

REALITY

A SURVEY ON
INFINITY AND THE
PRESENCE OF GOD



Reality

A Survey on Infinity and the
Presence of God

Cover: Samir Belhamra @Grafixart_photo

Reality

It was a very slow process before certain upright apes learned to *imagine*. Their brain had to have developed to a point where thinking overtook instinct, and survival depended more on wit than on the fittest. So far we have not been able to trace with certainty the line back to the band of humanoids to whom we owe our lineage, but those who first arrived at “what would happen if?” became our forebears. They were able to persist and succeed over all the others. This gift of conceptualization and critical perception was at the same time the nascent understanding of freedom from an innocent but brutish existence.

This was the brain to mind transformation. The genus *Homo* began about 28 million years ago. Paleontologists are able to tell the story by literally piecing it together from the bones. In my opinion, it was this abstract thought processing that produced the larger brained hominids. Top down intellectual activity feeding on itself was the pathway opened to persons who would just begin to understand and start reasoning about 2.5 million years ago. Mind developed more brain power, as both the brain and external impressions worked simultaneously through the senses. Our first parents emerged somewhere in the reality of an earthly paradise. Life began to have meaning when Love was finally apprehended. To accept or reject Love, once understood, was the ultimate option in human terms. The gift of choice; freedom from a former state of being, marked the transformation from animal nature. The deepest center of human consciousness, an amalgam of understanding, feeling and reason, now known as “heart” identified humanity.

It is reasonable to assume that we've all had an occasion to experience severe weather. When a storm is directly overhead the lightening strikes and thunder claps together with high winds and pelting rain can be very frightening, even for the most stalwart among us. I can personally remember one storm where the electricity in the air made the hair on my arms stand up and the thunder made my ears ring. Anyone who says they're not frightened under these conditions is not being completely honest. We've all heard of situations where people were struck by lightening on golf courses and beaches when taken unaware by severe electrical storms. The power generated can be incredible. *How Stuff Works* tells us "in an electrical storm, the storm clouds are charged like giant capacitors in the sky. The upper portion of the cloud is positive and the lower portion is negative. How the cloud acquires this charge is still not agreed upon within the scientific community, but the following description provides one plausible explanation. In the process of the water cycle, moisture can accumulate in the atmosphere. This accumulation is what we see as clouds. Interestingly, clouds can contain millions upon millions of water droplets and ice suspended in the air. As the process of evaporation and condensation continues, these droplets collide with other moisture that is in the process of condensing as it rises. Also, the rising moisture may collide with ice or sleet that is in the process of falling to the earth or located in the lower portion of the cloud. The importance of these collisions is that electrons are knocked off of the rising moisture, thus creating a charge separation."¹

It's all very scary, probably because we don't understand it completely, it's an absolute reality and certainly displays enormous power beyond our control. Depending on where you live, the earth presents different conditions that are life threatening and for which we need to be prepared. One need

only recall the devastation brought on by tornados in the American midwest to comprehend the energy nature can unleash. Now, imagine how our earliest ancestors must have reacted under similar circumstances, those who had recently received the use of reason and freedom of the will– joined to their instinctual motivations. What attribution would they make about these frightening phenomena sometimes even killing or crippling their own, those for whom they now had love? Those forces that they experienced were an absolute reality as they themselves were real. Whatever attribution they would make about them had to be imagined since they didn't have a clue as to “how stuff works.” Zeus and Thor were conjured by the caveman long before they were named by a more advanced intelligence. In the stone age there was very little ambiguity about what was real and what was not. The power of absolute reality transcended their contingencies and controlled their lives. When the animal finally morphed into “man,” he and she recognized that there was “reason” in being and meaning in reality. When the eternal question– why? was asked for the first time, the interminable search for Truth began with the full knowledge of dependency along with the understanding of personal freedom. The question we will deal with is what constitutes reality, an issue that philosophy has been wrestling with for centuries.

There are two quotes we would like to note here. The first is by Rene Descartes, a French philosopher and mathematician, (1596-1650): “*Cogito ergo Sum.*” (I think therefore I am.) This famous remark was from his *Discourse on Method* (1637) “as a first step in demonstrating the attainability of certain knowledge. It is the only statement to survive the test of his methodic doubt. The statement is indubitable, Descartes argued, because even if an all-powerful demon were to try to deceive me into thinking that I exist when I do not, I would

have to exist for the demon to deceive me. Therefore, whenever I think, I exist. Furthermore, he argued, the statement “I am” (sum) expresses an immediate intuition, not the conclusion of dubious reasoning, and is thus indubitable. Whatever I know, I know intuitively that I am.”² *Intuition*: quick and ready insight; (a) immediate apprehension or cognition; (b) knowledge or conviction gained by intuition; (c) the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference.³ The thing that always troubled me about this quote was the “cogito.” Why would I cogitate about what is intuitive? That would be a conclusion I might reach by thought processing. Immediate apprehension or immediate cognition is a knowing without thinking. For Descartes, because he could think proved to himself his own existence. Descartes took the rap for “Body/Soul duality,” a philosophical distinction which has engaged determinists and indeterminists since the so called enlightenment, an accusation which was a bit unfair, according to Professor Daniel N. Robinson in his wonderful book: *Consciousness and Mental Life*, Columbia University Press, 2008. For those of us who find the “mind/body problem” interesting, it’s a great read.

Next, Ayn Rand (1905-1982) “was a Russian-American novelist, philosopher, playwright, and screenwriter. She is known for her two best-selling novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, and for developing a philosophical system she called Objectivism.”⁴ In *Atlas Shrugged* she had her principal character, John Galt, reverse Descartes premise and say: “*I am therefore I’ll think.*” Though there have been millions of words written about Descartes’ “blunder,” true and false, the difference between his comment in *Discourse on Method* and Ayn Rand’s clever reversal in *Atlas Shrugged* leaves us with an interesting distinction. It gives us an opening to pursue a few philosophical thoughts about the notion of the “real.” It would

probably be a good idea to briefly outline the general difference between Descartes' philosophy and Rand's for those of us who are not currently familiar with either.

“René Descartes is often credited with being the ‘Father of Modern Philosophy.’ This title is justified due both to his break with the traditional Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy prevalent at his time and to his development and promotion of the new, mechanistic sciences. His fundamental break with Scholastic philosophy was twofold. First, Descartes thought that the Scholastics’ method was prone to doubt given their reliance on sensation as the source for all knowledge. Second, he wanted to replace their final causal model of scientific explanation with the more modern, mechanistic model.

Descartes attempted to address the former issue by way of his method of doubt. His basic strategy was to consider false any belief that falls prey to even the slightest doubt. This “hyperbolic [exaggerated] doubt” then serves to clear the way for what Descartes considers to be an unprejudiced search for the truth. This clearing of his previously held beliefs then puts him at an epistemological (*the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge*) ground-zero. From here Descartes sets out to find something that lies beyond all doubt. He eventually discovers “I exist” is impossible to doubt and therefore is absolutely certain. It is from this point that Descartes proceeds to demonstrate God’s existence and that God cannot be a deceiver. This, in turn, serves to fix the certainty of everything that is clearly and distinctly understood and provides the epistemological foundation he set out to find.

Once this conclusion is reached, Descartes can continue to rebuild his system of previously dubious beliefs on this absolutely certain foundation. These beliefs, which are

reestablished with absolute certainty, include the existence of a world of bodies external to the mind, the dualistic distinction of the immaterial mind from the body, and his mechanistic model of physics based on the clear and distinct ideas of geometry. This points toward his second, major break with the Scholastic Aristotelian tradition in that Descartes intended to replace their system based on final causal explanations with his system based on mechanistic principles. Descartes also applied this mechanistic framework to the operation of plant, animal and human bodies, sensation and the passions. All of this eventually culminating in a moral system based on the notion of ‘generosity.’”⁵

For Ayn Rand, “Objectivism's central tenets are that reality exists independent of consciousness, that human beings have direct contact with reality through sense perception, that one can attain objective knowledge from perception through the process of concept formation and inductive logic, that *the proper moral purpose of one's life is the pursuit of one's own happiness (or rational self-interest)*, that the only social system consistent with this morality is full respect for individual rights embodied in laissez-faire capitalism, and that the role of art in human life is to transform humans' metaphysical ideas by selective reproduction of reality into a physical form—a work of art—that one can comprehend and to which one can respond emotionally.

Rand characterized Objectivism as “a philosophy for living on earth, grounded in reality, and aimed at defining human nature and the nature of the world in which we live. My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.”

The name "Objectivism" derives from the idea that human knowledge and values are objective: they exist and are determined by *the nature of reality*, to be discovered by one's mind, and are not created by the thoughts one has. Rand stated that she chose the name because her preferred term for a philosophy based on the primacy of existence—"existentialism"—had already been taken. Rand originally expressed her philosophical ideas in her novels: *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, and other works. She further elaborated on them in her periodicals: *The Objectivist Newsletter*, *The Objectivist*, and *The Ayn Rand Letter*, and in nonfiction books such as *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* and *The Virtue of Selfishness*.⁶

I think it's worth offering a few words about Rand's Objectivism, the idea of which, in human terms, is determined by the "nature of reality." For all that has been said and written regarding the nature of reality since about 400 years before Christ until today would take an above average person a lifetime to study and probably not even then come up with a simple definition to the nature of reality. In my opinion Ayn Rand's work was more sociology than philosophy. Still, her thoughts bear interesting philosophic inferences. It is no mystery why the young people of the sixties were drawn to her ideas. For them the time had arrived for a transition from what they considered unacceptable authoritarianism, and the loss of faith in religious principles became pandemic. John Galt, put it very well in *Atlas Shrugged*: "*No ones happiness but my own is in my power to achieve or destroy.*"

Starting with Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum," and Rand's "I am therefore I'll think," we will make an effort to frame the difference between the two statements with respect to the "mind-body" problem. "In the philosophy of mind, dualism is

the theory that the mental and the physical—or mind and body or mind and brain—are, in some sense, radically different kinds of thing [res]. Because common sense tells us that there are physical bodies, and because there is intellectual pressure towards producing a unified view of the world, one could say that materialist monism is the ‘default option.’ Discussion about dualism, therefore, tends to start from the assumption of the reality of the physical world, and then consider arguments why the mind cannot be treated as simply part of that world.”⁷ What is real then, is what is ipso facto material and the rest is argumentation, yet we all know, by common sense that thinking is also real, except you can’t reach out and touch a thought. My real brain is projecting real thoughts using real language and real internal “visual” images seen by the mind’s eye which can be turned into real speech or real art. Who will say that the images Michelangelo saw in the block of granite were unreal, or the words heard by Shakespeare had no “solidarity” so to speak. The human mind has evolved over the ages with an enormous capacity for both memory and forethought. It operates in that millisecond we call the present, between the past and the future calling in memory and projecting possibilities and probabilities. Can the body (including the brain) think without “mind,” or the mind think without the body? I think not! There seems to be a coordinated simultaneity, a sort of syncretic plasma like effect in the process of “being.” A pre-consciousness a consciousness and a sub-consciousness—all working together awake or asleep in the human organism. As man morphed from the animal, higher thought processes emerged with an enlarging brain, and as the developing mind supervened, “Man” more quickly became the special, supernatural “person” that he and she is, they became individually unique. It was the interaction of the mind working with body through the senses (with their external stimuli) and

his prior internal instincts that accelerated man's advancement through time.⁸

Recognizing his freedom, it became a matter of what he did with it that would establish him as the master of the universe. He understood the difference between good and evil. He was committed to the one— and drawn by the other by “nature,” but he had advanced from the state of nature he had known. Along with survival, conscience was now in operation; there was a tendency toward the good accompanied by a strong force of natural reversion. Reasoning was his methodology and the choice was his to make, but now, *not* without consideration for others, or the power of the “real” which he experienced night and day. There were reasons why things were as they were, and it was for him to unlock with an eternal “why?” as his accumulation of knowledge accelerated.

“A number of important theorists in the natural philosophy of ancient Greece held that the universe is composed of physical ‘atoms’, literally, ‘uncuttable.’ These philosophers developed a systematic and comprehensive natural philosophy accounting for the origins of everything from the interaction of indivisible bodies, as these atoms—which have only a few intrinsic properties like size and shape—strike against one another, rebound and interlock in an infinite void. This atomist natural philosophy eschewed teleological explanations and denied divine intervention or design, regarding every composite of atoms as produced purely by material interactions of bodies, and accounting for the perceived properties of macroscopic bodies as produced by these same atomic interactions. Atomists formulated views on ethics, theology, political philosophy and epistemology consistent with this physical system. This powerful and *consistent materialism*, somewhat modified from its original form by Epicurus, was regarded by Aristotle as a

chief competitor to teleological (*evidences of design in nature*) natural philosophy.

Aristotle is commonly considered the inventor of teleology, although the precise term originated in the eighteenth century. If teleology means the use of ends or goals in natural science, then Aristotle was rather a critical innovator of teleological explanation. Teleological notions were widespread among Aristotle's predecessors, but he rejected their conception of extrinsic causes such as intelligence or god as the primary cause for natural things. Instead, he considered nature itself as an internal principle of change and as an end, and his teleological explanations focus on what is intrinsically good for natural substances themselves. Aristotle's philosophy was later combined with the teleological "proofs" for the existence of God (Aquinas, etc.), *the anthropic cosmological principle, creationism, intelligent design, vitalism, animism, anthropocentrism*, in opposition to *materialism, evolution, and mechanism*. But an examination of both his explicit methodology and the explanations actually offered in his scientific works (on physics, cosmology, theology, psychology, biology, and anthropology) shows that Aristotle's aporetic (*skeptical*) approach to teleology drives a middle course through the traditional oppositions between: causation and explanation, mechanism and materialism, naturalism and anthropocentrism (*considering human beings the most significant entity of the universe*), realism and instrumentalism (*the important thing is the idea*).⁹

Our cave dweller surely would not have understood the philosophical differences expressed by the atomists as opposed to their skeptics. For us, there are two ways of looking at the "real" today. They can be expressed by defining the differences in belief between Determinism and Indeterminism, specifically

concerning human beings. It would require an entire volume to elucidate on all the shades of this dichotomy, so we will try to stay within the bounds of the two statements to throw some light on the issue of “reality” as we know it.

Determinism: a theory that holds acts of the will, occurrences in nature, or social or psychological phenomena are causally determined only by preceding events or natural laws.

Indeterminism: a theory that the will is free and that deliberate choice and actions are not necessarily determined by or predictable from antecedent causes.¹⁰

These are the very elementary differences in thinking which have a direct bearing on the understanding of “being,” or existence, specifically about human existence.

Let’s elaborate on these theories as they relate to the philosophical claims of Descartes and Ayn Rand. Is the statement of Descartes determinate or indeterminate?

“I think therefore I am.”

In order for Descartes to think, he had to exist, he had to “be.” The fact that he was thinking proved to himself that he existed, he therefore could say unequivocally, “I am” and have no doubt. Renee got to be who he was as a result of having been born into the world in the natural way— by nature so to speak. Before he was born— he was not. As far as his physiological presence is concerned it appears to be deterministic. Yet, using reductionism we may root back through his family and through the family of man— then through all the evolutionary cycles to creation itself, and find no answers as to the initiating cause of it all, including Descartes as well as ourselves, except for an

uncreated power known as an indeterminate, un-provable prime mover or God, one of Aristotle's and Aquinas' proofs of God, *The Prime Mover*. No one philosophically or scientifically has yet been able to empirically "prove" creation or the Creator. What about Descartes' "psychological phenomenon"? Is his thought processing deterministic in the same way his physical presence appears to be? Does his free flow of thinking follow preceding thoughts in a mechanistic way? When reality presses in, other than his own contingent reality, and makes it's unpredictable impressions on him, is there a predictable causal reaction other than instinct on his part? Or does his freedom of will allow him to choose any number of ways to react? Yes, he is reacting to previous cause, but freely, so his reaction is determinate but his response may be indeterminate. "Descartes believed that living organisms, just as much as dead matter, were governed by the laws of physics. He thought of animals as machines, analogous to clocks. The Cartesian material world was rigidly deterministic. However, Descartes permitted one exception. He contended that a human soul could, by an act of the will change the direction if not the magnitude of the motion of its life. This concession to human free will seemed to be at odds with his laws of mechanics."¹¹

So Descartes, the arch determinist, who was to prove all things mathematically, without doubt, could be considered a determinate-indeterminist in the long run. His legacy was to carry with it the dubious distinction of having created the body/soul separation, or the "duality problem." However there are scholars who believe that the criticisms attributed to him regarding this matter are not entirely worthy.

Now we can treat Rand's reversal of Descartes "cogito" which she put in the mouth of her protagonist John Galt:

“I am therefore I’ll think.” If you like the sound of the Latin: Ego igitur cogitábo.

Rand, born Alisa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum (1905-1982) in Russia, and having gone through both revolutions, 1907 at the age of two and 1917, it’s best not to try to be too analytical about her motives. It would suffice to say that she was a very thoughtful and talented individual. “After the latter Russian Revolution, universities were opened to women, allowing Rand to be in the first group of women to enroll at Petrograd State University, where she studied in the department of social pedagogy, majoring in history. At the university she was introduced to the writings of Aristotle and Plato, who would be her greatest influence and counter-influence, respectively. A third figure whose philosophical works she studied heavily was Friedrich Nietzsche. Able to read French, German and Russian, Rand also discovered the writers Fyodor Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo, Edmond Rostand, and Friedrich Schiller, who became her perennial favorites. In 1925, she was granted a visa to visit American relatives. Intent on staying in the United States to become a screenwriter, she lived for a few months with relatives in Chicago, one of whom owned a movie theater and allowed her to watch dozens of films for free. She then set out for Hollywood, California.”¹² It’s obvious that Rand knew enough of Descartes to cleverly reverse his “Cogito” to suit the narrative of *Atlas Shrugged*. Let us address the statement at face value. Galt, in Rand’s mind was stating a position she thought had genuine philosophical inferences. She makes it clear in *The Virtue of Selfishness* that she is against altruism and any kind of “mystical religion” that relies on or calls for “sacrifice.” Objectivism’s primary thrust is Secular Ethics, similar to the Kant variety. Self interest with virtue is the key. This statement as well appears to be both determinate and indeterminate. Since Galt is a fictitious character, his creator

was the mind of Rand. Rand's creator, on the other hand, would be the same as Descartes' or for that matter yours and mine. To put creation in Ms. Rand's perspective, here's clip from an interview:

Question: *Where does God come in the picture?*

Answer: *Well, if you're referring to an objective, rational view of the universe as it really is (the perspective Objectivism adopts), God simply doesn't come in the picture. He does not exist.*¹³ So, reality for Rand does not include God, but virtue is included. One could ask, does virtue come from brute nature? What compels man to be virtuous?

"I am therefore I'll think," presupposes existence as a precondition for thought. It doesn't appear to me to be a very earth shaking statement. Unless of course, one, knowing that he "is," decides not to think— which is highly unlikely. With Descartes, it was the fact of his thinking that proved his existence. It all seems so simple, our senses and our cognizance surely signals that we are alive. It appears to be precisely the same with both statements. The first *thinks and presumes existence*, the other *assumes existence by implied thought*, and decides to keep on thinking, suggested by the personal pronoun I'll or I will. The paradox continues. Here we are in the 21st Century, still wrestling with the meaning of reality since Socrates. Is there in a human being a soul to be saved from oblivion by a misuse of his apparent gifts of life and freedom, or is everything the result of a natural state of eternal matter, and man just a self oriented, thinking lump of meat. Dr. Leonard S. Peikoff is a Canadian-American philosopher. A former professor of philosophy, he was designated by Ayn Rand as the heir to her estate.¹⁴ Here's what he has to say:

“The universe is the total of that which exists—not merely the earth or the stars or the galaxies, but everything. Obviously then there can be no such thing as the “cause” of the universe . . . Is the universe then unlimited in size? No. Everything which exists is finite, including the universe. What then, you ask, is outside the universe, if it is finite? This question is invalid. The phrase “outside the universe” has no referent. The universe is everything. “Outside the universe” stands for “that which is where everything isn’t.” There is no such place. There isn’t even nothing “out there”: there is no “out there.”...”To grasp the axiom that existence exists, means to grasp the fact that nature, i.e., the universe as a whole, cannot be created or annihilated, that it cannot come into or go out of existence. Whether its basic constituent elements are atoms, or subatomic particles, or some yet undiscovered forms of energy, it is not ruled by a consciousness or by will or by chance, but by the Law of Identity. All the countless forms, motions, combinations and dissolutions of elements within the universe—from a floating speck of dust to the formation of a galaxy to the emergence of life—are caused and determined by the identities of the elements involved. Nature is the metaphysically given—i.e., the nature of nature is outside the power of any volition.¹⁵

A lot of our “multiverse” believers and creationists surely would not agree, Still, for philosophers as well as scientists the search for Truth is endemic. For Peikoff, truth was found in Rand’s Objectivism. Obviously the only thing that would matter is an assumed ethical behavior while satisfying specifically the self in the pursuit of happiness. Galt says: *“I swear-by my life and by my love of it— that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine.”* These thoughts have Nietzsche written all over them.

“Übermensch.”

I have saved a statement from a very good man whom I have known. John Richard Neuhaus, founder of *First Things Magazine*. It stands on it's own: "*Ours is a period that Karl Barth, the most influential Protestant theologian of the past century, described as 'disillusioned sovereignty.' The great disillusionment is with the sovereignty of the state. The practitioners of the unbridled technological imperative in our day are eager to obtain the license and, if possible, the support of the state for their purposes. In this way they live in an older world in which there is no appeal beyond or against the state. If one had asked almost all Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century what is sovereign, they would not have answered "reason" or the "individual" or "science." The unhesitating answer would have been "the state." The darkest and most relentless depiction of the modern political project was offered by Thomas Hobbes. He taught that the incarnate and resurrected God—man who lives and governs is to be replaced in the temporal world by a mortal god (deus mortalis)—a machine like man, mythologically known as Leviathan. Engraved on the title page of the 1651 edition of his book by that title is Job 41: 24: (Non est potestas super terram quae comperatur ei—) "There is upon the earth no power like his."* After Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago, we cannot read those words without a moral shudder."

¹⁶ I'm sure Ms. Rand would agree having lived with it. I'm also sure that her Objectivism, perhaps under another name, may very well have been the cause of so much of the worlds misguided philosophy resulting in the "dictatorship of relativism" and selfishness without virtue. For some profound reason our caveman became Homo Sapiens Sapiens, surly not by unguided nature or simply by chance. Creation has a supernatural source. Who will look at the world today and not see that it is man qua man who has abrogated his gift of freedom and chose to act unnaturally in many ways for what he understands to be "the good life?"

What is virtue if not charity, and charity if not love for one another in truth? The writer of the Book of Job gave us “God’s” answer to Job’s complaints, and metaphorically and poetically set things straight between man and his Creator.

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?”

(Job 38: 4-7)

Many of us believe that the plan for man was already present in the explosion and expansion of dense matter that, according to current cosmological theories, marked the origin of the universe, and that the uncreated “ground” from whence that event came was God. No one has yet been able to give us a better idea based on “scientific” proof. Astronaut Jim Irwin, recalling his space mission said:

“The Earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart. Seeing this has to change a man, has to make a man appreciate the creation of God and the love of God.”¹⁷ Irwin, a scientist, made this assumption on reasonable grounds, not on empirical proof. His eyes saw the work of God— as the experience was processed through his brain in concert with a mind able to imagine a

power greater than the “concrete” substances resulting from the Creation itself. What he had been taught as a child with regard to Christmas trees, etc., did not prove the point, on the contrary, what he had seen and felt in space substantiated what he had been taught as a child. In my opinion his faith was secured by the grace of God. Grace that was recognized when it arrived at the “heart” of his human psyche through his vision. A simultaneity of mind and matter, subjectivity and objectivity in unison. The spirit, or the life of man, in communion with the Spirit of the living God. Grace is indeed participation in the life of God.

*“In the religious act we find the same equilibrium of the objective and the subjective which characterizes the aesthetic feeling. The religious consciousness transcends every specific theoretical and practical orientation: It unites the knowledge and love of God in one act of cognitive surrender.”*¹⁸ We cannot say that this cognition is taking place in a separate entity called either the “soul” or the body. It is a participation of the whole man *in* the palpability of God both within himself and external to himself. A discernible unity and tension of spirit with Spirit. When the followers of Zeno understood “reason” as being God, they were seeing the picture in reverse, starting with “I am,” or the “I think.” It was the Platonists who discerned “transcendence,” similar to the conclusions of primitive man. It has been Revelation and finally the Incarnation that explained the Father in real time as the ground of ultimate reality.

*“God became man for man to become God.”*¹⁹ “The universe was created in a state of journeying (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained.”²⁰ “This may sound weird at first because Christianity is a monotheistic religion and this means that there can be no other God than the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”...“According to Aquinas, the Son is the Eternal Wisdom and "man is perfected in wisdom (which is his proper perfection, as he is rational) by participating [in] the Word of God” (ST III, q. 3. a. 8) and that the reason for the Incarnation is for “*the full (explanation and) participation of the Divinity, which is the true bliss of man and end of human life; and this is bestowed upon us by Christ's humanity; for Augustine says in a sermon (xiii de Temp): ‘God was made man, that man might be made God’* (ST III, q. 1 a. 2).²¹ That is, he is “brought to his perfection” by following the words and promises of Jesus Christ, particularly by participation in the Eucharistic Mystery inaugurated by him “on the night he was betrayed.”²² The world’s knowledge of this event was brought about by an organization which was subsequently established by him, and is understood as being Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, simply because of him, regardless of how obtuse some of its participants, including some of its leaders, may have been or may be. He said, “*The gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*”²³ Most of the “people of God”²⁴ take his word for truth, “*you will know them by their fruits.*”²⁵

That surely doesn’t mean that believers forego philosophy and science and try to grasp the real presence of God strictly by theological concepts. Experiencing God in one form or another is diligently sought and guided by the realities of what has been and is being revealed. “*To think God is not religion, but Philosophy or Theology. Likewise, to strive for moral perfection, even if this includes a certain relation to God and a religious sanction, it is only indirectly related to the unique apprehension of the transcendent which we call the religious experience.*”²⁶ This is what Irwin sensed. Many other scientists also recognize this as the practical unitary relationship of God in man and man in God. The poet/philosopher Coleridge put it pretty well: “*There is something in the human mind which*

makes it know that in all finite quantity, there is an infinite, in all measures of time an eternal; that the latter are the basis, the substance, of the former; and that as we truly are only as far as God is with us, so neither can we truly possess, that is, enjoy our being or any other real good, but by living in the sense of His holy presence.”²⁷

Theology is said to be the study of God, god, or the gods. For many in today’s culture theology ought not exist since God does not exist. Those who have arrived at this conclusion are simply professing a negative view about what a majority of others believe. Theology rather, is a study of peoples “faith in God” with regard to practice and experience. The unbeliever expresses another kind of faith, i.e. certainty in a personal understanding that not only does God not exist, but that there is no necessity for anybody else to believe that he does. In the last fifty years this belief against “believers” has been unfortunately institutionalized in many of our places of learning, particularly higher learning. Formerly places of a free exchange of ideas or beliefs by informed individuals, have become lecterns aimed at replacing pulpits. Quite a few people, secure in the negativity of God, generally try to prove their point by an acrobatic display of philosophy, psychology and physics rather than notions in theology, a discipline that requires faith to begin with. A wonderful definition of theology was provided by St. Anselm suggesting that Theology is “faith seeking understanding.” If God is believed only by faith and cannot absolutely be proven, then how can God be proven unnecessary by those who do not know of this faith? Signs of religious belief were found everywhere Homo Sapiens and perhaps earlier Hominids thrived. What is notable is that it happened when there could be no possible contact between the various peoples.

Subsequently history has been shown to be cyclic. There were times when believers of certain creeds were persecuted– and times when nonbelievers of certain creeds were persecuted, but there was never a time when there were no believers. Since the time of the brain to mind transformation, man’s most formative state, preliterate people strongly believed in God or the gods, and the reality of God was ubiquitous. In fact, it would probably be more accurate to have called man *Homo Religiosum* rather than *Homo Sapiens* since it was natural for man to sense a real supervening power other than himself. Cognition of Spirit was aboriginal, no one taught man that but God himself, it came with the package. We say *himself*, because we have no other personal pronoun to describe the indescribable. Augustine, no slouch to theological concepts, says: “*We could never judge that one thing is better than another, if a basic understanding of the good had not already been installed in us,*” and again: “*I have learnt to love you late, Beauty at once so ancient and so new! . . . You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself.*”²⁸ Using the gift of analogical imagination man and God were permanently joined “in spiritu.” In spite of his presumptuous emancipation by modern philosophy and science, God is *in* man and man is *in* God; Creator and created, in *Vitae et Amoris*– every person on earth is none other than a child of God.

It is commonly understood, proven or not, that man came out of an animal-state. As that “transformation” took place man arrived at the juncture of thinking of himself as self as opposed to the others and particularly to an idealized Other from whom all reality emerged. The infant “man” (Adam and Eve if you prefer) would not have had the capacity for philosophizing or conjecturing in a search for meaning and truth at this point in his reasoning. Man, in his infancy, as anthropology has shown, displays actual signs of an all powerful “other” in figurations

similar to himself. This idealization of a supervenient spiritual entity was not instinctive but innate in what was now mind, i.e. intellectualized matter, working simultaneously as one organic whole. Human persons. *“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.”*²⁹

Can we call searching for the “ideal” a fantasy, looking for something that doesn’t exist, something imagined as false? In my understanding that’s what philosophy is all about, seeking the ideal, the ultimate truth, or in theology “faith seeking understanding.” Is the ideal separate from the real, or is the ideal the most perfect reality to be sought, the ground of all reality, what Augustine called the “good” and the Beautiful, which after much struggle he apparently found? How can we *know* what is real at all— without the possibility of an ideal? Ms. Rand’s Objectivism, her substitute existentialism, tells us that we ourselves are the ideal, and none other than the ideal. Hobbs and others, on the other hand, suggested perhaps the “state” was paramount, or an exalted ruler. One might ask, if this is so, how is it that most of us live out our particular reality failing to practice those virtues which surely appear to be required ideally? It occurs to me that many of us may have chosen an easier “ideal,” one that can be quickly caught rather than sought. We simply idealize ourselves. Maybe our ideals are tied to *res materiales*, things of our own, rather than *spiritualium*, which we are told does not exist. We humans always remain absolutely free to create our own separate reality without a categorical ideal; what we say or think is all that really matters. This is how we remain truly alone, existential, and able call virtue by any name we choose. No one shall ever command John Galt.

Is there a power “beyond” our reality that a human being with the capacity for transcendent thought can aspire to; a power that can be *known* to exist with certainty? Here we begin to deal with what is essentially an infinity-boundary problem, what we could call a spiritual hyper-space; i.e. “heaven,” supported by scriptural utterances iterating on where the infinite God is. For instance, when Jesus taught us to pray he said say: *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”*³⁰ Jesus places his Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, The God of Israel who is said to have told Moses to have him called: “I Am Who I AM” in (Exodus 3: 14) somewhere outside of the five senses, but not outside of human experience. Since the very beginning of the human journey on this planet man has had an awareness of an all powerful Other. The “drawing power” of the Ideal, a recognition of the Beautiful and the unmistakable commitment to Love and Compassion present in every honest human heart are the very real experiences that begs only for the Good to be served by human action. By contrast, everyone knows when he or she answers to the contrary. We are by nature spiritual people with the power to choose. By repeated real choices we chart our own course, but are never without the recourse of reaching for the Ideal. An Ideal cannot be objectified and found in a place. The word “heaven” in a spiritual context is not meant as a place where God dwells, but is the everywhere that God is. Its origin in religion was meant as the ubiquitous “sky”. In other words God is everywhere. It is the “beyond” of this life, but not the beyond of Life itself. Jesus said: *“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth,”*³¹ and: *“Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.”*³²

Let's "cherry pick" the Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy to see what's out there so that we may be able to make a reasoned point in defense of believer's motives as opposed to unbelievers without attacking a contrary opinion by "begging the question." It must be said though, that a believer, is one who remains in search of the Ideal, sensing the drawing power of God in all experiences and whose spirit responds in truth. For a Christian, belief is entirely based on both Scripture and Tradition regarding the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His or her theology is simply faith-based yet seeking clarification and fuller understanding through the Church to which he belongs, founded by Jesus Christ.

"Ever since Zeno, intellectuals have realized that careless reasoning about infinity can lead to paradox and perhaps 'defeat' the human mind. Some critics of infinity argue that paradox is essential to, or inherent in, the use of the concept of infinity, so that the infinite is beyond the grasp of the human mind." Another reason to believe the concept of infinity is beyond human understanding is that to have the idea, one must have some accurate mental picture of infinity. Thomas Hobbes, who believed that all thinking is based on imagination, might remark that nobody could picture an infinite number of grains of sand at once. However, most contemporary philosophers of psychology believe mental pictures are not essential to having any concept." The main issue here is whether we can coherently think about infinity to the extent of being said to have the concept. Here is a simple argument that we can: If we understand negation and have the concept of finite, then the concept of infinite is merely the concept of the not-finite." "When metaphysicians speak of infinity they use all three concepts: potential infinity, actual infinity, and transcendental infinity. When they speak about God being infinite, they are usually interested in *implying* that God is beyond human

understanding or that there is a lack of a limit on particular properties of God, such as God's goodness and knowledge and power.

The connection between infinity and God exists in nearly all the world's religions. It is prominent in Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian literature. For example, in chapter 11 of the *Bhagavad Gita* of Hindu scripture, Krishna says, "O Lord of the universe, I see You everywhere with infinite form...." "Aquinas argued in his *Summa Theologica* that, although God created everything, nothing *created* by God can be actually infinite. His main reason was that anything created can be counted, yet if an infinity were created, then the count would be infinite, but no infinite numbers exist to do the counting (as Aristotle had also said)." "David Hume, and many other philosophers, raised the problem that if God has infinite power then there need not be evil in the world, and if God has infinite goodness, then there should not be any evil in the world." "Spinoza and Hegel envisioned God, or the Absolute, pantheistically. If they are correct, then to call God infinite, is to call the world itself infinite. Hegel denigrated Aristotle's advocacy of potential infinity and claimed the world is actually infinite.

Traditional Christian, Muslim and Jewish metaphysicians do not accept the pantheistic notion that God is at one with the world. Instead they say God transcends the world. Since God is outside space and time, and the space and time that he created may or may not be infinite, depending on God's choice, but surely everything else he created is finite, they say." "The multiverse theories of cosmology in the early 21st century allow there to be an uncountable infinity of universes within a background space whose volume is actually infinite. The

universe created by our Big Bang is just one of these many universes.”³³

There, is the boundary problem. If the universe is the “beginning, and John is correct, and *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”*³⁴ What other beginning could there have been that has been scientifically “proven?” This throws a whole new light on the existence of an infinite God, regardless of the incredible advances in science. Rather than the multiverse theory or all the other theories offered by today's hyper science, let us assume that the Big Bang was John's “beginning.” God would have had to exist, infinitely, *before* the grand expansion when “all things came into being through him.” More or less similar to the writer of Genesis's understanding, i.e., *“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.*³⁵

Taking the quote literally, you could say that the “formless void” was a “bubble,” however, an infinite chain of bubbles (matter, or energy of some sort) would have to be called infinite as the theory says, yet matter, even energy, is finite. John's Trinitarian concept of God, as infinite Spirit, was what brought *all things*, (by way of the energy of the big bang), *into being*. This makes more sense from what we know about electrons, protons, et al. The question still not answered is the boundary question. Is infinity outside the cosmos, is the universe open or closed? Since God is everywhere, he would have to be “spiritually” in both places, but the *infinite* is not a place! So

the infinite must only be God, the *I Am Who I Am, who was, is, and ever shall be, from whom all things have come. Creator of heaven and earth and all things, visible and invisible.* The infinite God is not *in* infinity.

We should take a moment and clip a brief explanation of some of the ideas that philosophers have come up with regarding belief in God such as Theism, Pantheism, Panentheism, etc., from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy to refresh our memory and keep us on track regarding reality concerning God.

1. Classical or Traditional Theism

The understanding that ultimate reality is a being which is distinct from the world and any other reality. This distinction often develops into an ontological separation between God and the world that makes any interaction between God and the world problematic.

2. Pantheism

A type of theism that stresses the identity of God and the world ontologically. This identity is expressed in different manifestations so distinctions can be made, but the distinctions are temporary. There is often a strong sense of necessity in God's creation of the world so that God as God must express deity in creation.

3. Panentheism

A constructed word composed of the English equivalents of the Greek terms “pan”, meaning all, “en”, meaning in, and “theism”, meaning God. Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world. It offers an increasingly popular alternative to both traditional theism and pantheism. Panentheism seeks to avoid either isolating God from the world as traditional theism

often does or identifying God with the world as pantheism does.

4. Transcendence

Generally, God's externality to the world so that God is unlimited by any other being or reality. Hegel and then Hartshorne understand transcendence as including all that is— in order to avoid any reality external to God that limits God.

5. Immanence

God's presence and activity within the world. Panentheists assert that traditional theism limits its affirmation of God's immanence by understanding immanence as the transcendent presence of the supernatural Being within the natural realm. When this divine presence is understood as distinctly transcendent, God's presence and activity within the world as natural is an intervention of the supernatural within the natural. God, then, is absent from the natural except in specific cases of intervention.

6. Kenosis

Divine self-emptying, or withdrawal, of infinite being while present in the world.

Panentheism seeks to avoid either isolating God from the world as traditional theism often does or identifying God with the world as pantheism does. Traditional theistic systems emphasize the difference between God and the world while panentheism stresses God's active presence in the world. Pantheism emphasizes God's presence in the world but panentheism maintains the identity and significance of the non-divine. Anticipations of panentheistic understandings of God have occurred in both philosophical and theological writings throughout history (Hartshorne and Reese 1953; Cooper, 2006). However, a rich diversity of panentheistic understandings has developed in the past two centuries primarily in Christian traditions responding to scientific thought (Clayton and

Peacocke 2004). While panentheism generally emphasizes God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world, specific forms of panentheism, drawing from different sources, explain the nature of the relationship of God to the world in a variety of ways and come to different conclusions about the significance of the world for the identity of God.³⁶ For Catholics, the great theologian Karl Rahner says that panentheism is heretical only if it denies creation and the distinction of the world from God. There are, of course, other opinions among theologians.

Theology does not fall under the category of Philosophy. Searching for the Ideal, or Ultimate Truth or the “Absolute” is the thinking endeavor that has kept “philosophers” earnestly busy as their day job for about twenty eight hundred years. Philosophy is a bottom up proposition using accumulated human brain power i.e., reason, logic, instinct, etc., as tools for finding the Ideal, or God, as well as finding answers to all the other perplexing questions life presents. An Ultimate Philosophy, like the Theory of Everything (GUT) in physics, expects to have everything totally explained by man in finite terms. Anything is possible. Theology, on the other hand, has use of all the same intellectual tools but starts off with a *resonance or an experience* of the presence and closeness of God in creation, but not entirely understood in practical or intellectual terms. Believers, over the millennia have not only been reading the incredible and almost undeniable signs of order that nature provides, but have had the predictions of unique “prophets” turn out to be almost one hundred percent correct. Many of those prognosticators were philosophers as was Plato for example. This has been going on since the earliest times when man simply believed in a supervenient Spirit beyond himself. There was not much conjecture, the

ground of all reality was inherently God whatever name was used to identify him. Depending on the geographic distribution of human beings, the name of God or the gods would be different, but belief would always be present and understood. Belief, or faith, if you will, was the constant where ever man found a home. The proliferation and the names given to the gods or God were many. The internet will give you the ones we know about anthropomorphically if you care to enquire. Only through Abraham was the great variety of the gods reduced to One. *“A name of the Hebrew God, represented in Hebrew by the tetragrammaton (“four letters”) יהוה (Yod Heh Vav Heh), transliterated into Roman script Y H W H. Because it was considered blasphemous to utter the name of God it was only written and never spoken. This resulted in the original pronunciation being lost. The name may have originally been derived from the old Semitic root הוה (hawah) meaning “to be” or “to become.”*³⁷ It made sense for Saint Anselm to quote Isaiah: *“I believe, in order to understand. For this too I believe, that ‘unless I believe, I shall not understand.’”*³⁷ As we have said, theology is “faith seeking understanding” as it always has been.”

Most of us understand that the Ideal or Ultimate Reality must exist, similar to the understanding that infinity exists in a mathematical or geometric context. “In the subatomic world, though the Standard Model accurately describes the phenomena within its domain, it is still incomplete. Perhaps it is only a part of a bigger picture that includes a new physics hidden deep in the dark recesses of the universe.”³⁸ Hyper-physics so to speak. We humans have indeed been knocking on the door of the “beyond.” With the human ability to transcend ourselves and exercise incredible creativity, while recognizing breath taking aesthetics, present in the cosmos, what Saint

Augustine called the “Beautiful,” the human “animal” seems to be getting closer and closer to the divine all the time, but, as the saint explained, “*You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself.*”

In the history of the Universe man is known to have gone through two transformations. One, having received the image and likeness of God with the brain to mind crossover, and two, God himself becoming a man, one of us, at the Incarnation of Jesus Christ while still remaining Father, Son and Spirit. Through him we are given the option to make a third transformation; to be one with God starting here on earth in “The Kingdom of God,” and finally one with God when *all is in all* through the promises of Christ. It is no surprise that the John Galt’s of this generation, who honestly eschew any kind spirituality, could ever dialogue with those of “faith.” Faith being only the “assurance of things hoped for” brought on by the grace of God. Can “believers” offer proof of the existence of God as a reality? If Jesus Christ had not existed, they could *not*, except for their own personal experience of “God.” It was the Incarnation that changed the world utterly, inexorably. Man was able to see God face to face *as a man* like himself, and experience his life, his crucifixion and his resurrection and continue to *experience* his real presence among us to the end of the age. The words of Christ are offered here to close this piece; to take them within ourselves and to experience the reality of God through his *grace*, nothing other than participation in the life of God.

*“No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.”*³⁹

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”⁴⁰

Feast of St Bonaventure

Notes:

1. How Stuff Works, Internet
2. Encyc. Britannica
3. Webster
4. Wiki.
5. Encyc. of Philos. Stanford
6. Wiki.
7. Encyc. of Philos. Stanford
8. Deus Per Solum Christum, Arundell
9. Oxford Scholarship, online
10. Webster
11. Scandalon, UK, online
12. Wiki
13. The Atlas Society, online

14. Wiki
15. Ayn Rand Lexicon
16. American Babylon, Bask Books
17. Space Quotations, online
18. Suscipe, Schliermacher
19. Athenasius, Musings on Theosis
20. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 302
21. Athenasius, Musings on Theosis
22. Consecration of the Mass
23. Matt 16: 18
24. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 286
25. Matt 7: 16
26. Suscipe, Schliermacher
27. Suscipe, Coleridge
28. Suscipe, Augustine
29. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 27
30. Matt 6: 9
31. John 4: 24
32. John 8: 51
33. Encyclopedia Philos, online
34. John 1: 1
35. Genesis 1
36. Encyc. Philos, Stanford
37. Names, internet
38. Cern
39. John 6: 44
40. John 17: 21

