

God without Parts

Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness



Classical Theism (Part 1)

- 'Ehyeh (Exodus 3:14)
- The Simplicity of God
- The Trinity
- The Incarnation

T/G/B

- Eschatology
- Thanatology
- Ecclesiology
- Israelology
- Dispensationalism
- Doxology
- Hodology
- Soteriology
- Hamartiology
- Natural Law
- Anthropology
- Angelology
- Pneumatology
- Christology
- Paterology
- Trinitarianism
- Cosmology
- Theology Proper
- Bibliology
- Natural Theology

The transcendent life, Psalm 73:2-3, 21-28.

Prayer: Fellowship is all about focus on the Lord (Heb. 12:1-2), not our sins, guilt, or earthly kingdoms (Matt 6:19-24).

3 Parts to Bible Class: Each part is important if we hope to get away from sloppy thinking about God

Part I: Spiritual basics: God-talk and love.

Part II: Philosophical foundations. POL: Saussure, the father of modern linguistics (on signification).

Part III: Doctrinal development: Special – Classical theism 1: Simplicity of God, the Trinity, and the Incarnation.

Part I: Basics: Spiritual foundations: God-talk and love (1 Cor. 13; Gal 5:13-15; 22-23).

1. Human love, joy, and peace have more to do with the quality and state of the human will than anything else. There is no way a person can become better apart from developing a better will. While most would choose to have a greater intelligence than a better will, it is the will that determines more about character and the direction of one’s life than anything else. There is not enough doctrine in the universe to override a captious will. We should all reflect on our wills, especially in relation to God, the POG, and our loved ones. Love is more than, but not less than, sheer commitment. True love finds delight and peace in the object of love.
2. God’s love and God-talk. Given that God is not like any other being, He is the Totally Other, how can we predicate anything of God? He is not even a concept; He is a verb: Esse, BE, without a separate essence! Moreover, He is also immutable, infinite, atemporal, omniscience. How can we attribute *human* love to Esse?
3. There are three major options in predication when it comes to God-talk.
 - a. Equivocality or equivocal predication: The same word is used, but the word signifies completely different realities/entities/beings (bank, date). If God-talk is equivocal, then we know nothing of God because such terms as goodness or love would have completely different meanings with reference to God.
 - b. Univocality or univocal predication: The same word is used of two things that really are the same. For example, when you say that an Oak is a tree and an Elm is a tree, you are using “tree” univocally—it has precisely the same meaning. Both entities are the same even though they have different accidents. When we say that Don is man, Abraham is a man, Moses is a man, David is a man, Isaiah is a man, and Peter is a man, we are talking about the same essence of man even though there are different accidents. Univocality does not work with God because we do not have the same essence as God. There can be no univocal predication with God without making Him a creature. To predicate univocally of God is to annihilate God’s transcendence. God simply does not have a human kind of love, joy, and peace.
 - c. Analogy or Analogical predication. In analogy two things are compared because of similarity in both. There is partial sameness and partial difference. There are also different levels of analogous predication. But the bottom line is that God is the cause of love in man. God is the primary analogate and man is the secondary analogate. God is the measure of love and man is measured by love.
4. Summary of ways in which man’s love is like and unlike (i.e., analogous to) God’s love.

5: Hermeneutics
4: Language-81
3: Epistemology 32 - Existence 50 - History 50
2:Metaphysics 32 - Trans. 50
1: Reality - Logic 32, - Truth 32

Part 2: Philosophy of Language (81)

Outline

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ What is philosophy of language?
- ✓ Theories of meaning
- ✓ Plato's *Cratylus*
 - Hermogenes
 - Cratylus
 - Socrates
- ✓ Aristotle (384-322 BC)
- ✓ Transition to modern philosophy of language

1. Who taught that man was born with innate ideas?
2. Who taught that man learned these ideas in a pre-incarnate life (extreme realism)?
3. Who is often called an empiricist, but is really a moderate realist? (Father was a doctor)
4. Who is the father of modern linguistics regarding the signified and signifier?
5. Who provided the foundation for all subsequent modern philosophy & philosophy of language?
6. Who was banned in the Roman Catholic Church and is villainized as too "intellectual."
7. Who bequeathed to modern man an epistemology of apperception?

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

Gottlob Frege (1848-1925)

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

W. V. O. Quine (1908-2000).

Noam Chomsky (1928-)

Realist view of meaning.

Foundation of meaning.

Communication of meaning.

Elements of language.

Function of language

Meaningful God-talk.

Analytic Philosophy

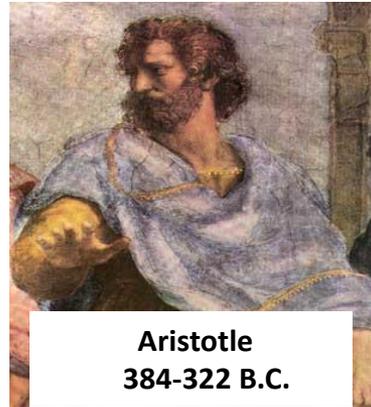
Conclusion.

Analogy.

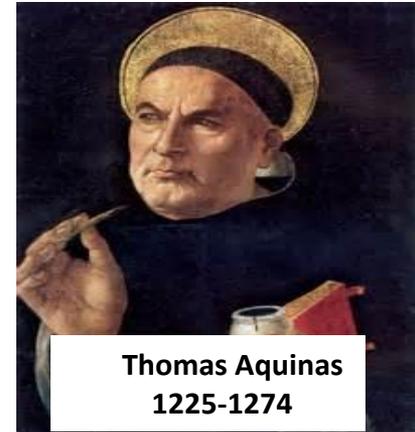
Metaphysical analogy.



Plato
428-348 B. C.



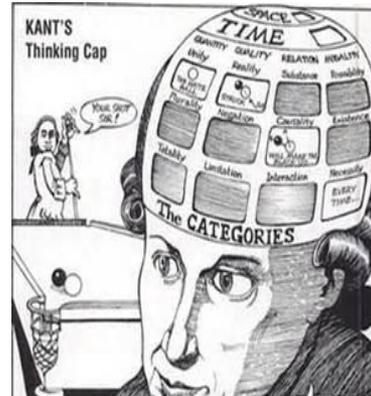
Aristotle
384-322 B.C.



Thomas Aquinas
1225-1274



Rene Descartes
1596-1650



Immanuel Kant
1724-1804



Ferdinand de Saussure
1857-1913

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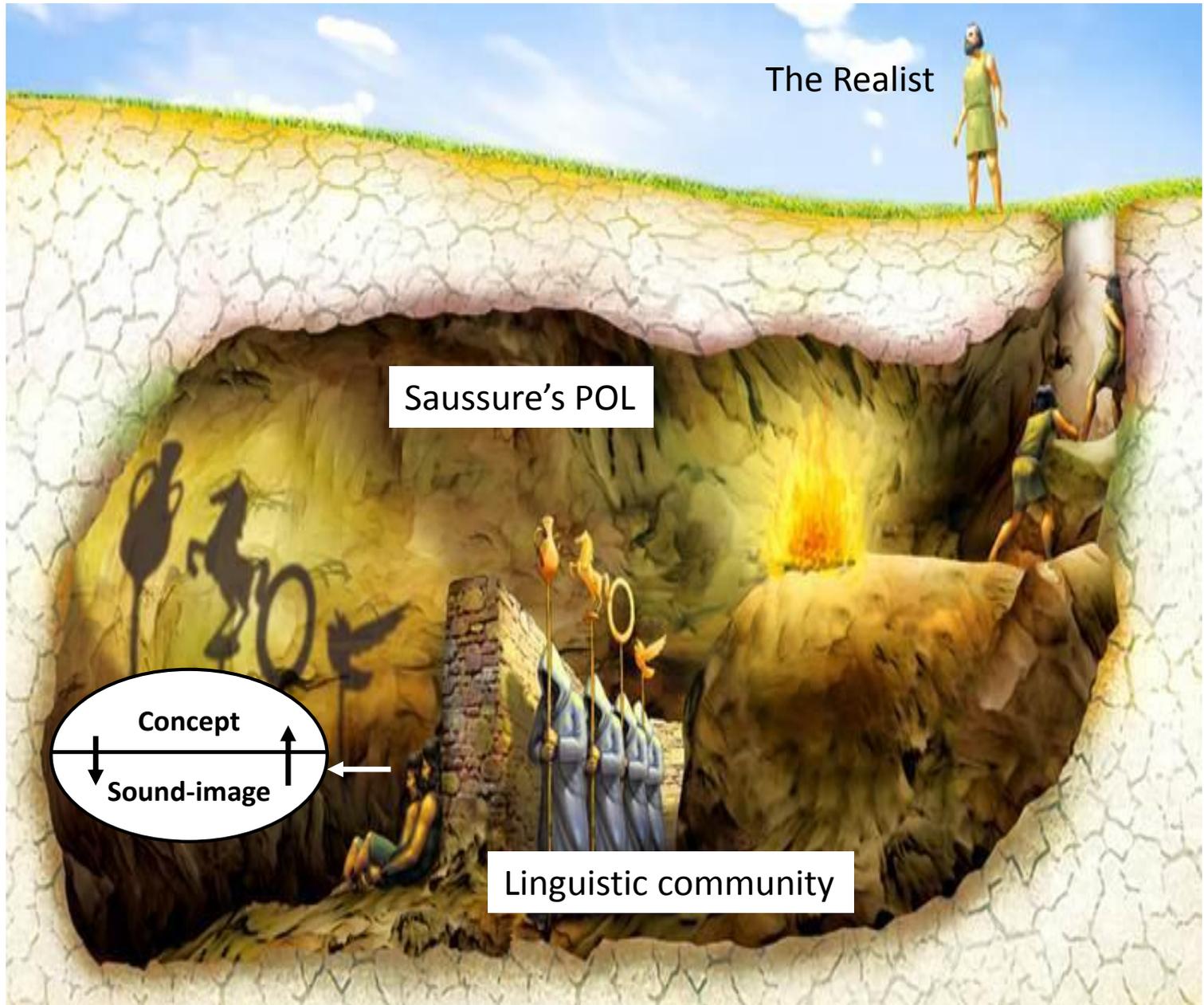
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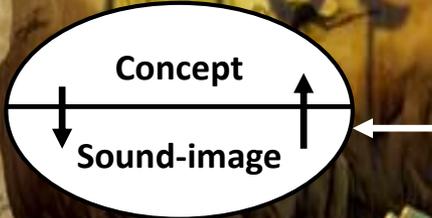
Analogy.

Metaphysical analogy.



Saussure's POL

Linguistic community



More on Saussure

1. Saussure and all subsequent philosophy and philosophy of language is modeled after Immanuel Kant, which means that there is a bifurcation between the external world (noumenal) and the world of appearance (phenomenal) that cannot be bridged. Instead of metaphysically abstracting essences as per Aristotelianism, it is posited that the world is made up of only bodies extended in space and when the photons of light are received by our senses, we are the ones who create the forms. This is the Kantian revolution that we have all grown up in--one in which we create reality.
2. Note that in Saussure the object of knowledge is the concept, not the essences of things abstracted from reality.
3. It is important to understand that concepts are things whereby we know things in the world. The concept is not the object of knowledge.
4. Moreover, it is important to know that neither our minds nor brains know anything. It is we who know through our minds and brains and senses.
5. To be a Realist one must always strive to make the object of knowledge that which is, as it is in itself. While our senses use accidents and our minds use concepts, the object of knowledge must always be the essences of things as such.

Neo-theism vs. Classical Theism

1. God, BE, is radically different from any and all creatures, Isaiah 46:8-13.
2. In our recent study of the simplicity of God and classical Christianity we have discovered the problem of neo-theism that dominates contemporary Christianity (even in our camp). Our Christmas special, from the Simplicity of Esse to incarnation as human being, from Exod. 3:14 to John 1:1, has brought before us the issue of the one and the many (Trinity) and the one in two (incarnation, hypostatic union). Due to the influences of neo-theism, we have a very deficient view of these central *Christian* doctrines. So, I have decided to do a few classes on the Trinity and the Hypostatic Union before getting back to our study of Heaven, which also suffers from deficiencies due in no small part to our neo-theistic, God as Infinite Human Problem Solver, world.

3. The bane of neo-theism. Note the extremely high price for the new views.
 - a. God is not viewed as radically different in kind.
 - b. God is viewed as Person with separate attributes and accidents.
 - c. God is not immutable.
 - d. God is in time.
 - e. God receives univocal predication.
 - f. God is primarily a Problem Solver.
 - g. Little to no motivation of being with Him in the next life.
 - h. Blind to the glory of God in all of creation, Isa. 6.
 - i. Blind to proof of God's existence through creation, Rom. 1:20.
 - j. God is spatial—sometimes filling and sometimes not filling up space.
 - k. Heresies: Unitarianism, binitarianism, tritheism, polytheism, modalism, Nestorianism, fideism, naturalism, skepticism.
 - l. Loss of spiritual heritage and personal reflection on grand doctrines.
 - m. Loss of categories to handle the metaphysical data of Scripture.
 - n. Follower of a pastor or movement, totally dependent on novel teachings.
 - o. Vulnerable to new, discredited, and unorthodox views of God, creation, man, and the spiritual life.

4. The simplicity of God, the Trinity, and the Incarnation are classical Christian doctrines that can be traced back to the Early Church. These doctrines have been the standard of orthodoxy throughout church history.
5. However, due to the abandonment of classical metaphysics, these doctrines have fallen on hard times mainly within evangelicalism. The result is that God viewed principally as a large man with infinite attributes. Moreover, the loss of categorical and philosophical thinking has resulted in lack of ability to even apprehend the true nature of the Trinity and Hypostatic Union, which all acknowledge cannot be fully comprehended.

6. The result of all of this is that the Trinity and the Hypostatic Union, which are distinctly recondite and beautiful Christian doctrines have become all but irrelevant. The attitudes toward these magnificent doctrine run the gamut from being “flat,” to heresy, irrationality and even skepticism.
7. The loss of contemplation of the inner divine life of the Trinity and the hypostatic union is far too high of a price to pay just to have a God we can easily understand, relate to, and use to make our lives better.
8. There is no greater intellectual activity that the believer can engage in than in the simplicity of God, the Trinity, and the hypostatic union. These doctrines take us to the core of ultimate reality. This theological science separates the men from the men.

The simplicity of God

1. We have not developed the necessary metaphysical and philosophical categories to grapple with simplicity as it relates to God's will and knowledge. So, we are just going to summarize what we have learned and note a few principles on spatial metaphors used of God before moving on to the Trinity and the hypostatic union.
2. The doctrine of divine simplicity states that God is identical with all that is in Him. He is not composed of any parts. He does not need any parts. He is most absolute. He is the ontological reason for Himself as *Esse*. God is not the product of any parts that determine Him in any way.

3. By grasping divine simplicity one is able to easily grasp the metaphorical use of language in the Bible that is couched in temporal, corporeal, and spatial terms.
 - a) God reveals Himself in bodily dimensions so we can better understand spiritual truths by comparing them with bodily things. For example, when eyes are used of God (2 Chron. 16:9), it points to the fact that God knows. He has no eyeballs that allow Him to take in photons.
 - b) When the Bible speaks about the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10), it is not a reference to something deep in God. It refers to hidden things that man is unable to plum with unaided reason.

- c) When the Bible says that God is higher than this or that, it does not mean that if one goes up in a space shuttle he will be closer to God. When the Bible refers to higher than the heavens, it is not referring to space. Rather, it refers to God's transcendence. It is pointing to something beyond our grasp.
- d) When the Bible depicts God in various positions like sitting on a throne (Psa. 47:8), it is not because He is tired or is actually sitting down. This analogy symbolizes His authority and that He is in control.
- e) When the Bible portrays God standing (Psa. 82:1), it is used to illustrate His power and activities against those who resist Him. He is not located in space and does not stand, sit, or walk.

4. From the doctrine of divine simplicity flows God's aseity, unity, infinity, immutability, and eternity. These doctrines make no sense apart from divine simplicity.

5. All and each of the attributes of God is ontologically accounted for by the same undifferentiated reality, namely, God Himself as Pure Act. God is love. God is justice. God is wisdom. However, these are not parts of God. These are human categories due to the way the human mind works.

6. Without the doctrine of simplicity, there is no basis for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. How much of God is the Father? He is all of God. How much of God is the Son? What about the Spirit? If you say that part of Father is God, and part is the Son is God and part is the Holy Spirit is God, then you end up in heresy according to the Bible and early Christianity. Early Christianity may not have grasped the tri-unity, but they did maintain the oneness of God in terms of triadic language. In sum, without simplicity you have no numerical oneness as far as God. It was the Greek metaphysical categories that enabled the Early Church to avoid contradicting biblical testimony and ending up in heresy.

7. While most Christians do realize how difficult the Trinity and HU is, most do not realize the consequences of failing to properly apprehend these doctrines. How can one appreciate the LJC, if He is less than God? Yet, if one makes Him separate God, one ends up in polytheism, either ditheism or tritheism.
8. Though we cannot comprehend God as He is, we must be careful not to fancy Him to be what He is not.

TRINITY AND THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

1. John 1:1-3; binitarianism, tritheism, or the Trinity (trinitary). How could Christ be worshipped if He is not God? How could He be equal with God if He is not God? Yet, how does one maintain monotheism, if Christ is God? What is the relationship between God and God in these verses? These truths and all of the related passages in the Bible have been pondered by the greatest genius Christians for many hundreds of years.
2. The truths in John 1:1-18 are the most difficult in all of reality because it deals with the ultimate foundation of reality. The opening of John alone is one of the greatest rebukes of modern anti-intellectualism. These passages scream for metaphysics and the development of the mind. There are no higher truths for the mind.

3. Three levels of Truth.
 - a) Natural revelation alone without the need for biblical revelation. These truths can be demonstrated apart from the Bible.
 - b) Metaphysical truths discoverable through natural revelation and the Bible, Rom. 1:20. The unbeliever, the philosopher as well as the Christian can get to the existence of God. This can be demonstrated apart from the Bible, but it can also be accessed in the Bible by faith, Gen. 1:1.
 - c) Sacred doctrine or special revelation. This is the highest truth and can only be accepted by faith in the authority of God Himself. This is what faith is all about. These truths cannot be proven! However, it can be shown that there are not contradictions. A word about Hume and modern evidential apologetics and knowing vs. showing.

4. Sacred doctrine, divine revealed truths inaccessible by man.
 - a. These truths include such things as the Trinity, salvation, the deity of Christ, the hypostatic union.
 - b. These truths cannot be demonstrated or proven (or disproven).
 - c. There are no rationally compelling arguments that can be given for the Trinity or the hypostatic union.
 - d. Apart from God telling us, there is absolutely no basis for the trinity—that there is one what and three whos in the trinity.
 - e. Moreover, if Jesus is not God, then there is no reason for the trinity.
 - f. While there are many things we can learn apart from direct revelation from God, the Trinity and the incarnation is not among them.
 - g. Sacred doctrine are articles of faith accepted without question by the people of God.
 - h. To reject sacred doctrines is reject the authority of God. The reason that Doubting Thomas is rebuked is due to rejection of God's authority.
 - i. The Trinity and the hypostatic union are intricately related. Rejection of one leads to rejection or distortion of the other.

5. The nature of faith in God's Word.
 - a. Hebrews 1:1.
 - b. This hope is not based on a philosophical proof.
 - c. By faith we believe God created the universe.
 - d. Faith is all about believing God.
 - e. The same God who told us about creation gives us a peak at the inner life of the Trinity.
 - f. While it may be able to demonstrate that the world had a beginning (kalam horizontal argument), one can be far more assured by supernatural faith in God's Word. One is more probabilistic and the other is absolutely certain.
 - g. It is one thing for a Muslim or unbeliever to reject the Trinity. It is quite another for a believer to doubt it. The believer should never doubt God or place rationalism or empiricism over what God has said.
 - h. All you can do is to demonstrate by logic that there is no irrationality in the doctrine of the Trinity and hypostatic union. You cannot demonstrate this to be true.
 - i. Without supernatural faith, you cannot believe in the Trinity. As a matter of fact without faith you have no basis to believe anything in the Bible. This is all outside of the rational and empirical realm.

The Trinity and the Incarnation, John 1:1-18.

1. It is in the nature of God to communicate Himself to others. Christ is the perfect image, exact representation of the nature of God. He reveals God's perfections to all—friends and enemies—and claimed equality with God, 1:1-2.
2. The revelation of the deity and nature of Christ as the Word of God in the Trinity, 1-4-5. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ. There simply is no other human being like Him. We may admire Aristotle, but with Jesus we bow in worship and give Him our all.

3. Man's natural hostility to God and the essence of all evil and sin, 6-11.
4. The revelation of God's grace to the undeserving, 12-13. Our new birth was made possible by Him dying for us on the Cross. The nature of special revelation and faith and use of apologetics.
5. The Eternal Word becoming flesh to give us grace and truth, 14. Christ reveals God like no one else. He shows us what God is really like and what human spiritual life should be like—what it is like to love and serve God. Imagine if there was no incarnation, what kind of example would we have? What image of God in humanity? The only begotten refers to Christ as the Son, the Word, throughout all of eternity, the eternal generation of the Son.
6. The full revelation of grace and truth is found in Jesus Christ, 15-17.

7. Christ, from the bosom of the Father in Trinity, to Supreme Revealer of God. Christ's exegesis of God brings the blessings of
 - a) Understanding what it means that "no one has seen Him"
 - b) Understanding the eternal, transcendent God analogically.
 - c) Understanding the nature of God's love—we do matter to God.
 - d) Understanding the nature of evil as the world rejected Christ.
 - e) The privilege of looking to Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith rather than focusing on sin and guilt.
 - f) The privilege of living a committed life of the mind and will to the Lord Jesus Christ and His life in and for God.
 - g) The privilege of following Christ's example, Philip 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-6; 12:1-2; John 14:9.
 - h) The Christ-centered life.