

1 **The Nature of God (2)**

- Module: Philosophy
- Lesson 12

2 **Last Week We Talked About God's:**

- Necessity
- Aseity
- Incorporeality (Immateriality)
- Simplicity
- Today we will pick up where we left off.

3 **5. Transcendence**

- Transcend: To exist beyond the limits or range of something. In God's case, of the cosmos and the entire created or natural realm.
- God has no spacial, temporal, or material constraint.
 - Space (omnipresent)
 - Time (omnitemporal, eternal)
 - Matter (immateriality)

4 **5. Transcendence**

- God's transcendence in relationship to space:
 - Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold,
You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
Psalm 139:7-11

5 **5. Transcendence**

- Am I a God who is near," declares the LORD,
"And not a God far off?
"Can a man hide himself in hiding places
So I do not see him?" declares the LORD.
"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.
Jer. 23:23-24

6 5. Transcendence

- God is not diffused, but is fully present everywhere with his whole being.
- However, God's otherness, his aseity, precludes the possibility of:
 - pantheism (pan = all, theism = God): God is everything, everything is God
 - panentheism (pan = all, en = in, theism = God): God is "in" everything (e.g. the world as God's body).

7 5. Transcendence

- God's transcendence in relationship to time:
 - God said to Moses, " I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Exodus 3:14
 - Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

John 8:58
 - "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

Malachi 3:6
 - Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

James 1:17

8 5. Transcendence

- God fully exists and is present at all times, and before time existed.
- Just as God's transcendence of space does not preclude his relation to or operation within space, so God's transcendence of time does not preclude his relation to or operation within time.
- God's transcendence of time entails his immutability, his changelessness–
 - He is never inconsistent, growing, developing, or learning (contra process theology).
 - His immutability refers to his essential nature, his character. It does not refer to his actions.
 - His immutability does not mean that God is passive, immobile, or inactive.

9 5. Transcendence

- God's transcendence in relationship to matter:
 - In order for God to transcend space and time he must not be constrained by matter
 - "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
John 4:24
 - "Now the Lord is Spirit..."
2 Cor. 3:17
 - In Colossians Paul refers to him as the "invisible God."
Col. 1:15
 - Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
1 Tim. 1:17

10 6. Personality

- The personality of God is evidenced by the fact that the universe is not eternal, but caused:
 - "How can you get an effect with a beginning, like the universe, from a cause that is changeless and eternal? The only way I can see out of this dilemma is if the cause is a personal agent, endowed with freedom of the will, and therefore able to create a spontaneous new effect without any antecedent determining conditions."
-William Lane Craig- Christian philosopher and apologist.

11 6. Personality

- Some Aspects of Personality
- Consciousness: (self and others aware): In God's case, he is also the ultimate source of consciousness. (He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see? Psa. 94:9)
- Knowledge: In God's case, he is also the ultimate source of knowledge and information. ("For the Lord is a God of knowledge..." 1 Sam. 2:3)
- Intention: ("My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure." Isa. 46:10)
- Feeling: (emotions) ("Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..." Eph. 4:30)
- Relational: ("...for you loved me before the foundation of the world." Jn. 17:24)

12 7. Power

- Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm!
Nothing is too difficult for You,
Jeremiah 32:17

- God has power to do all that is consistent with his nature and that is not logically incoherent.
- God's omnipotence does not entail or include the ability to do that which conflicts with his nature, as that would mean ceasing to be God, which is impossible.
 - God cannot lie.
 - God cannot change.
- The ability to do that which is logically impossible or incoherent:
 - e. g. To make a married bachelor or a square circle.
 - e. g. To make a morally free agent who would always choose to do right.

13 8. Knowledge/Wisdom (Omniscience)

- With Him are wisdom and might. To Him belong counsel and understanding. Job 12:13
 - God believes every true proposition.
 - God does not believe any false proposition.
 - God knows all counterfactuals. That is, God not only knows what does/will happen, but also what would follow if something else happens/would happen. (i.e. God knows the full range of possible worlds.)

14 9. Freedom

- But our God is in the heavens, he does whatever he pleases. Ps. 115:3
 - If the first cause is necessary, then that cause must be free to create or to not create.
 - If God, the first cause, were not free to create but did so necessarily, then the cosmos would be coeternal with God. (If God were not free in his essence, then he would have necessarily caused the cosmos to exist co-extensively with himself. i.e. eternally)
 - The cosmos is not eternal.
 - Therefore God must have been free to create or not create.
 - There is an essential link between freedom and personality.
 - Non-personal material things are determined.
 - Only minds possess freedom.

15 Review:

- 1. Necessity
- 2. Aseity
- 3. Incorporeality (Immateriality)
- 4. Simplicity

- 5. Transcendence
- 6. Personality
- 7. Power (omnipotence)
- 8. Knowledge/wisdom (omniscience)
- 9. Freedom

16 **Is God A "God-of-the-Gaps?"**

- What is a "god-of-the-gaps?"
 - A concept of God in which he is seen merely to be an explanation for the things we don't understand — the "gaps" in our knowledge.
 - God serves as sort of a placeholder in our explanatory framework for things we can't explain, until a better (or naturalistic or scientific) explanation can be found.
 - Some atheists and others charge Christianity with having a god-of-the-gaps.
 - This view of God was first criticized by Christian thinkers.
 - Henry Drummond (19th century evangelist)
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

17 **Is God A "God-of-the-Gaps?"**

- What is wrong with a "god-of-the-gaps?"
 - As scientific knowledge expands, God becomes progressively less necessary as a means of explanation.
 - [God is merely a myth whom imagine him in order to explain things we can't otherwise explain by natural processes or science.]
 - John Lennox: God is not a god of the gaps, he is God of the whole show, what we know and what we don't know.

18 **Is God A "God-of-the-Gaps?"**

- Is the teleological argument simply an argument for a god-of-the-gaps?
 - Teleological arguments must be expressed so as to not give the impression they are a god-of-the-gaps explanation.
 - Darwin's own scientific method was inference to the best explanation, or "Method of Multiple Competing Hypotheses."
 - "Looking for causes that are known from our uniform and repeated experience to have the capacity to produce the event we're trying to explain." -Stephen Meyer-
 - Key phrase: "Looking for causes now in operation."

19 **Is God A "God-of-the-Gaps?"**

- Teleological arguments employ the same method (looking for causes now in operation) to find the best explanation for the effect (e. g. the cosmos) that we seek to explain.
- We know that the causes now in operation that account for effects like design, fine tuning, irreducible complexity, and information are invariably intelligent minds.
- That an intelligent mind is the cause for the existence of design, fine tuning, irreducible complexity, and information in the natural world is not a placeholder for an explanation (a god-of-the-gaps), it is the explanation.
 - Recall our discussion of the completist fallacy (last week). One needn't be able to explain an explanation of 'X' in order for that explanation of 'X' to be a valid explanation. (One needn't be able to explain the intelligent mind behind the cosmos for an intelligent mind to be the explanation of the cosmos.)

20 **Next Week:**

- The Nature of Humanness