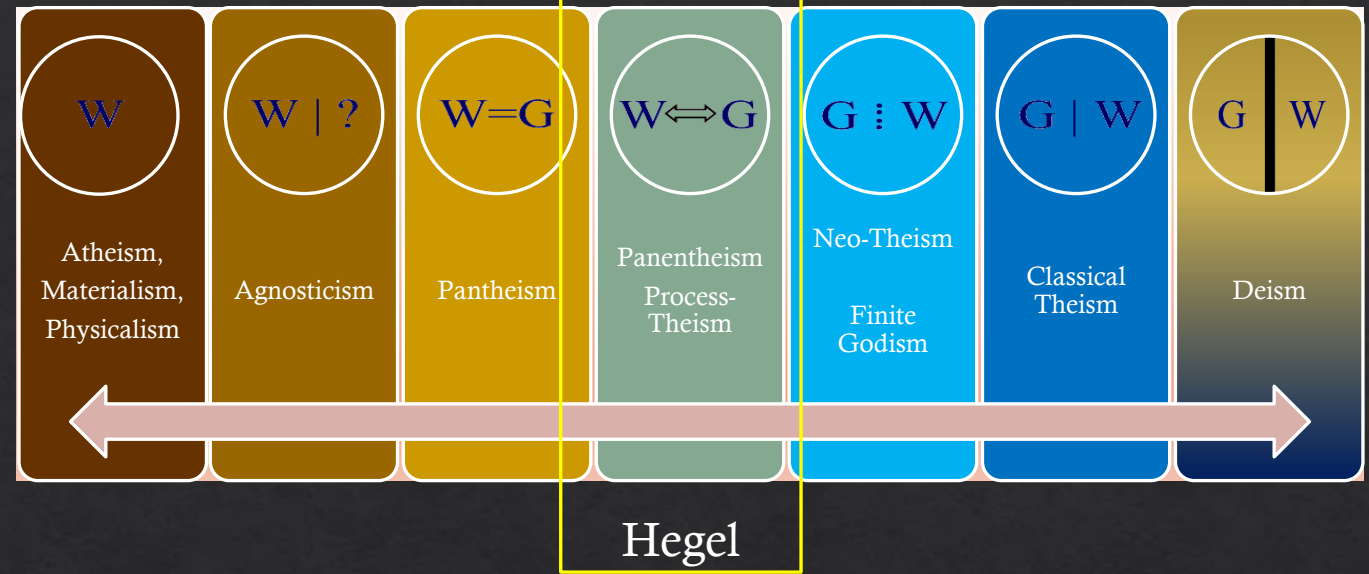
Principles.
 Imparticipable Natures are Unbegotten.
 All Imparticipables emanate from the one.





GOD IS, AS IT WERE,
THE SEWER INTO
WHICH ALL
CONTRADICTIONS
FLOW.

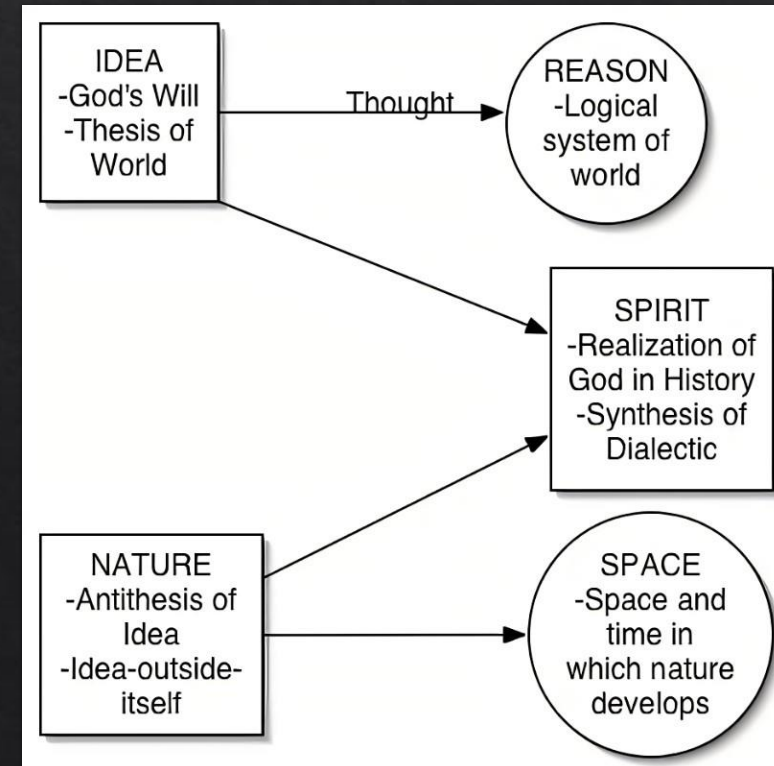
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
QUOTEHD.COM German Philosopher



If facts contradict to
my theory, the
worse for the
facts

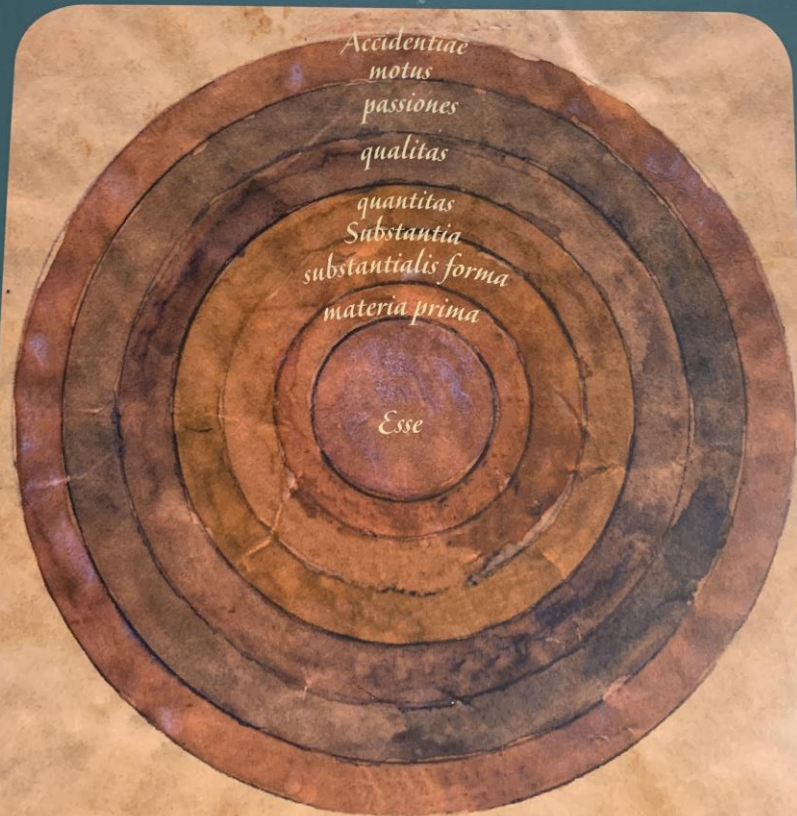
~ Georg Hegel ~

www.StatusMind.com



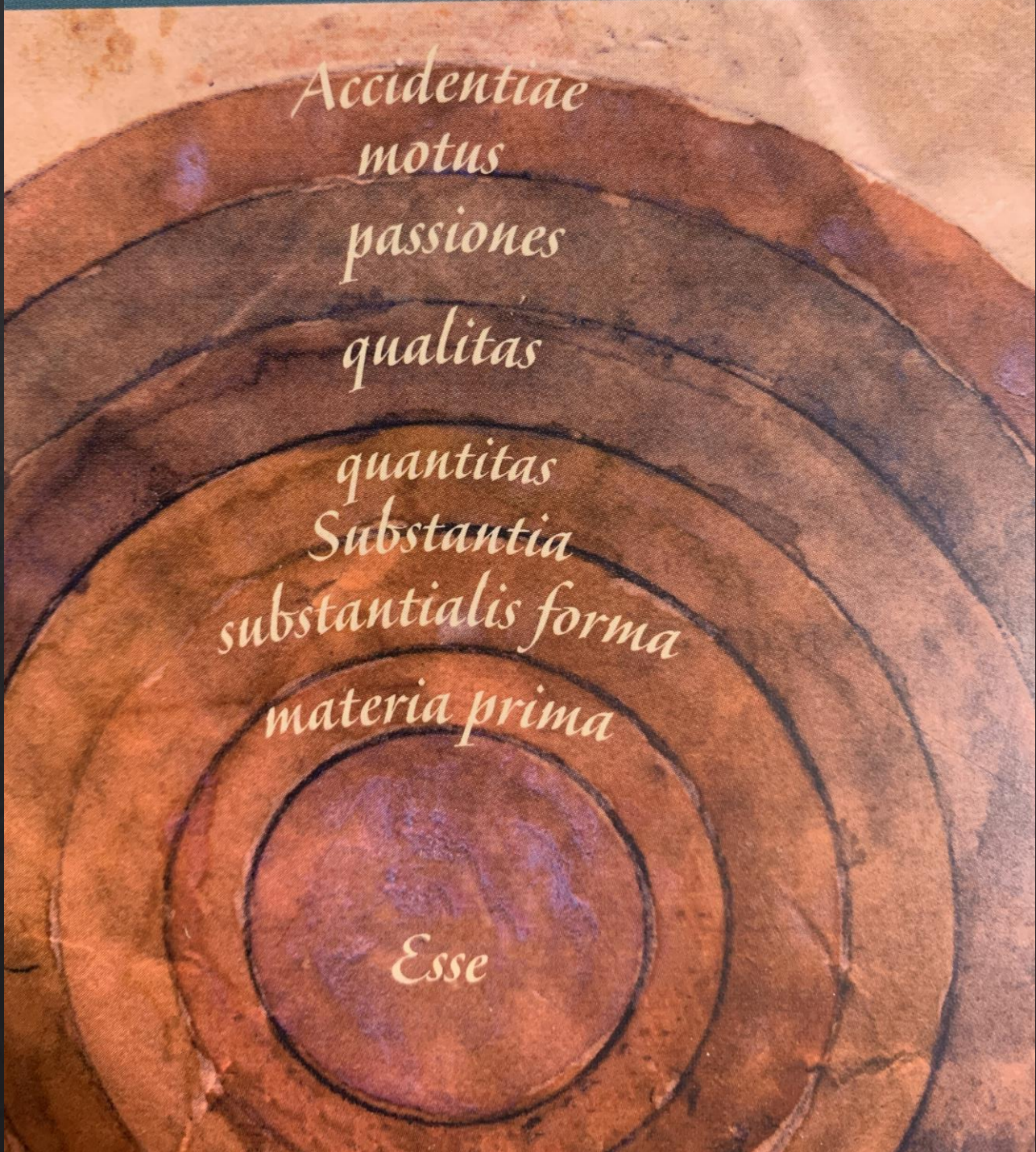
Thomistic Existentialism & Cosmological Reasoning

JOHN F. X. KNASAS



Ens sensibile

*Antiqui philosophi paulatim et quasi pedetentim
intraverunt in cognitionem veritatis*



“But doesn’t the Bible say
‘God changed his mind’?”

(an objection)

Immutability
&
Impassability

Malachi 3:6

“I the LORD do not change”

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, **who does not change** like shifting shadows.

Numbers 23

God is not man, that he should lie,
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Behold, I received a command to bless:

he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.

1st Samuel 15

- ◆ “I [God] regret that I have made Saul king” (v.10)
- ◆ “the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king” (v.35)
- ◆ “And [God] will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.” (v.29)

“I AM WHO I AM”

יהוה



¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” ¹ And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ^r ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, ² the ^s God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is ^t my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

¹⁶ Go and ^u gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, “The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ^v “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷ and I promise that ^w I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the

Exodus 3:14

- ◆ Self-existent one - always existed, always will exist
- ◆ Not “I am becoming what I am becoming.”
- ◆ Gives existence to everything else that exists
- ◆ Objection: “But then, who created God?!?”
 - ◆ What created the uncreated Creator of creation?
 - ◆ Which existing thing brought Existence itself into existence?

Immutability

Phenomenological language?

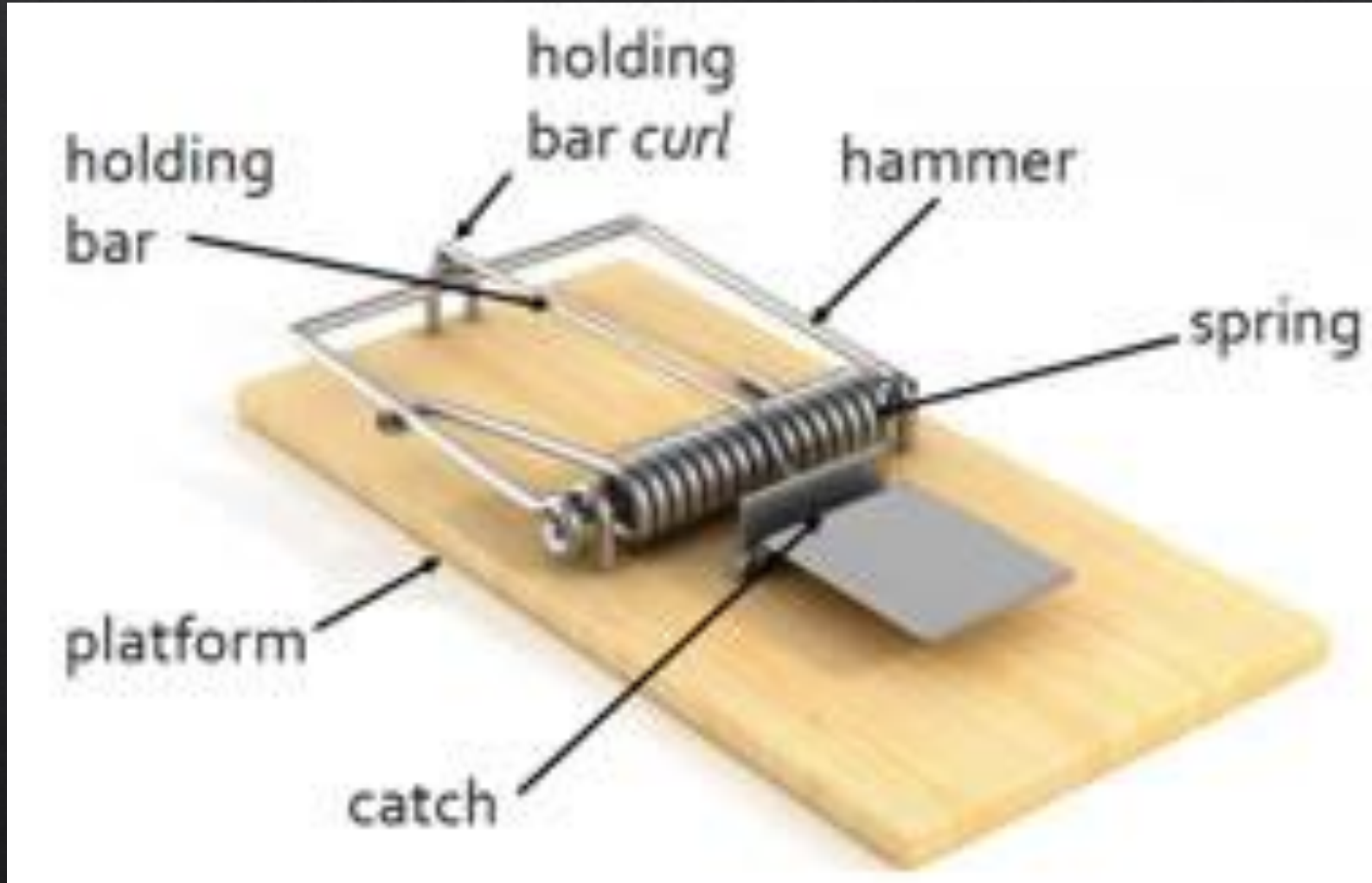
- ◇ “The sun rose in the west this morning.”
- ◇ “The sun will set in the east tonight”
- ◇ “The wind is against me!”
- ◇ “The wind is for me!”



Immutability

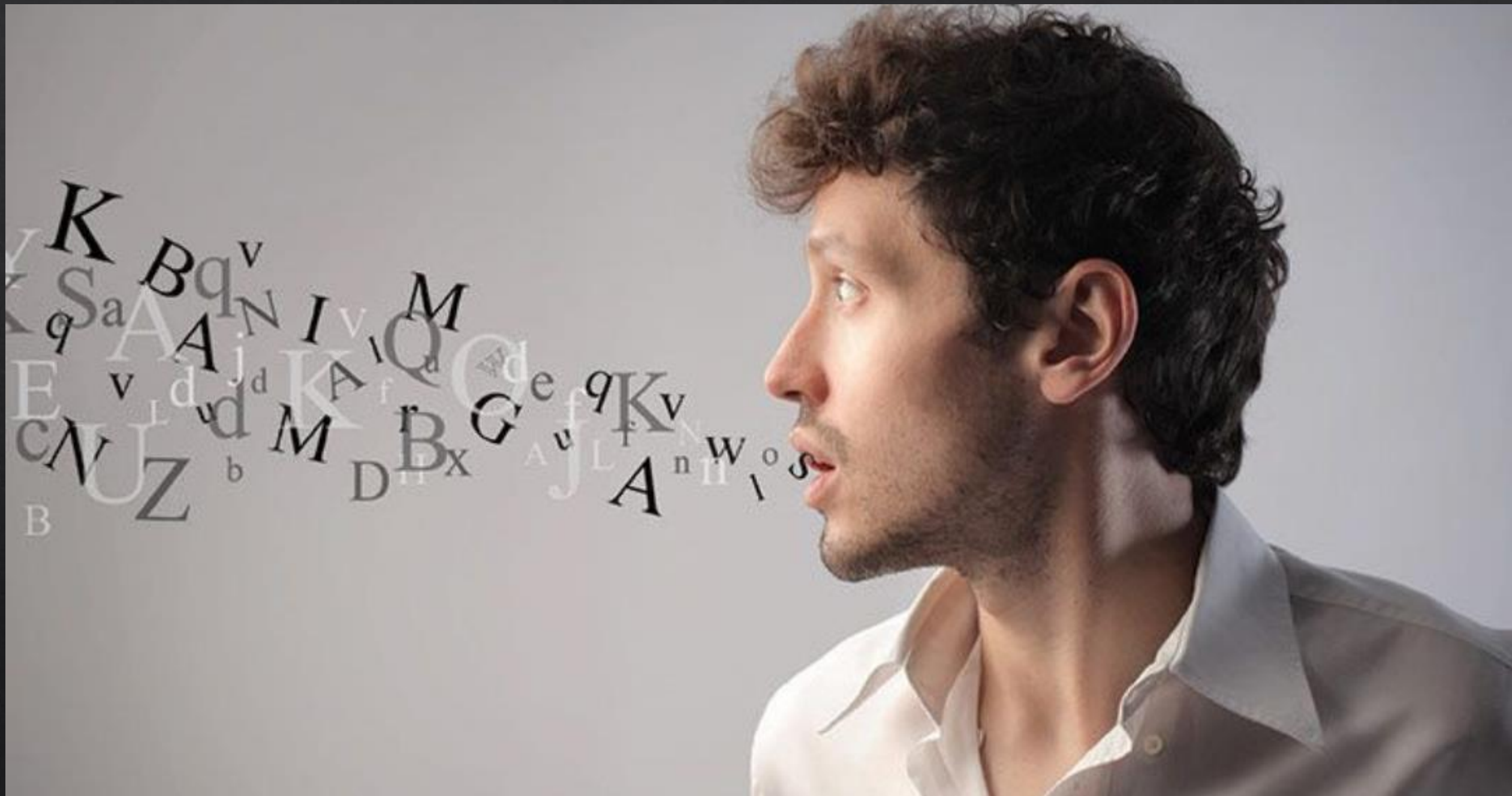
- ◆ If God is changing, what is the greater, unchanging backdrop against which change is measured?
- ◆ If anything is greater than that is behind God—any unchanging reality that is more fundamental than God?
- ◆ In a changing world, God is changeless. Reassuring?
- ◆ Unchanging is good. What if God changed his mind on giving you eternal life?

Does God have parts?



What about the Logos (John 1:1-14)?

- ◆ Theos (God) and Logos (Jesus) are connected but separate
- ◆ Logos is sent by Theos
- ◆ Logos is likened to a word spoken by a speaker?
- ◆ . . . to sunlight emanating from the sun?
- ◆ . . . a son begotten from a father?
- ◆ Was John using “Logos” as a pagan, Neoplatonic philosophical term?

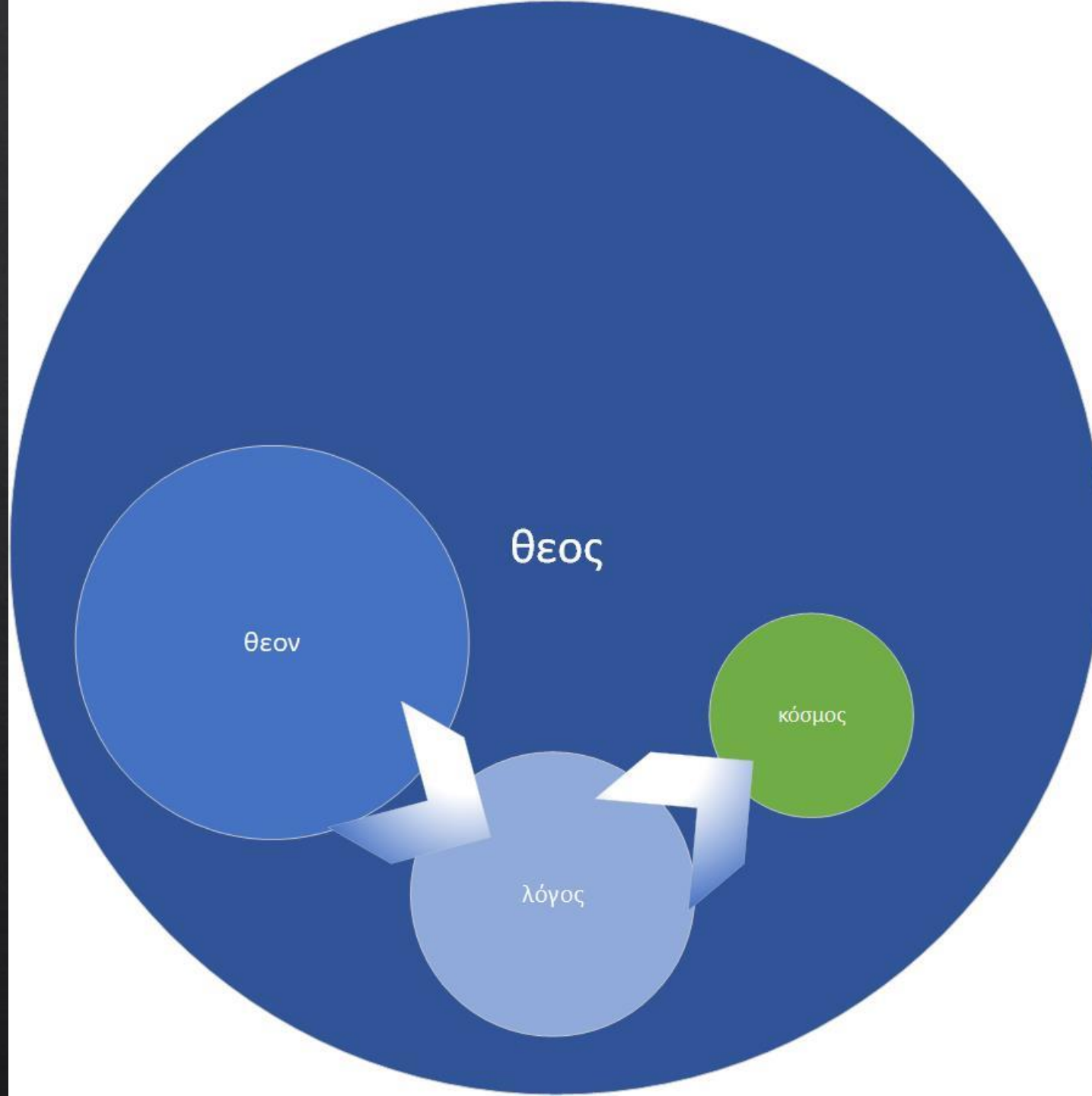






- ◇ Heraclitus – account, discourse, teaching, explanation
- ◇ Aristotle – a persuasive account of something
- ◇ Stoicism – a principle that gives order to the world
- ◇ Neo-Platonism – immanent rational principles

John 1's Logos – Greek Background?



- ◇ Hebrew “Memra”
- ◇ Gen. 1 – God said, “Let there be...” (creation by spoken word)
- ◇ Psalm 33:4-9 “For the **word of the Lord** is right; and all his works are done in truth. . . . By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host [stars, planets] . . . For he spoke, and it [the world] came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”
- ◇ “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11)

John 1’s Logos – Hebrew Background

- ◇ “from the beginning of creation. . . the earth was formed out of water and through water **by the word** of God” (2 Pe 3:4–6)
- ◇ God speaks through his Son Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2).
- ◇ Jesus “upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3)
- ◇ “the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Hb. 11:3).

John 1’s Logos – NT parallels

Leon Morris:

When John used the term *Logos*, then, he used a term that would be widely recognized among the Greeks. The average man would not know its precise significance to the philosophers . . . But he would know that it meant something very important. John could scarcely have used the Greek term without arousing in the minds of those who used the Greek language thoughts of something supremely great in the universe. But, though he would have not been unmindful of the associations aroused by the term, his essential thought does not derive from the Greek background. . .

... His Gospel shows little trace of acquaintance with Greek philosophy and less dependence upon it. And the really important thing is that John in his use of *Logos* is cutting clean across one of the fundamental Greek ideas. The Greeks thought of the gods as detached from the world, as regarding its struggles and heartaches and joys and fears with serene divine lack of feeling. John's idea of the *Logos* conveys exactly the opposite idea. John's *Logos* does not show us a God who is serenely detached, but a God who is passionately involved.

Leon Morris, *Commentary on John's Gospel*

John 1:14 - Only-begotten son?

KJV, NKJV, & NASB: “only begotten Son.”

WEB: “the one and only Son.”

NASB: “the only begotten God.”

NIV, RSV, NRSV, ESV, & NET:

“the one and only God.”

Nicene Creed – “Begotten, not made”

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, **the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father** before all ages. **God from God, Light from Light**, true God from true God, **begotten, not made**, consubstantial with the **Father**; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, . . . and became man.

Leon Morris on John 1:14 - Only-begotten son?

. . . John brings out the uniqueness of that relationship by referring to Christ as God's "only" Son, for example when he says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only (*monogene*) Son" (3:16). The adjective *monogenes* has sometimes been understood in the sense "only-begotten", but we should bear in mind the fact that it derives from *gen-*, the stem of *ginomai*, not *gennao* ... it is "only-being" rather than "only-begotten". But it certainly points to uniqueness. It may be used of an only child... but perhaps we see more of its distinctiveness when we notice that . .

John 1:14 - Only-begotten son?

. . . it is used of Isaac as Abraham's "unique" son (Heb. 11:17). Isaac was not Abraham's only son... But Isaac was unique. . . That Jesus Christ is God's *monogenes* then means that he is "Son of God" in a unique way. . . . [John is] saying that no one else stands in the same relationship to God the Father as does Jesus Christ. Christ is the Son of God not only in the sense that he is the object of God's love, but also in the sense that **his being is bound up with the being of the Father**.

Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John*
(Eerdmans, 1989) 92-93

Shekinah Glory

- ◇ “Dwelling,” “To tabernacle”
- ◇ A rare, visible, temporary, intrusive, localized manifestation of God on earth
- ◇ Often associated with fire, smoke, cloud, glory
- ◇ Examples:
 - ◇ Garden of Eden – Gen. 3
 - ◇ Abrahamic Covenant – Gen. 15
 - ◇ Burning bush – Exod. 3
 - ◇ Pillar of fire/cloud – Exod. 13-16
 - ◇ Mount Sinai – Exod. 5, 24; Deut. 5
 - ◇ Moses sees partial glory” – Exod. 34

Shekinah Glory

- ◇ More examples:
 - ◇ Tabernacle, Ark of Covenant - Exod. 29
 - ◇ Solomon's Temple – 1 Ki. 8,2; 2 Ch. 5
 - ◇ Shepherds – Lk. 2
 - ◇ Christmas star – Mt. 2
 - ◇ Logos – Jn. 1:1-14, Heb. 1:1-8
 - ◇ Transfiguration – Mt. 17, Mk. 9, Lk. 9
 - ◇ Tongues of fire – Acts 2
 - ◇ Damascus road – Acts 9, 22, 26
 - ◇ Second Coming of Christ – Mt. 24
 - ◇ Temple in Davidic Kingdom – Ezek. 43-44; Zech. 2; Isa. 35

Conclusion – Unbiblical

- ◆ Acts 17 finds common ground with Stoicism before rebuking and correcting it
- ◆ The few passages that support panentheism and divine immanence are very few in number and can be explained better from a theistic God-world model framework
- ◆ The number of biblical passages that support theism, transcendence, and firm Creator-creation distinction are in the hundreds
- ◆ Intrusions of God into our world are rare, focused, supernatural
- ◆ Confuses the Creator with his creation (Rom. 1:18-32, etc.)

Conclusion – Philosophically Worst of Both Worlds

- ◇ **Embraces logical contradictions? Motte-and-Bailey fallacy?**
 - ◇ How can God and the World both be permanent and fluent, one and many, immanent and transcendent to the other.
- ◇ **Requires too much blind faith**
 - ◇ World is constantly being destroyed and recreated every moment?
 - ◇ The P. God is based on a weak, vague teleological argument
 - ◇ Cobb admits it's not for people who need rational proof to believe
- ◇ **Does not help solve the problem of evil**
- ◇ Lacking a solid foundation. Needs something like Aquinas's corrections of Parmenides and Plotinus.
- ◇ **A competing "God of the Philosophers." Heir of the Heraclitus > Neoplatonist stream**

Conclusion – Just a Sub-Christian/Anti-Christian Heresy

“A God without **wrath**
brought man without sin
into a kingdom without judgment
through the ministrations
of a Christ without a **cross.**”

H. Richard Niebuhr
The Kingdom of God in America
1934

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Foreword by **RON RHODES**

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Bio: My intellectual journey began at age sixteen when someone loaned me a copy of C.S. Lewis' book Mere Christianity. It awakened me from my anti-intellectual slumbers, sparked my television saturated mind to think higher, deeper, and wider, and mesmerized and inspired me with the sheer beauty of its eloquence, logi...see more

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Whitehead, for example, concluded that God and the World are somehow both permanent and fluent, one and many, immanent in one another, transcendent to one another, and created by the other. The god imagined by John Cobb is constantly being destroyed and recreated in every moment of world history. Cobb points out that these “antitheses” which Whitehead is famous for are not in violation of the law of non-contradiction because God has two “natures” and therefore these propositions are true in slightly different ways.

Cobb, like Whitehead, holds that God has an infinite pole beyond the world and a finite pole in the world. It is easier to imagine their view as two separate Gods—one great, unchanging, uncreated, and infinite God in the metaphysical world, and a lesser, changing, created, dying, recreated, temporal god inside our physical world. But then the two have to be cobbled back together into one internally inconsistent and impossible God.

As A.N. Whitehead's God-world model is acclaimed as one of the most brilliant panentheistic models to date, we might expect to find persuasive arguments in his writings. John Cobb, one of the foremost experts on Whitehead, concludes that "Whiteheadian theology is not for those who seek certainty" because our understanding of the world is constantly changing. Commending a changing worldview about a changing God based on our changing understanding of our changing world would be a challenge for anyone.

Both Cobb and Whitehead wrote and taught “as though there were no philosophical reason for affirming [their view] of God other than the demand of a coherent completion of the idea of God as actual entity.” Only twice did Whitehead begin to make a half-hearted and “obscure” argument for his God. “Has Whitehead ‘proved’ the existence of God?” Cobb asks. “Obviously the answer to these questions is no,” he answers. “Nothing is proved in this sense. ... Whitehead’s argument for the existence of God, insofar as there is an argument at all, is primarily the traditional one from the order of the universe to a ground of order.” But since it is impossible for the panentheist to even know where to draw the line between Artist and artwork, the argument for God from order fits better with classical theism. For those seeking a logical, intellectually satisfying God-world model, panentheism may dazzle then disappoint. By contrast, the case for a God that is entirely different from everything else proves far more logically compelling.