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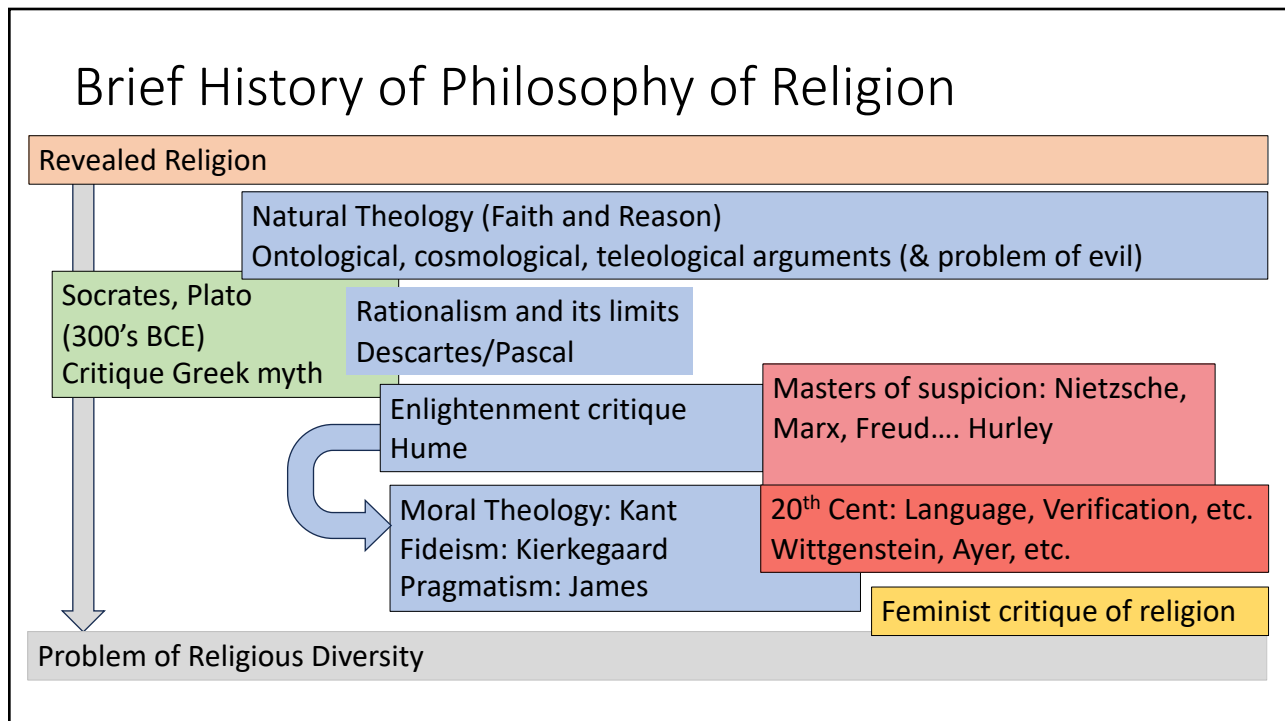
## Course Plan

- April 3
  - Defining Religion
  - Contemporary problems in the philosophy of religion
- April 10
  - Adventures in natural theology
  - Proving (and disproving) the existence of God
  - Critiques of Religion
- April 17
  - Exploring faith and knowledge
  - Can we know religious objects or must we have faith?
  - Fideism and the Wager
- April 24
  - The challenge of religious diversity
  - Other critiques of religion (ex. feminism)
  - Religious Liberty

2

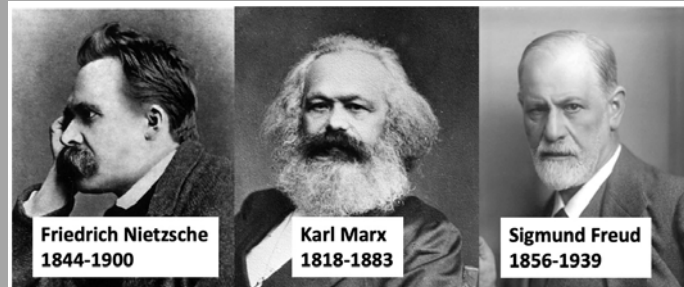
<h2 style="text-align: center;">Ethics Center Lecture</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 22, 5-6pm</li> <li>• Yvonne Chiu (U.S. Naval War College)</li> <li>• “Exit Strategies and the Ethics of War”</li> <li>• ED 170 (Kremen Bldg.)</li> </ul> <p>• <a href="https://cah.fresnostate.edu/ethicscenter/documents/chiuflie.pdf">https://cah.fresnostate.edu/ethicscenter/documents/chiuflie.pdf</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Ethics Center Lecture</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Exit Strategies and the Ethics of War</i></b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>Yvonne Chiu</b> U.S. Naval War College</p> <p><b>April 22, 5:00-6:00 pm</b> <b>ED170</b></p> </div> <p style="font-size: small;">As soon as the current Russia-Ukraine and Hamas-Israel wars started, policymakers and commentators began talking about exit strategies and ending these wars. The seeds of the next war are always found in the last war, so how these wars end will be critical. When does it make sense to start thinking about ending a war? How should we think about exit strategies and war termination? How should we balance considerations of pragmatism, prudence, and morality in terminating the war and setting the stage for both peaceful and just post-war development?</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Yvonne Chiu, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Strategy and Policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Prof. Chiu writes on just war theory, international ethics, comparative political thought. She has been a National Fellow at the Hoover Institution, a Member at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, Professor at the University of Hong Kong, and postdoctoral fellow at the Political Theory Project (Brown University). Among her publications is: <i>Conspiring with the Enemy: The Ethic of Cooperation in Warfare</i> (Columbia University Press, 2019).</p>
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## The Critics of Religion The Masters of Suspicion



**Nietzsche:** Genealogy of religion based on will-to-power:  
“God is dead. And we have killed him.”

**Marx:** Materialist history of religion based on economic power:  
“Religion is the opiate of the masses.”

**Freud:** Psychoanalytical critique of religion:  
“Religion is the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity.”

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## A Response to the Critics of Religion → Fideism

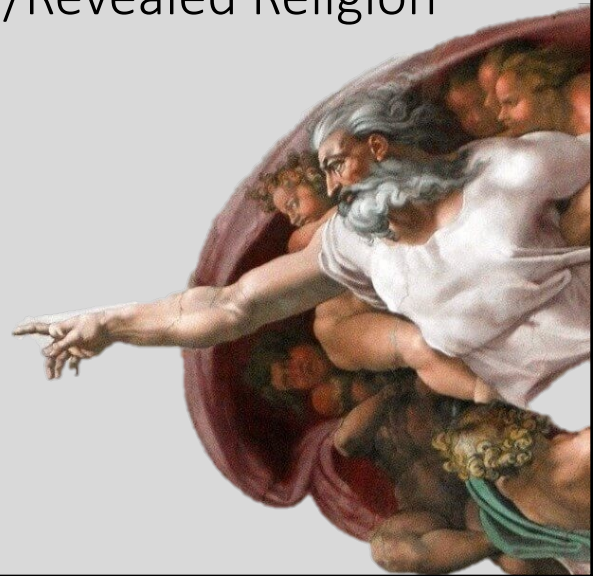
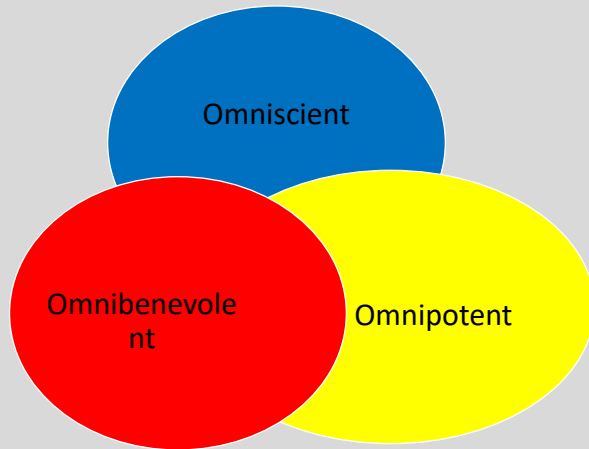
- Faith is in some sense independent of, if not outright adversarial toward, reason. In contrast to the more rationalistic tradition of natural theology, with its arguments for the existence of God, fideism holds that reason is unnecessary and inappropriate for the exercise and justification of religious belief.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fideism/>



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## The Problem: Natural Theology V. Lived/Revealed Religion



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## Descartes' innate idea of God → Pascal's wager

- **René Descartes** (1596–1650)
- Innate Idea of God (cf. ontological argument)
  - “God, at my creation, implanted this idea in me, that it might serve, as it were, for the mark of the workman impressed on his work” (Descartes, *Meditations*)
- **Blaise Pascal** (1623–1662):
  - “Reason can decide nothing”
  - Philosophical God is not the God of faith
  - We can choose to believe based on hope of payoff
    - “Doxastic Voluntarism”
    - (but is this really how faith works?)



**René Descartes**  
1596–1650

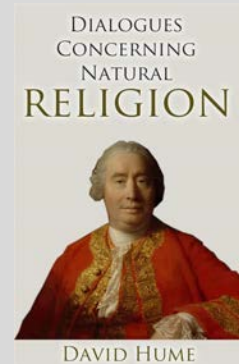


**Blaise Pascal**  
1623–1662

8



David Hume  
(1711-1776)  
*Dialogues Concerning  
Natural Religion* (1779)



*It is an absurdity to believe that the Deity has human passions, and one of the lowest of human passions, a restless appetite for applause.*

*In proportion to my veneration for true religion, is my abhorrence of vulgar superstitions.*

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## Hume's critique of the Teleological Argument

- Watchmaker God of enlightenment deism is understood on analogy with human creators
- **BUT (Hume): this ends up in anthropomorphism**

→ Hume: anthropomorphism is degrading to god

- *I was from the beginning scandalised, I must own, with this resemblance, which is asserted, between the Deity and human creatures; and must conceive it to imply such a degradation of the Supreme Being as no sound Theist could endure.*



10



Anthropomorphism and personification is connected to general problem of knowledge

- **Hume, *Natural History of Religion* (1757)**

- There is an **universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves**, and to transfer to every object, those qualities, with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious.
- The absurdity is not less, while we cast our eyes upwards; and **transferring, as is too usual, human passions and infirmities to the deity**, represent him as jealous and revengeful, capricious and partial, and, in short, a wicked and foolish man, in every respect but his superior power and authority..



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Hume's letter to William Mure (1743)

- The Deity possesses these attributes in the highest perfection: and yet I assert, **he is not the natural object of any passion or affection. He is no object either of the senses or imagination, and very little of the understanding, without which it is impossible to excite any affection.**
- From this circumstance of **the invisibility and incomprehensibility of the Deity**, [we] may feel no affection towards him.



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

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## Hume's letter to William Mure (1743)

- I am afraid that **all enthusiasts mightily deceive themselves**. Hope and fear perhaps agitate their breast when they think of the Deity; or they degrade him into a resemblance with themselves, and by that means render him more comprehensible. Or they exult with vanity in esteeming themselves his peculiar favourites; or at best they are actuated by a forced and strained affection, which moves by starts and bounds, and with a very irregular, disorderly pace. Such an affection cannot be required of any man as his duty.
- 'Tis a natural infirmity of men to imagine that their prayers have a direct influence; and this infirmity must be extremely fostered and encouraged by the constant use of prayer. Thus, **all wise men have excluded the use of images and pictures in prayer...**



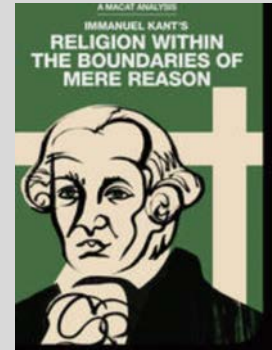
David Hume  
(1711-1776)

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Immanuel Kant  
1724-1804

## Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793)



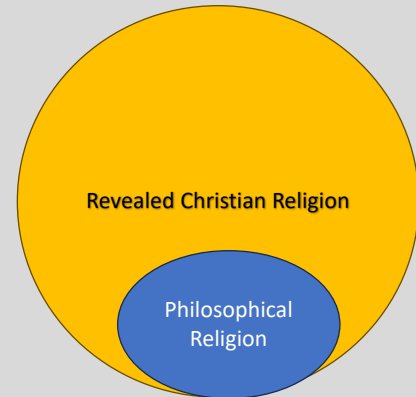
- Moral religion alone is rational... the rest is superstition
- Reasonable Hope: Based on belief that I can improve and follow moral law
- Against religious superstition, mysticism, fetishism, sorcery, illusion
- Mystical Christianity degrades man and focuses on ingratiation to an idol
- Prayer and ritual should be based on morality

Kant's 300<sup>th</sup> Birthday  
Kant born: April 22, 1724

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## Kant, *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone* Reason does not contain historical revelation

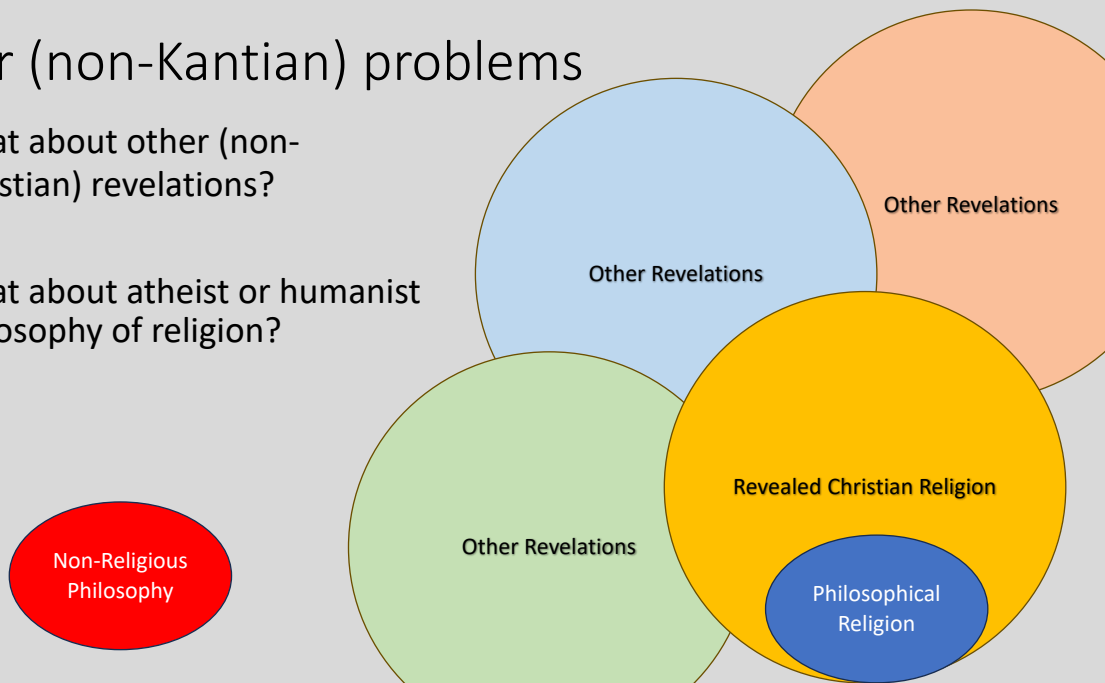
- Revelation can certainly embrace the pure religion of reason, while, conversely, the second cannot include what is historical in the first, I shall be able [experimentally] to regard the first as the wider sphere of faith, which includes within itself the second, as a narrower one (not like two circles external to one another, but like concentric circles). The philosopher, as a teacher of pure reason (from unassisted principles a priori), must confine himself within the narrower circle, and, in so doing, must waive consideration of all experience.



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## Other (non-Kantian) problems

- What about other (non-Christian) revelations?
- What about atheist or humanist philosophy of religion?

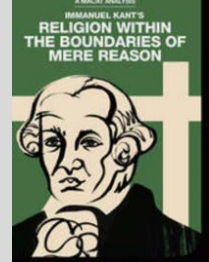


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Kant rejects four kinds of religion as “aberrations of reason”  
Kant rejects “favor-seeking” religion

- **Fanaticism** = believing you have special grace (knowledge)
  - **Superstition** = believing in the miracles performed by others
  - **Illuminism** = believing in miraculous/mystical knowledge
  - **Thaumaturgy** = working magic and miracles
- 
- Kant: there is NO supernatural knowledge
- 
- Favor-seeking religion says you only need to ask God for blessedness
    - As if, “God can make him a better man without his having to do anything but ask for it...”
  - Moral religion says you must be moral in order to be blessed
    - True Christianity = “man must do everything in his power to become a better man”
  - *Anything other than good life-conduct that a man supposes that he can do to become well-pleasing to God is mere religious illusion and pseudo-service of God.*



17

Against fetishism/sorcery → external rituals are illusions

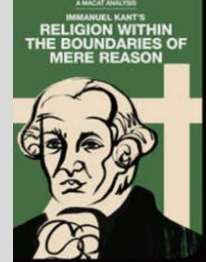
- Now the man who performs actions with nothing intrinsically God-pleasing (nothing moral) about them, as a means to earning immediate divine approval of himself and thereby the attainment of his desires, is under the illusion that he possesses an art of bringing about a supernatural effect by wholly natural means. I'll call such attempts **fetishism**. (A more usual term is **sorcery**...)
- If he thinks that ceremonial actions that in themselves seem to contain nothing moral or well-pleasing to God will serve as a means—even as a condition—of getting the satisfaction of his wishes directly from God, then he is a victim of **illusion**.



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## Kant reinterprets Christian sacraments

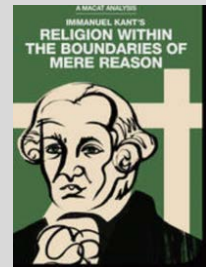
- Prayer should focus on your own moral goodness
  - Vs. fetish prayer based on illusion...
- Churchgoing should reinforce morality
- Baptism means teaching the next generation to be moral
- Communion creates an “ethical body”
- BUT...
- No miracles, No mysteries, No grace
- Does Kant leave us with anything like traditional Christian practice or belief?



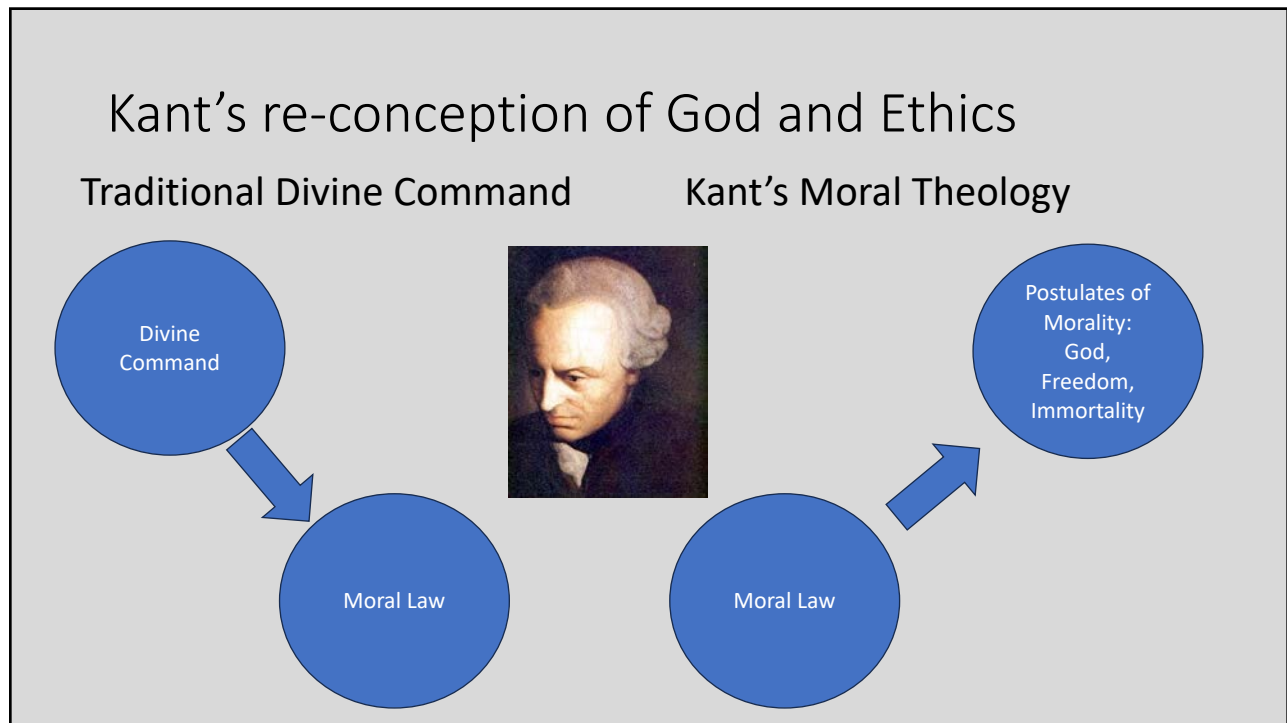
19

## Kant rejects vicarious atonement

- This is no transmissible liability which can be made over to another like a financial indebtedness.; rather is it the most personal of all debts, namely a debt of sins, which only the culprit can bear and which no innocent person can assume even though he be magnanimous enough to wish to take it upon himself for the sake of another.
- A good cannot come from another but must arise from man himself, if it is to be imputable to him. Therefore, so far as reason can see, no one can, by virtue of the superabundance of his own good conduct and through his own merit, take another's place; or, if such vicarious atonement is accepted, we would have to assume it only from the moral point of view, since for ratiocination it is an unfathomable mystery.
  - Kant, *Religion within the limits of Reason Alone*



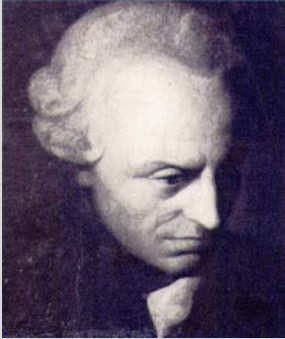
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## Kant's Moral Argument for God

- Morality requires punishment for wrongdoers and rewards for the good
  - This only happens if we postulate God and immortality
  - Morality requires that we “hope” that God Rewards and Punishes



Does Kant leave us with anything like traditional Christian practice or belief?

22

**Fideism:** preserving (or returning to) traditional (ordinary) belief and practice

- Blaise Pascal (1623-1662): Wager that God exists and that Christianity is true
- Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855): Leap of Faith (vs. reason)
- William James (1842-1910): Will to Believe (vs. demand for certainty)



23

**Blaise Pascal (1623–1662):**

- “Reason can decide nothing”
- → Philosophical God is not the God of faith
- *I cannot forgive Descartes. In all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he did allow Him to snap his fingers to set the world in motion. Beyond this, Descartes has no further need of God.*
- *Descartes: useless and uncertain.*
  - *Pensées, #77-78*



**Blaise Pascal**  
1632–1662

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## Pascal's wager

The solution, Pascal argues, is to weigh the potential rewards of believing in God against the potential rewards of failing to believe in God – i.e., to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the relative merits of “wagering” for or against God’s existence. The options, as Pascal construes them, can be outlined in the form of a table:

From *Stanford Encyclopedia*  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fideism/>

	<i>God exists</i>	<i>God does not exist</i>
<i>Believe</i>	Infinite Gain	No (or Finite) Loss/Finite Gain
<i>Disbelieve</i>	Infinite Loss	Finite Gain

*The immortality of the soul is a matter which is of so great consequence to us, and which touches us so profoundly, that we must have lost all feeling to be indifferent as to knowing what it is (Pascal, *Pensées*)*

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## Pascal's Wager (*Pensées*, #233)

- Who then will blame Christians for not being able to give a reason for their belief, since they profess a religion for which they cannot give a reason
- Let us then examine this point, and say, "God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager?...



26

## Pascal's Wager (*Pensées*, #233)

- You must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.



27

## *Fear and Trembling* (1843) (by Johannes De Silentio)

In our age, everyone is unwilling to stop with faith but goes further.

Would it not be best to stop with faith, and is it not shocking that everyone wants to go further?

Faith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal.

Abraham cannot be mediated; in other words, he cannot speak.



**Søren Kierkegaard**  
**1813-1855**

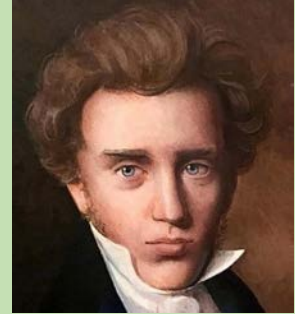
- Fideism and the Leap of Faith
- Teleological Suspension of the Ethical
- Existential Experience of Faith
- Beyond System, Reason, Universality

28



## Kierkegaard: Christian Faith is unethical, paradoxical, and absurd

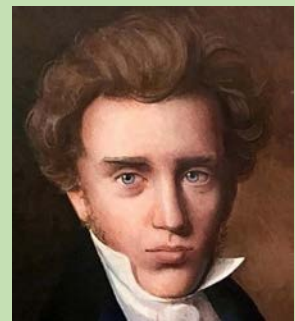
- Ethics (Kantian) = universal demand to be good
  - Faith: to believe that we are saved despite not being good
  - Faith: 'teleological suspension of the ethical' = transgressing the ethical
    - Abraham: faith that sacrificing Isaac is God's command
    - Christian: faith that God's grace saves us despite our sinful nature
  - Faith: anxiety, distress, paradox
  - Existential experience of faith: To Fully Imagine Abraham
- 
- Abraham (→ Christ)
  - *"As the single individual he became higher than the universal. This is the paradox, which cannot be mediated."*



29


## Kierkegaard on Paradox of Faith

- ...to sacrifice Isaac and get him back again
- ...to believe that you are beloved of God and that the good God commands you to sin
- ...to go beyond the universal and get the absolute
- ...to believe that the absolute God cares for your concrete particular individuality
- ...to believe that the absolute God sacrifices himself for you even though you are not worthy of that sacrifice



30

Kierkegaard  
(Johannes Climacus)  
*Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the  
Philosophical Fragments* (1846)



“Thus in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me...”

- Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith (207)
- Subjectivity is truth; subjectivity is actuality (225)
- The *how* of the truth is precisely the truth (217)
- To exist is an art (226)

31

## Kierkegaardian Faith: personal NOT THEOLOGY

- *The issue is not about the truth of Christianity but about the individual's relation to Christianity, consequently not about the indifferent individual's systematic eagerness to arrange the truths of Christianity. in paragraphs but rather about the concern of the infinitely interested individual with regard to his own relation to such a doctrine.*

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## Socrates vs. Christ

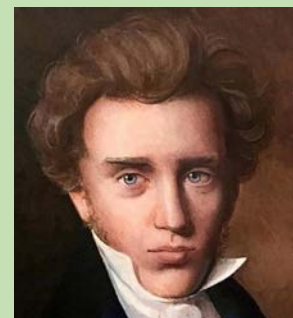
- **Socrates:** teacher lifts you to the eternal
- (midwife = helps you give birth to what's within)
- → leads you to understand eternal truths of ethics, logic, philosophy
  - Focus on thinkers: Aristotle, Hegel, Trendlenburg, etc.
  - "A logical system can be given"
  - **Objective**
  - **Non-historical:** it is always true and never "happens"
- **Christ:** savior descends from eternity to history
- (God's son whose death atones for your sin)
- → transforms you without understanding through personal/inward rebirth
  - Focus on Christ dying and YOU
  - "A system of existence cannot be given"
  - **Subjective**
  - **Historical:** it happens THEN and NOW (but also paradoxically eternal...)



33

## Kierkegaard on Absurdity of Christianity

- *The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc., has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being.*



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## “Lessing’s Ditch”

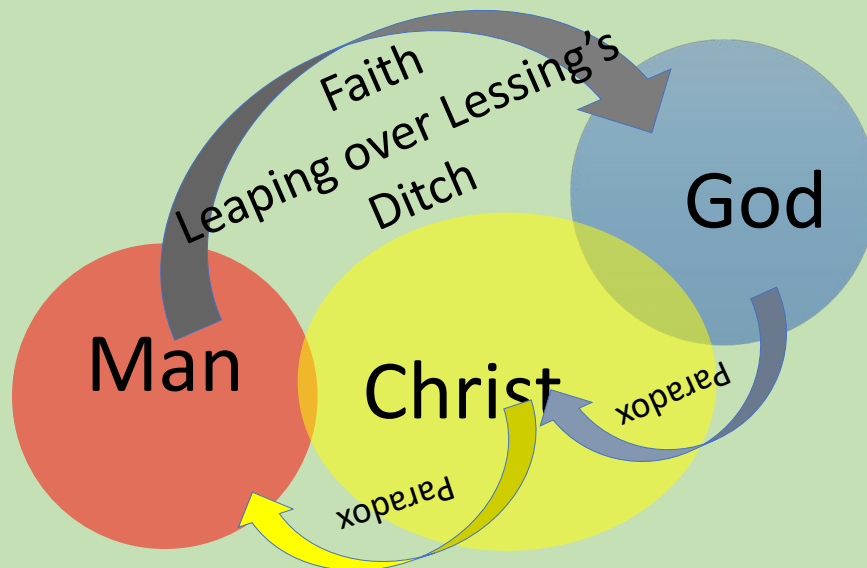
- “Miracles, which I see with my own eyes, and which I have the opportunity to verify for myself are one thing; miracles, of which I know only from history that others say they have seen them and verified the, are another.”
- “Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason”
- **“This then is the ugly broad ditch which I cannot get across, however, often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap. If anyone can help me over it, let him do it, I beg him”**
- Lessing, “On the proof of the spirit and of power” (1777)



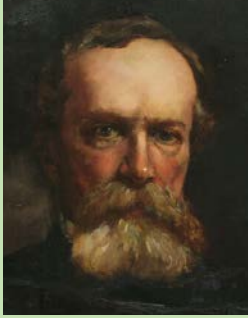
G.E. Lessing  
1729-1781

35

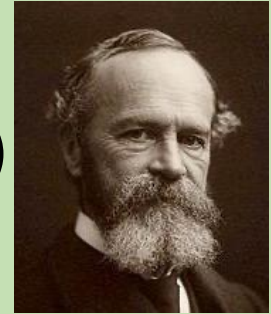
## Kierkegaard’s “Ladder” or “Leap” of Faith



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## William James, “The Will to Believe” (1896) Lecture 2



William James  
(1842-1910)

### William James

→ Pragmatism, radical empiricism, pluralism

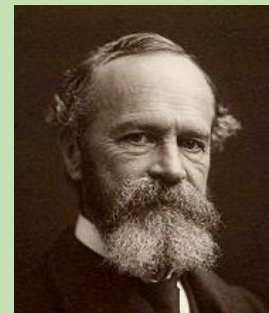
→ ALSO: “IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?”

- “The lawfulness of voluntarily adopted faith”
- “Our non-intellectual nature does influence our convictions. There are passional tendencies and volitions which run before and others which come after belief”
- “What proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear?”
- “We have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will.
- “Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.”

37

## William James Vs. Pascal’s Wager

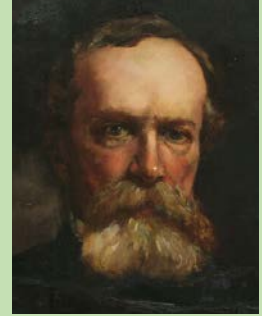
- It seems impossible to change our belief in facts by force of will
  - Ex. can you force yourself to believe that Abraham Lincoln did not exist; or that you are not sick when you have fever?
- Pascal’s Wager: choose to believe and you gain eternity (vs. nothing)
- This seems to be a weak argument in favor of belief
- And NOT a live option
- *It is evident that unless there be some pre-existing tendency to believe in masses and holy water, the option offered to the will by Pascal is not a living option. Certainly no Turk ever took to masses and holy water on its account*



38

James: better to be duped by hope than by fear → take a chance of ‘winning’

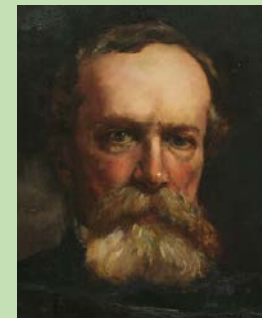
- What proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear?
- If religion be true and the evidence for it be still insufficient, I do not wish, by putting your extinguisher upon my nature (which feels to me as if it had after all some business in this matter), to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side,—that chance depending, of course, on my willingness to run the risk of acting as if my passional need of taking the world religiously might be prophetic and right.
- We have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will.



39

Tolerance: respect the other's will to believe  
→ Religious Diversity...

- We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism's glory; then only shall we live and let live, in speculative as well as in practical things.



40

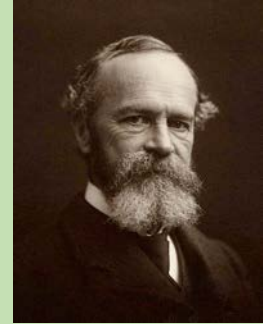


## William James, “Is Life Worth Living?” (1895)

*Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.*

*To trust our religious demands means first of all to live in the light of them, and to act as if the invisible world which they suggest were real.*

*Probably to almost every one of us here the most adverse life would seem well worth living, if we only could be certain that our bravery and patience with it were terminating and eventuating and bearing fruit somewhere in an unseen spiritual world.*



William James  
(1842-1910)

41

## James, “Is Life Worth Living?” “it depends on the liver...”

- Temperament/mood matters
- BUT: we can control our temperament by thinking more carefully
- “Temperamental Optimism” → Mania
  - Walt Whitman: “I do not see one imperfection in the universe”
- “Temperamental Pessimism” → Melancholy
  - James Thomson: “the wine of life is poison mixed with gall”

42

## The disease of philosophy

- Many of you are students of philosophy, and have already felt in your own persons the scepticism and unreality that too much grubbing in the abstract roots of things will breed. This is, indeed, one of the regular fruits of the over-studious career. Too much questioning and too little active responsibility lead, almost as often as too much sensualism does, to the edge of the slope, at the bottom of which lie pessimism and the nightmare or suicidal view of life.

43

## The Climber's Leap Example →

Power of believing in "may be" and acting "as if"

- *Suppose, for instance, that you are climbing a mountain and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and think of all the sweet things you have heard the scientists say of maybes, and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss. In such a case (and it belongs to an enormous class), the part of wisdom as well as of courage is to believe what is in the line of your needs, for only by the belief is the need fulfilled. Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. But believe, and again you shall be right, for you shall save yourself.*

44

## You can make your life worth living

- *This life is worth living, we can say, since it is what we make it, from the moral point of view, and we are determined to make it from that point of view, so far as we have anything to do with it, a success.*
- *Once more it is a case of maybe. And once more maybes are the essence of the situation.*
- *Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.*