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HUFF POST RELIGION

10 Proofs That Will Change How You Think About God

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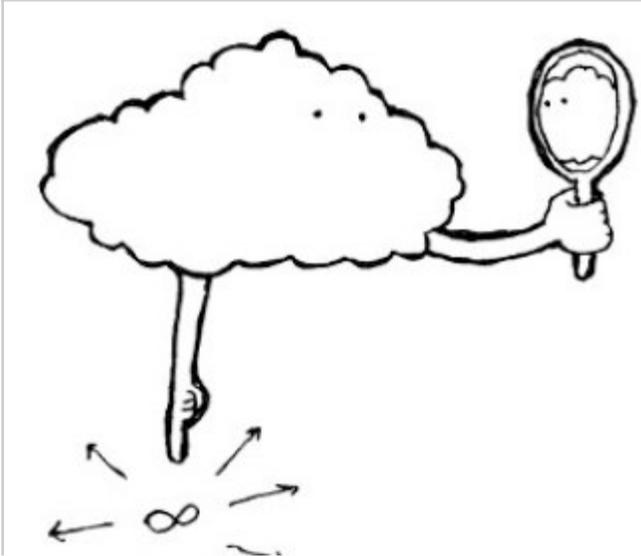
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The notion of proof for or against the existence of God has come to be used for a very specific purpose: to convince other people that someone called God either does or doesn't exist. But actually the little these so-called proofs have to offer -- whether one believes any such proof really proves anything -- is very limited.

While writing "[God in Proof: The Story of a Search from the Ancients to the Internet](#)," I found that the history of these proofs reveal a lot more than they're given credit for. Like artifacts from a lost time dug up provide glimpses into how people imagined their place in the universe and their chances of knowing the divine. For some thinkers, a new proof brought on a sudden, emotional fit of ecstasy; for others, it was the effort to carve out a new way of conceiving of God.

Despite today's unending debates about whether God exists or not, few of the classic proofs have convinced one way or another. More often, they served to pose more interesting questions: What do you could count as proof? As many of these attempts at proof reveal, also, the line between God and the world is thinner than we're now led to believe.

10. Aristotle's self-thinking thought



Everyone has heard of Aristotle. Part of the problem is that everyone -- including Muslims, Jews and Christians -- has recognized something of their own God in Aristotle's model of physics. Aristotle's model of physics leads him, in the end, to the sky and planets and stars, to something that moves without being moved. Aristotle also realized that the universe is so perfect that it can only think about what is perfect. Don't expect to have your prayers listened to if they don't matter.

9. The *kalam* cosmological argument now



There's no more effective debater about the than William Lane Craig, a conservative evang to him as "the one Christian apologist who see

into my fellow atheists." The centerpiece of Craig's arsenal is the *kalam* cosmological argume dissertation in the 1970s. In it Craig borrowed from thinkers in the medieval Muslim world, mi: science. The result was a hard-to-beat set of reasons that the universe must have a creator ar who [has called](#) the God of Islam "rationally objectionable," doesn't agree with Muslims on n career on one of their proofs.

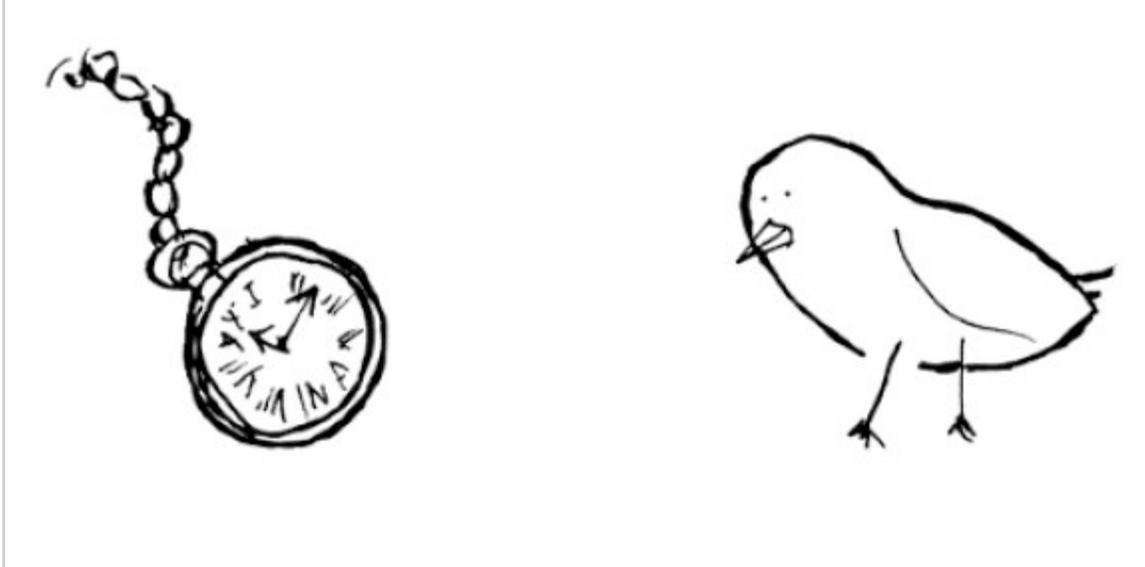
8. Hindus for monotheism

We're used to thinking of Hinduism as a religion of about as many gods as the population of kinds of proofs Westerners crave. But in the 10th and 11th centuries, the Nyaya school of Hir proofs for a one, personal, transcendent god that looks more like You-Know-Who than anyth most famous of these was a proof from "composition" -- that for there to be any things in the v thing, there must sometime have been a first combiner. Not long after, the great Jewish philo similar argument in his "Guide for the Perplexed."

7. The ontological God (or Nature)

When Anselm of Canterbury first alighted on his "ontological" proof for a God -- an idea so pe the God he had in mind was the one he prayed to in his monastery. But when the Jewish apr almost the same proof a few centuries later, the God that popped out from the arguments wa outcome of the ontological argument was "God, *or Nature*," an infinite being identical with the it. It was a devious reversal of Anselm's original idea. There would be no need, for instance, t since you'd be praying, at least in part, to yourself.

6. What Paley really would have thought about Darwin



There is Darwinian design the represent 18th-centu Paley cor flora and f mechanic Surely, h deduce th that it mu intelligent be said decades t

was published, and ever since his views have been so repeatedly set in opposition to Darwin's of his books on evolution "The Blind Watchmaker." [A closer look at Paley's own thinking](#) reve *through* the laws of nature, not beyond them like the modern ID theorists' designer. Paley had i

over time. It's only in today's highly polarized culture-war climate that we don't bother to notice that intelligent design theory might have been perfectly comfortable with evolution.

5. Why is God so shy?

An argument against God's existence that has gained attention among philosophers in "hiddenness": If God existed, shouldn't it be a whole lot more obvious? It is often a crucial part of the problem of evil and suffering in the world that an allegedly good God doesn't lift a finger to prevent evil and suffering. If God is well-meaning, smart people who seek good evidence of the divine in the midst of suffering fail to find it. If God is also an obvious one? Then again, other well-meaning, smart people have ended up seeing God as if hidden in plain sight; Elie Weisel reported a vision of God at Auschwitz, no le gallows."

4. Or is God really a demon?

In 2009 philosopher Stephen Law proposed another kind of response to the problem of evil: 'as he could judge, Law concluded that the strength of the case for an all-powerful, all-good God is equal to the strength of the case for an all-powerful, all-evil God. This evil God hides from us on purpose and tries to confuse us by getting people to believe in various opposing religions so we'll do more evil to one another; all the freely acting human beings will commit lots and lots of evil acts. The evidence for this, unfortunately, is all around us.

3. A proof for the heart

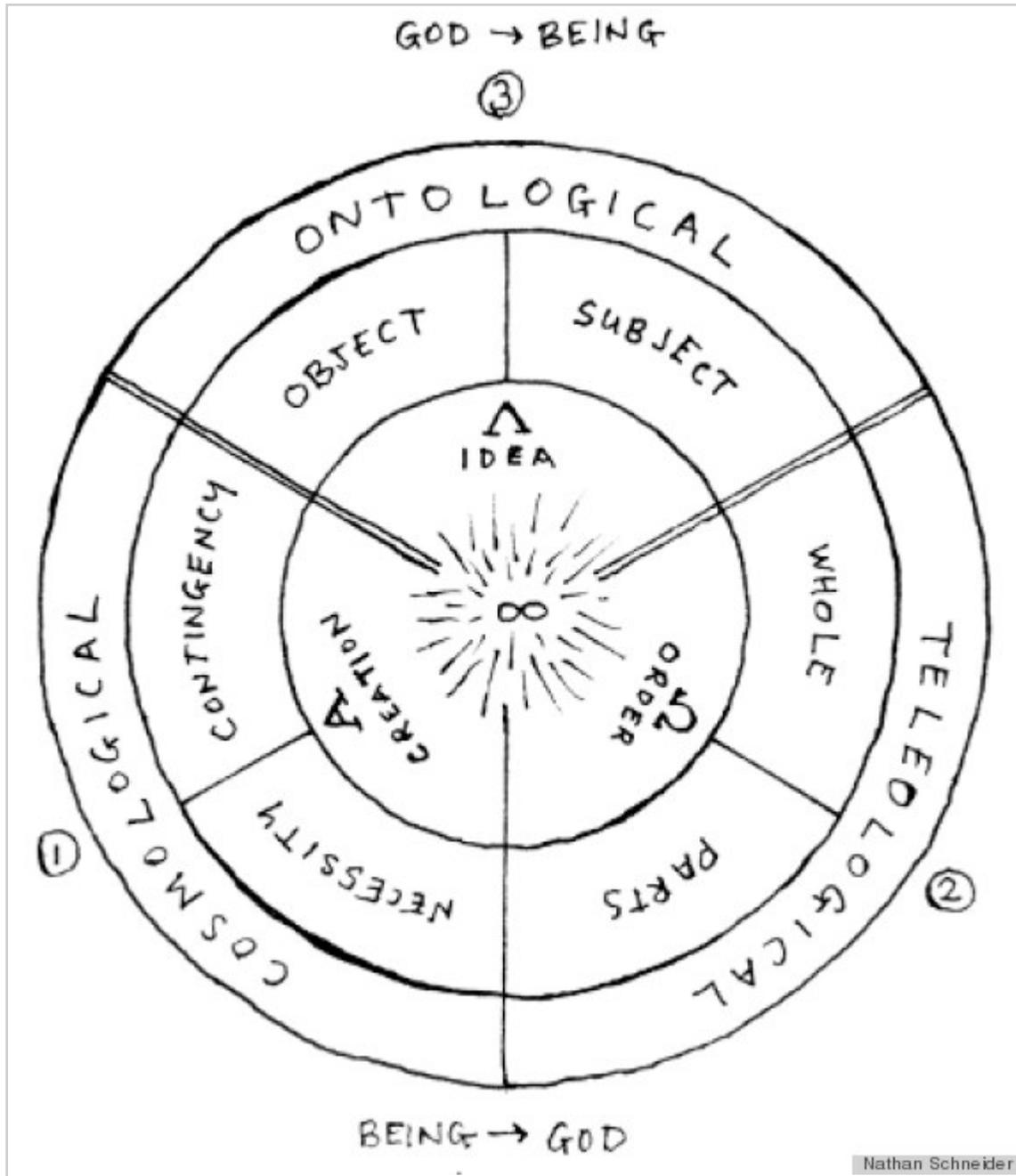
One rejoinder to the evil-god hypothesis lies in our own desire. Just as Augustine famously prayed, "Our heart is restless until it rests in you," some people have found in their own desire for God evidence that God exists. This reasoning helped persuade "Narnia" author C.S. Lewis to believe in God, and he used it often to convince others of the reasonableness of Christian faith: Our desires for food, sex and friendship all point to something that can satisfy them, so why not the desire for God? This isn't an argument one finds discussed by many hard-headed philosophers these days, but one professor, Peter Kreeft, finds that it works really well at a music school where he teaches. "They were bored with everything in the course until they came to this," he told me. "The mind of the poet or the musician is attuned to that argument. Even though half of them were on drugs, they loved it!"



2. Good, not God

Artists do seem to have a different way of seeing proofs than the rest of us. When the great Irish novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch took up the old ontological argument that Anselm and Spinoza wrestled with, she came out not with Anselm's God, but with Good. For her, "No existing thing could be what we have meant by God's shadow of what beauty points us toward. ("Only an atheist can believe in what is unintended," Murdoch says. No matter how wrong it may be, the pervading sense of the universe. The Good exists, which is precisely why she believed that God do

1. God discovers godself in proof



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