

“Catholic philosophy” could mean (1) ~~philosophy based on premises of the Catholic faith~~, (2) philosophy written by Catholics, or (3) Thomism.

The initial problem of Catholic philosophy was how to combine Christianity (FAITH – especially from the Old and New Testaments) with Greek Philosophy (REASON – especially as found in Plato and Aristotle).



What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?



Plato →
Aristotle →

Early
Christian
Philosophers

← Old Testament
← New Testament



*What has Athens to
do with Jerusalem?*



Patristic Era: Centuries 1-6 AD

From the twelve apostles, through persecutions and heresies, to become the state religion of the Roman Empire.

- Plato, Platonisms, and Stoicism
- Apologists: Aristides, Justin, Felix, Tertullian
- Systematizers: Irenaeus, Clement, Origen
- Theologians using philosophical concepts: Gregory of Nyssa
- The big name: Augustine
- Late figures: Pseudo-Dionysius and Boethius

The “traditional” explanation of evil

- (a) God is all-good and all-powerful.
- (b) God created a world with perfect free creatures, Adam and Eve. Before creaturely sin, the world had no suffering, death, or disease. All evil comes from the abuse of free will – either as a punishment or as a natural consequence.
- (c) God permits evil because he could eliminate it only by taking away our free will (and thus our capacity for moral goodness), which would result in a less-good world.



Objections:

science
morality
psychology
text

Hick's explanation of evil (from Irenaeus)

- (a) God is all-good and all-powerful.
- (b) God created a world of imperfect, weak free beings who, by struggling against evil, can grow in spiritual maturity toward greater faith and love – which will reach perfection only in the afterlife.
- (c) God permits evil because it is required for the significance of the human epic.



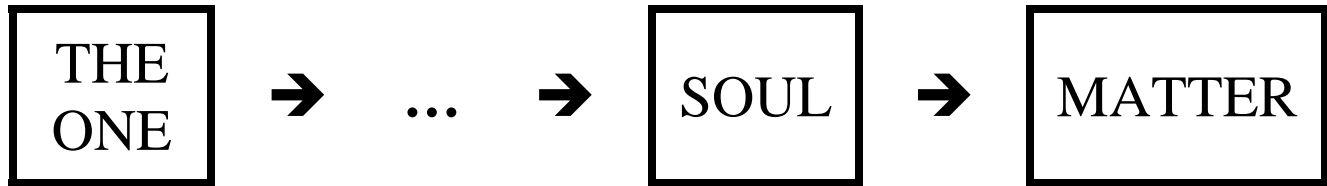
Our life is like the way of the cross leading to the resurrection.

Clement of Alexandria

- God prepared the world for Christ both by the Old Testament and by Greek philosophy.
- The Greek philosophers stole many ideas from the Old Testament.

Plotinus (father of Neoplatonism)

All of reality flows (emanates) from THE ONE through lower levels of being down to matter:



Augustine's God's Providence

Objection to Providence

If God had a plan for my life,
then my life wouldn't be a
mess.

My life is a mess.

∴ God has no plan for my life.

Augustine's Response

If God designed my body so
well, then (even more so) he
has a plan for my life.

God developed my body so well.

∴ God has a plan for my life.

God knew that I'd do it.

If God knew that I'd do it, then it
was necessary that I'd do it.

If it was necessary that I'd do it,
then I wasn't free.

∴ I wasn't free.

If you're a bachelor, then it's
necessary that you're unmarried.

Conditional Necessity

$$\Box(A \supset B)$$

This is necessary:
if you're a bachelor
then you're unmarried.

Simple Necessity

$$(A \supset \Box B)$$

If you're a bachelor,
then you're inherently
unmarriageable.

If we see John walking, then
it's necessary that John walks.

Conditional Necessity

$$\Box(A \supset B)$$

This is necessary:
if we see John walking
then John is walking.

Simple Necessity

$$(A \supset \Box B)$$

If we see John walking,
then John's walking is
inherently necessary.

If God knows that you'll do it, then
it's necessary that you do it.

Conditional Necessity

$$\Box(A \supset B)$$

This is necessary:
if God knows that you'll
do it *then* you'll do it.

Simple Necessity

$$(A \supset \Box B)$$

If God knows that you'll
do it, then your doing it
is inherently necessary.

The Middle Ages: Centuries 7-14

In this period, three faith traditions are important: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish.

- Early middle ages (600-1100): not much happening with Christian thinkers.
- High middle ages (1100-1300): the great faith-reason synthesis, especially in St. Thomas Aquinas.
- Late middle ages (1300-1400): increasing skepticism about the faith-reason synthesis.

There must be a God, because

cosmological
argument

- the world's existence requires an explanation

teleological
argument

- the world's order requires a designer

ontological
argument

- the idea of a supremely perfect being requires existence

moral
argument

- our moral duties require a source

If I were God, I'd give humans

- (a) conclusive
- (b) strong
- (c) weak
- (d) no

evidence for
my existence.

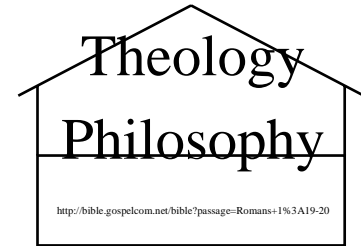
St. Anselm's Ontological Argument



1. If God exists in the understanding and not in reality, then there can be conceived a being greater than God (namely, a similar being that also exists in reality).
 2. "There can be conceived a being greater than God" is false (since "God" is defined as "a being than which no greater can be conceived").
 3. God exists in the understanding.
- ∴ God exists in reality.

Faith and Reason

St. Thomas Aquinas
1224–1274



Reason = what we can know by
experience and logic alone.

From reason, we can know the
basic moral truths and the
existence and nature of God.

Faith = what we can know by
divine revelation (from the
Bible and Christian tradition).

Faith in general is believing
on another's testimony.

Faith is consistent with reason.

Faith builds on reason.

Reason leads us to expect revelation.

Faith is backed by rational evidence.



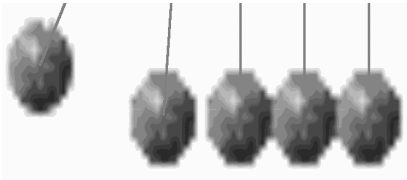
The “five proofs” of St. Thomas Aquinas

Two objections:

1. problem of evil
2. unnecessary hypothesis

1. First mover
2. First cause
3. Necessary being
4. Greatest being
5. World’s designer

1 - First mover



1. Some things are in motion (changing in some respect).
 2. Whatever is in motion is moved by something else.
 3. There is no infinite chain of movers.
 4. If these three things are true, then there is a first mover.
 5. If there is a first mover, then there is a God.
- ∴ There is a God.

2 - First cause



1. Some things are caused to exist.
 2. Whatever is caused to exist is caused by something else.
 3. There is no infinite chain of causes-and-effects.
 4. If these three things are true, then there is a first cause.
 5. If there is a first cause, then there is a God.
- ∴ There is a God.

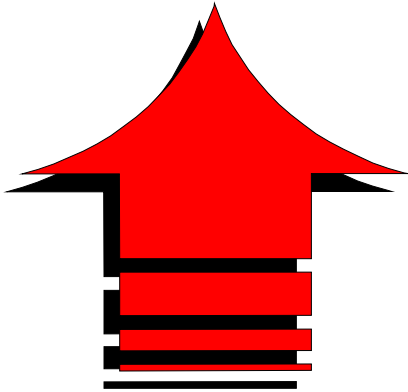
Is it wise to argue for
the existence of God
using this premise:
*“Everything has a
cause”*?



3 - Necessary Being

1. Each contingent being at some time fails to exist.
∴ If all beings are contingent, then there would have been a time at which there was nothing (since at some time everything would have gone out of existence at once).
2. If there was a time at which there was nothing, then there would be nothing now.
3. There is something now.
∴ Not all beings are contingent.
4. If not all beings are contingent, then there is a necessary being.
5. If there is a necessary being, then there is a God.
∴ There is a God.

4 - Greatest being



1. Everything that has a quality (like being hot or good) must have this quality by virtue of something that has it in the highest degree.
 2. Some things have greatness (existence, goodness, other perfections).
- ∴ The things that have greatness have it by virtue of a being (God) that has greatness to the highest degree.

5c – World's designer (a generic version)



1. The universe is orderly (like a watch).
 2. We've examined a large and varied group of orderly things.
 3. Most orderly things we've examined have intelligent designers.
- ∴ Probably the universe too has an intelligent designer (God).

5d – World's designer (a pre-Darwin version)



1. It's reasonable to accept the best explanation for empirical facts.
 2. The existence of plants and animals (whose structure seems to exhibit purposefulness) is an empirical fact.
 3. The best explanation for the existence of plants and animals is that they were caused by an intelligent being (the alternative view is that they came into existence by chance).
- ∴ It's reasonable to accept that plants and animals were caused by an intelligent being (God).



“Law” = promulgated ordinance
of reason for the common good

God’s eternal law includes
physical laws, natural (moral
laws), divine (revealed) laws,
human laws.

First axiom: “good” =
what all things seek after

First precept: Do good
and avoid evil.

Or perhaps:

“Good” = what we ought to seek

“Bad” = what we ought to avoid

We ought to seek good and avoid evil.



An opposing view to natural law is *cultural relativism*: “good” = socially approved

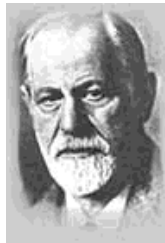
- Morality is a product of culture.
- Cultures differ widely about morality.
- There’s no clear way to resolve moral differences.

Religion in the 19th and early 20th century

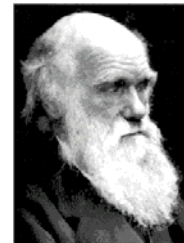
- Catholic thinkers tend toward a ghetto isolation – which ends abruptly with Vatican II (1962–65).
- The common people mostly remain believers. For many decades, about 94% of Americans have believed in God.
- Mainstream intellectuals become overwhelmingly non-believers. Peter Glynn's *God: The Evidence* sees this loss of faith as largely the result of science – and as moderating greatly in recent decades (since about 1970).



Copernicus
1473–1543



Freud
1856–1939



Darwin
1809–1882



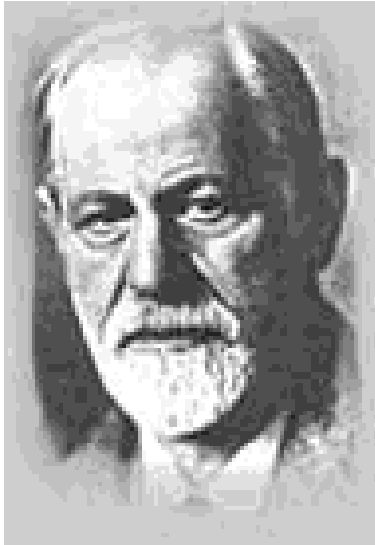
Traditional view: the sun revolves around the earth



Copernican view: the earth revolves around the sun

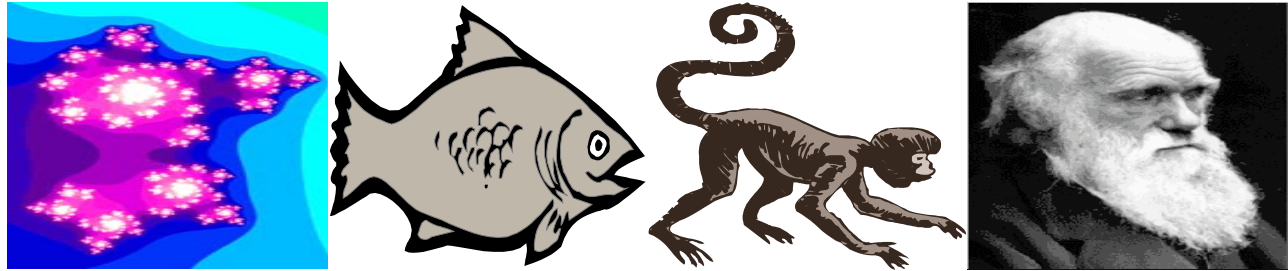
The newer view, besides seeming to clash with the Bible, seemed to demote the importance of humans in the universe.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)



1. Religion is an illusion (from wishful thinking and the emotional need for a father figure); but we have no right to believe without strong evidence.
2. Religion is a neurosis (a harmful mental disorder).
3. Science is the only path to knowledge; we have no right to believe anything on the basis of our feelings.

Darwin: Humans evolved from lower species.



Evolution seemed to show that:

- the Bible (and Christianity) are false,
- humans are an accident in a meaningless universe, and
- God isn't needed to explain our origin.

Mainstream philosophy too, from the early 19th century until very recently, was dominated by non-believers.

- Figures like Jean-Paul Sartre (continental tradition) and Bertrand Russell (analytic tradition) are typical in their opposition to religion and belief in God.
- Logical positivism declared that what couldn't be tested by empirical (scientific) methods was nonsensical.
- This has changed greatly since about 1970, with the demise of logical positivism and the rise of Alvin Plantinga and the Society of Christian Philosophers.

20th-Century Catholic Philosophy

- Thomism (scholastic philosophy) dominated at first. Philosophy, at JCU for example, was taught almost entirely from this perspective.
- The turbulent 60s changed things, with Vatican II (1962–1965) leading the way.
- Catholic philosophy today is pluralistic, with most following the dominant analytic and continental traditions.

We will take two women, three Jesuits, and three big names.



When your grandparents were in college vs. today



Catholics and Protestants see each other as enemies / ... cooperate and emphasize similarities

Philosophy at Catholic schools is Thomistic (and Descartes is forbidden) / ... is pluralistic (and Descartes is required reading)

Almost all mainstream scientists and philosophers are nonbelievers (e.g. only 1.1% of psychologists believe in God) / ... a sizeable minority are believers (e.g. 40% of psychologists believe in God)

Religion is seen by intellectuals as a neurosis / ... as a major contribution to a happy & healthy life (many studies confirm this)

The universe is thought to be eternal / ... to have started about 13.7 billion years ago (the “big bang” theory)

Atheists are confident they can explain the origin of life / ... have a difficult time explaining the improbable combination of physical constants that makes life’s evolution possible

The literal golden rule

~~If you want X to do something to you,
then do this same thing to X.~~

different situations

~~If you want Dr. Davis
to remove your ap-
pendix, then remove
her appendix.~~

flawed desires

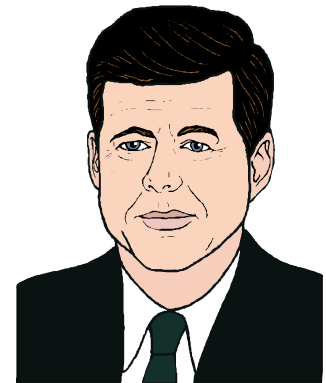
~~If you (in a fit of self-
hating depression) want
everyone to hurt you, then
hurt everyone yourself.~~

Gensler's GR

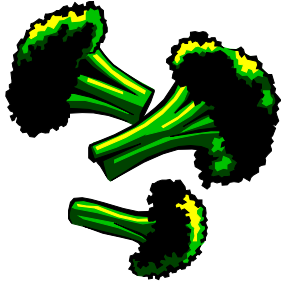
Treat others only as you consent to being treated in the same situation.

GR forbids this combination:

- I do something to another.
- I'm unwilling that this be done to me in the same situation.



GR involves imagining yourself
in the other person's place.



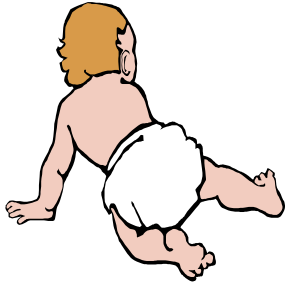
I'm a waiter who hates broccoli
and thus don't want it served to me.
If I follow GR, can I serve broccoli
to a customer who ordered it?

Ask
this



Am I now willing that if I
were in the same situation
then this be done to me?

GR involves a present attitude toward a hypothetical situation.



Little Will puts his finger into electrical outlets. Does GR let us discipline him?

Ask
this



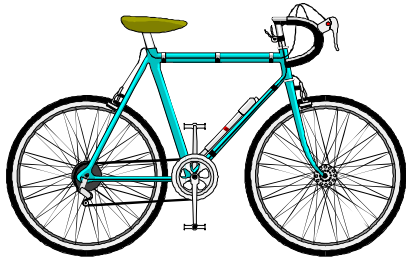
Am I now willing that if I were in the same situation then this be done to me?

GR forbids an inconsistent action-desire combination. Satisfying GR-consistency doesn't guarantee that your action is right.

“I grow rich with my coal mine while paying my workers only \$1 a day.”



The owner (out of ignorance of what \$1 can buy) is willing that he be paid that much in his workers' place. It doesn't follow that his act is right.



If you're conscientious and impartial,
then you won't steal Detra's bicycle
unless you're willing that your bicycle
be stolen in the same situation:

You steal
Detra's
bicycle

→
conscientious

You believe it would
be all right for you
to steal her bicycle

↓ impartial

You're willing
that your bicycle
be stolen in the
same situation

←
conscientious

You believe it would
be all right for your
bicycle to be stolen
in the same situation

The
golden
rule

First, get to *know* the person and *imagine* yourself in his place. Then treat him only as you are willing to be treated in the same situation.

This gives a *way to apply* the love norm.



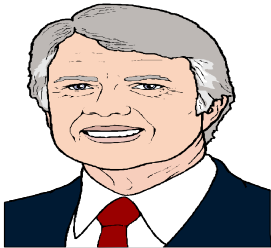
The
love
norm

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”
(Seek to do good and not harm to others,
and this for their own sake.)

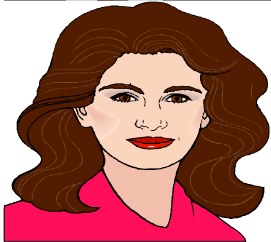
This is the *highest motive* for following GR.

GR: Our attitudes are defective if we treat others as we aren't willing that we ourselves be treated in the same situation.

Why follow GR?



GR is self-evident
(and provable).

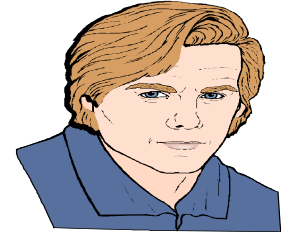


God wants us
to follow GR.

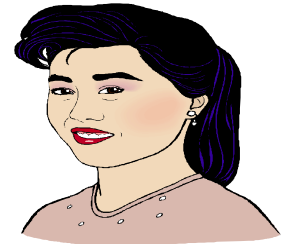
GR is a demand
of our culture.



GR fits my
altruistic feelings.



I'm happier
if I follow GR.



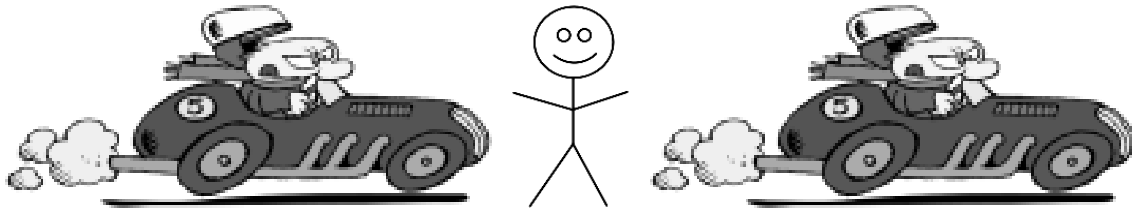
Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

So: There’s a God and the world had a beginning.

Classical atheism

There’s no God, and the world had no beginning.



Kalam argument

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The world began to exist.
3. Hence, the world has a cause.
4. If the world has a cause, then a personal being caused the world.
5. Hence, a personal being (God) caused the world.

Big-bang atheism

There's no God, but the world had a beginning.

The world just popped into existence, without any cause, about 14 billion years ago.

Fine Tuning

The basic physical constants are precisely in the narrow range of what is required for life to be possible.

Design explanation

The basic physical constants were caused by an intelligent being who intended to produce life.

Genesis - The Fine-Tuning Game



Create your own biosphere - set values and then click "start big bang."

Gravitational constant "g"	<input type="text" value="32"/>
"Strong" nuclear force	<input type="text" value="480"/>
Charge of proton	<input type="text" value=".073"/>
Mass of proton	<input type="text" value=".23"/>
Speed of light	<input type="text" value="186,000"/>
Electron energy	<input type="text" value="610"/>
Density of ice	<input type="text" value=".92"/>
Total mass of universe	<input type="text" value="97,920,000"/>
Universe expansion rate	<input type="text" value="54.352"/>

Start Big Bang

Atheists click here:

Create Random World

Fine-tuning argument

1. We ought to accept the best explanation for the world's fine tuning.
2. The best explanation for the world's fine tuning is that the world was created by an intelligent being intending to create life (this is better than the chance and parallel-worlds explanations).
3. Hence, we ought to accept that the world was created by an intelligent being (God) intending to create life.

Big-gamble big-bang atheism

There's no God, the world about 14 billion years ago just popped into existence without a cause, and the basic physical laws and constants just happened (in a zillion-to-one coincidence) to be in the narrow range which would make life possible.

Parallel-worlds big-bang atheism

There's no God. But there are an infinity of parallel worlds. Each popped into existence without a cause, and each is governed by a different set of basic physical laws and constants. Our world happens to be one of the very few that produced life.

A perfect God would create

- (a) the best of all possible worlds.
- (b) a hedonistic paradise.
- (c) a world of great enjoyment, knowledge, and love – without suffering, ignorance, or hatred.
- (d) a world where free beings can struggle meaningfully and lovingly against evil.
- (e) a world like (d) that leads to a world like (c).

Three questions about the problem of evil

1. Does God want us to be happy? If he does, and he can make us happy, then why are most people so miserable?
2. Why doesn't God let us freely choose between good and evil – and then block the bad consequences of our wrong choices?
3. Why did God make my mother suffer so much from rheumatoid arthritis? Did God want my mother to have this disease?