



Week 1: Getting Our Thinking Right
Week 2: The Cosmological Argument
Week 3: The Teleological Argument
Week 4: The Moral Argument
Week 5: The Transcendental and Ontological
Arguments
Week 6: The Problem of Evil and Suffering



Session 1:

Getting Our Thinking Right

Emergence Summer Sessions, 2026

The Existence of God



Burden of Proof

DEFINITION:

The obligation to provide evidence for one's claims.



Burden of Proof

COMMON ASSUMPTION:

Theism alone bears the burden of proof.

Atheism is the default view.



Burden of Proof

CORRECTING THE ASSUMPTION:

The debate is a clash between competing explanations for reality as we know it.



Burden of Proof

ATHEISM'S ENTAILMENTS:

Rejecting a creator is not a cost-free or or neutral position. It requires a positive commitment to several massive counter-intuitive assertions.



A LINGUISTIC SLEIGHT OF HAND: ATHEISM VS. AGNOSTICISM

THE MODERN SHIFT:

“God does not exist”

to

“I just lack belief in God”



A LINGUISTIC SLEIGHT OF HAND: ATHEISM VS. AGNOSTICISM

THE STRATEGIC GOAL:

This is an attempt to dodge the burden of proof.



A LINGUISTIC SLEIGHT OF HAND: ATHEISM VS. AGNOSTICISM

AGNOSTICISM:

The actual term for suspending judgment due to lack of knowledge or certainty.



**EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS REQUIRE
EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE**



QUESTIONS?



SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS: AVOIDING OVERREACH

OVERREACH:

When atheist scientists use their credentials to pronounce on something outside their expertise.



“... the evidence is massive enough and clear enough to tell us this much: We were created not by a supernatural intelligence but by chance and necessity.... There is no evidence of ... [a] demonstrable destiny or purpose assigned to us, no second life vouchsafed us for the end of the present one. We are ... completely alone.”

Edward O. Wilson, *The Meaning of Human Existence* (New York: Liveright, 2014), 173, as cited in Christian Smith, *Atheist Overreach: What Atheism Can't Deliver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019),



“Based on our best current scientific knowledge, we conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that a God who is the highly intelligent and powerful supernatural creator of the physical universe does not exist.”

Victor Stenger, “The Scientific Case against a God who Created the Universe,” in *The Improbability of God*, ed. Michael Martin and Ricki Monnier (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2006), 28, as cited *ibid*.



SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS: AVOIDING OVERREACH

SCIENCE:

Investigates natural phenomena using empirical evidence to build testable explanations.



SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS: AVOIDING OVERREACH

METAPHYSICS:

Uses logic and conceptual analysis to explore foundational questions (ultimate origins, causality, consciousness, nature of reality).



SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS: AVOIDING OVERREACH

SCIENCTISM:

The only things worth knowing or true are those that can be tested by science.



SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS: AVOIDING OVERREACH

MULTIPLE CAUSATION
VS.
“GOD OF THE GAPS”



THREE COMMON MISTAKES IN CONVERSATIONS

MISTAKE 1: THE CHARGE OF INDOCTRINATION



THREE COMMON MISTAKES IN CONVERSATIONS

MISTAKE 2: THE CHARGE OF WISH FULFILLMENT



THREE COMMON MISTAKES IN CONVERSATIONS

**MISTAKE 3: TREATING ARGUMENTS AS THE
ROOT OF FAITH**

