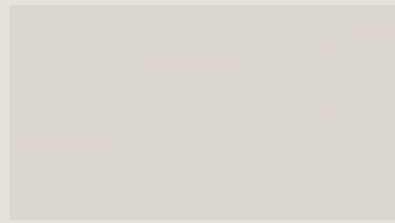




THINK
THEISM

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RATIO
CHRISTI

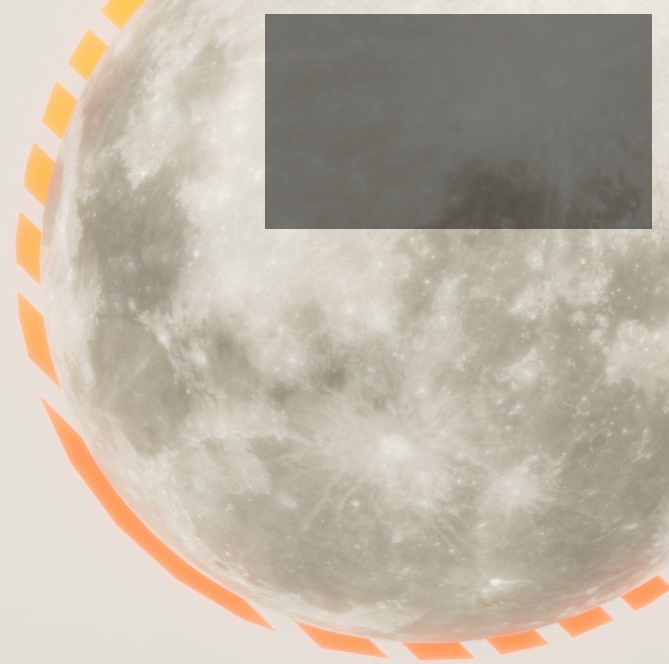
The background features a dark, starry space. A bright yellow arc, resembling a rainbow or a celestial body, spans across the upper half of the image. Below the arc, a purple wireframe landscape of jagged, mountain-like shapes stretches across the bottom. The text is centered within the yellow arc.

Is Christian Belief Warranted Without Evidence?

An introduction to Reformed Epistemology

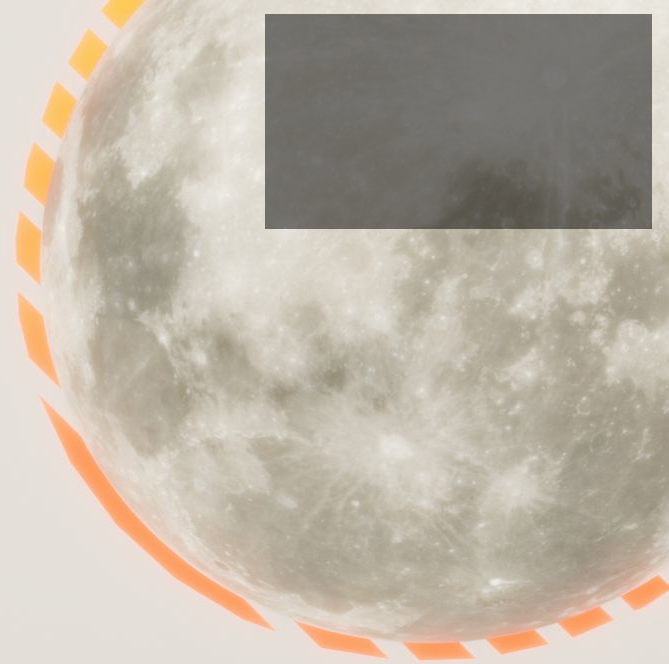
True or False

It is wrong to believe anything without sufficient evidence.

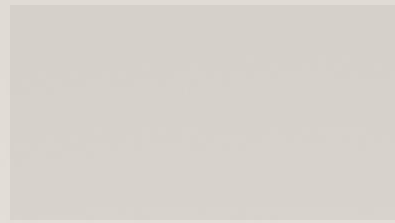


True or False

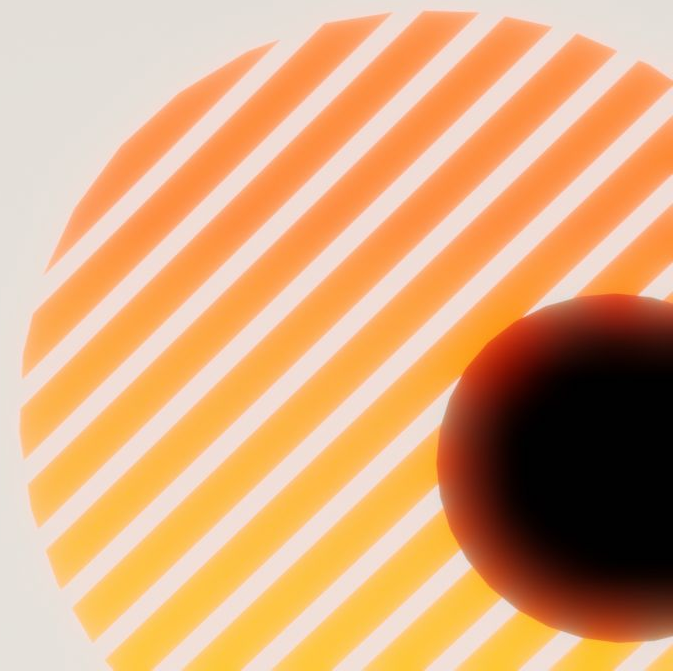
It is wrong to believe in God without sufficient evidence.



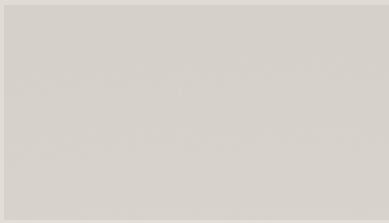
The Crucial Question



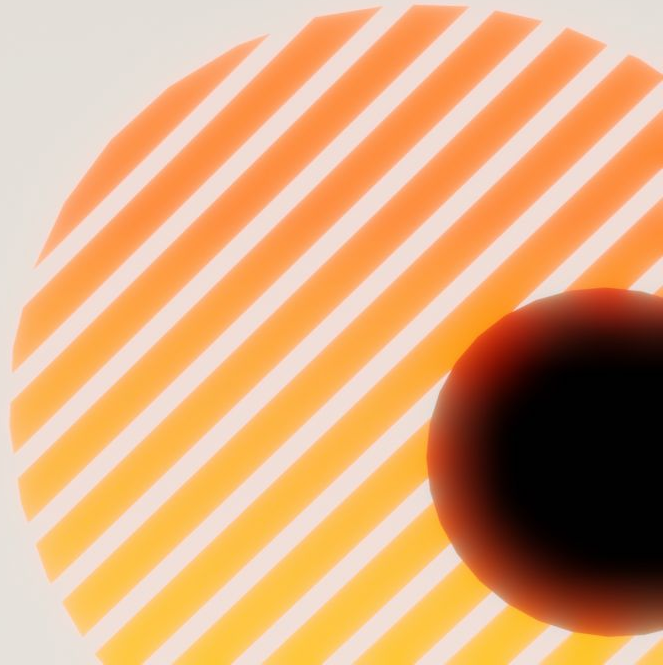
1. It is **irrational** to believe in God without sufficient **evidence**.
2. There is no **evidence** for God.
3. Therefore, theistic belief is **irrational**



The Crucial Question



1. It is **irrational** to believe in God without sufficient **evidence**.
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The Structure of Classical Apologetics

1. Does God Exist?

- a. The Cosmological Argument
- b. The Teleological Argument
- c. The Axiological Argument
- d. The Free Will Defence
- e. Skeptical Theism
- f. Theodicy

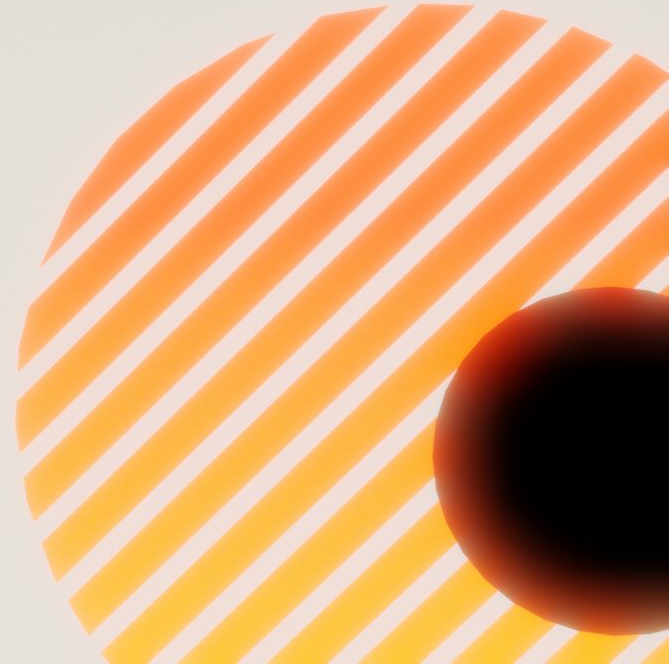
2. Is Christianity True?

- a. Arguments from Miracles
- b. Historicity of Jesus
- c. Evidence for the Resurrection



The Crucial Question

1. It is **irrational** to believe in God without sufficient **evidence**.
2. There is no **evidence** for God.
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Overview

Plantinga is taking aim at an objection to Christian belief which says it is irrational to be Christian, irrespective of whether its actually true. Plantinga says the the argument presupposes a view of epistemology known as *classical foundationalism*. So, Plantinga's project is

- (i) object to this form of foundationalism
- (ii) propose a new epistemology in its place
- (iii) defend that epistemology
- (iv) apply new epistemology to Christian belief, and
- (v) show Christian belief is rational

Background - "Reformed Epistemology"

- Developed by Alvin Plantinga
 - One of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century
 - Known for his work on the problem of evil, epistemology, metaphysics, theistic arguments
 - Reshaped the modern field of Philosophy

- Published in a Trilogy
 - Warrant: The Current Debate (1993)
 - Warrant and Proper Function (1993)
 - Warranted Christian Belief (2000)



Definitions

- **Epistemology** - the study of how we know things
- **Knowledge** - true belief + magic sauce
- **Warrant** - the magic sauce for knowledge
- **Rational** - you haven't made any reasoning errors
- **Basic Belief** - a belief that is not inferred from others
- **Properly Basic** - a belief that is not inferred from others AND it's okay
- **Evidence** - Evidence for or against p is, roughly, any information relevant to the truth or falsity of p .





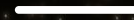
Introduction

Is Christian belief justified, rational, and warranted?

What is knowledge and warrant?

What is the criteria for warrant?





Questions

Classical Foundationalism, Evidentialism, and De Jure Objections.

Model

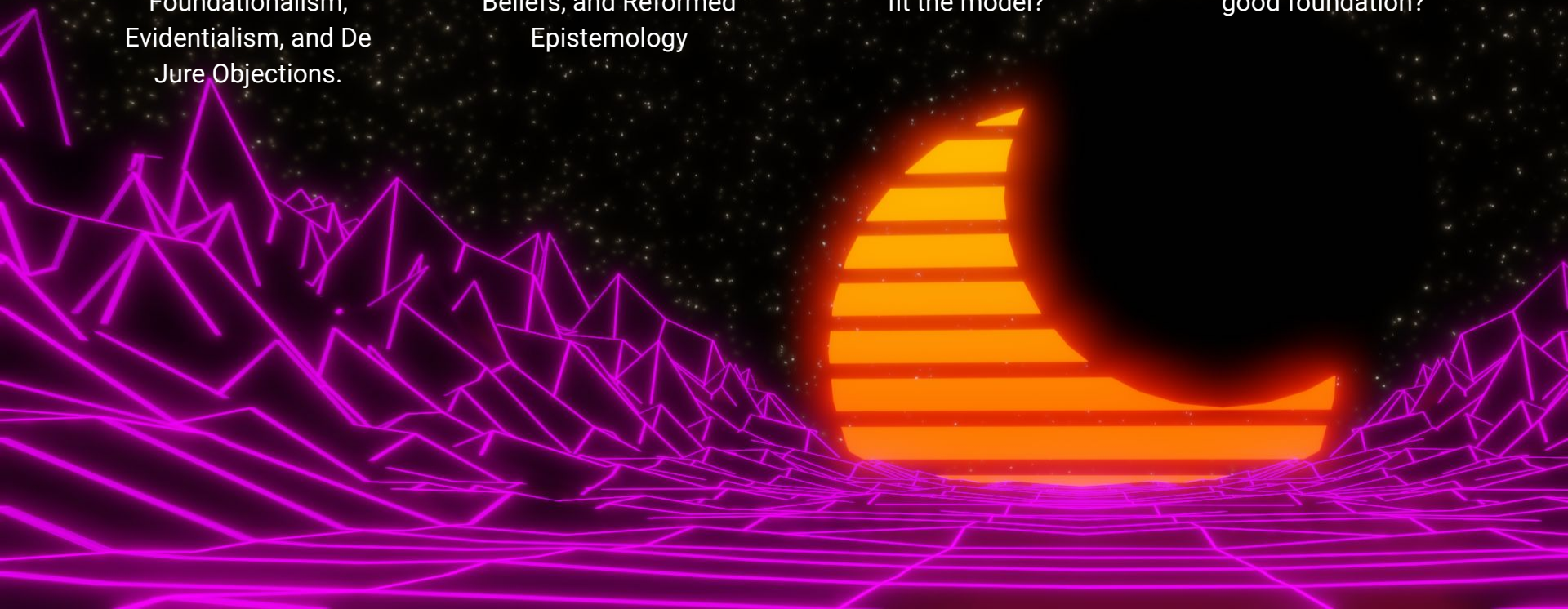
Knowledge, Basic Beliefs, and Reformed Epistemology

Case Study

How does Christianity fit the model?

God

Does God provide a good foundation?



1

Questions

Classical
Foundationalism,
Evidentialism, and De
Jure Objections.

2

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Knowledge, Basic
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Epistemology

3

Case Study

How does Christianity
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4

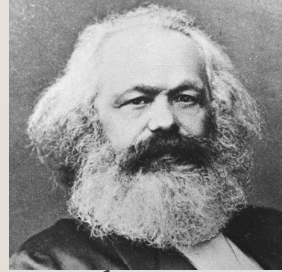
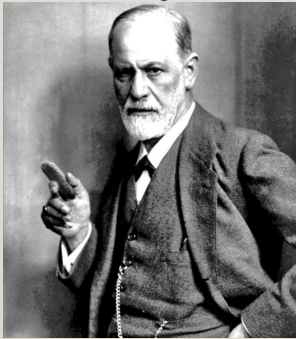
God

Does God provide a
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“De Jure” Objections

“Religion is the process of unconscious wish fulfillment, where, for certain people, if the process did not take place it would put them in self-danger of coming to mental harm, being unable to cope with the idea of a godless, purposeless life” -Sigmund Freud



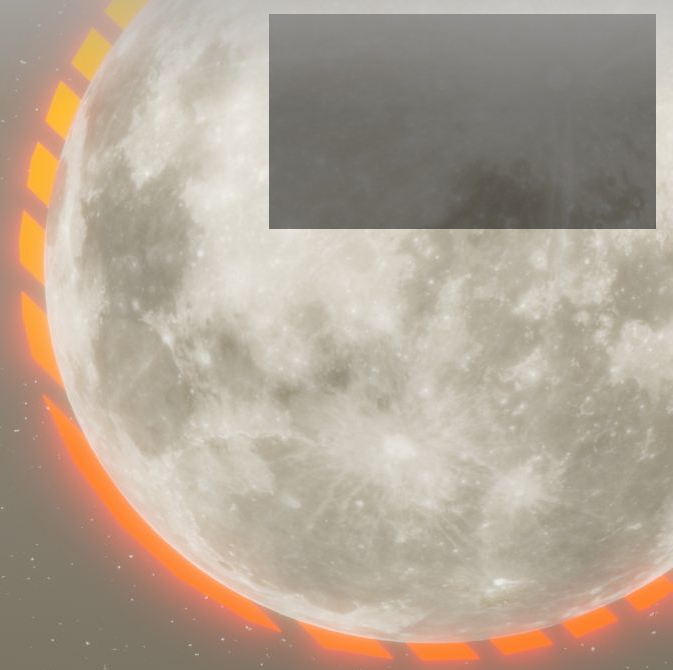
“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.” - Karl Marx

“It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence.”
- W.K. Clifford



The Crucial Question

What do these statements have in common?



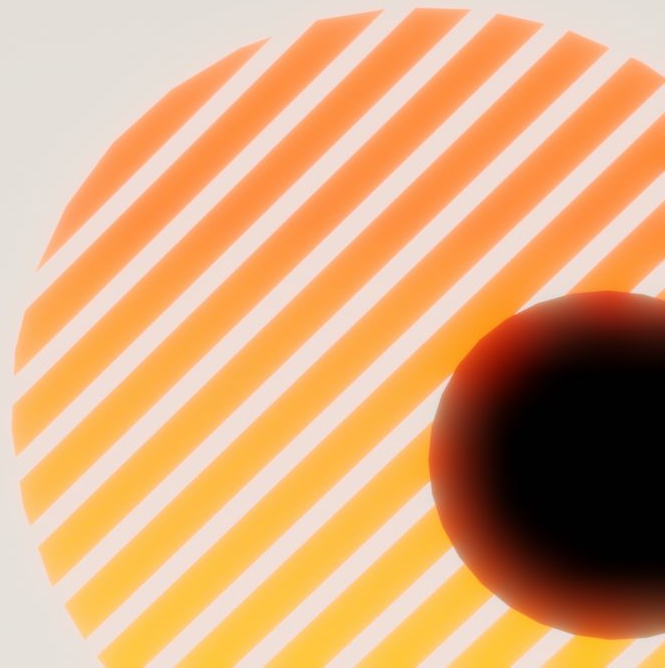
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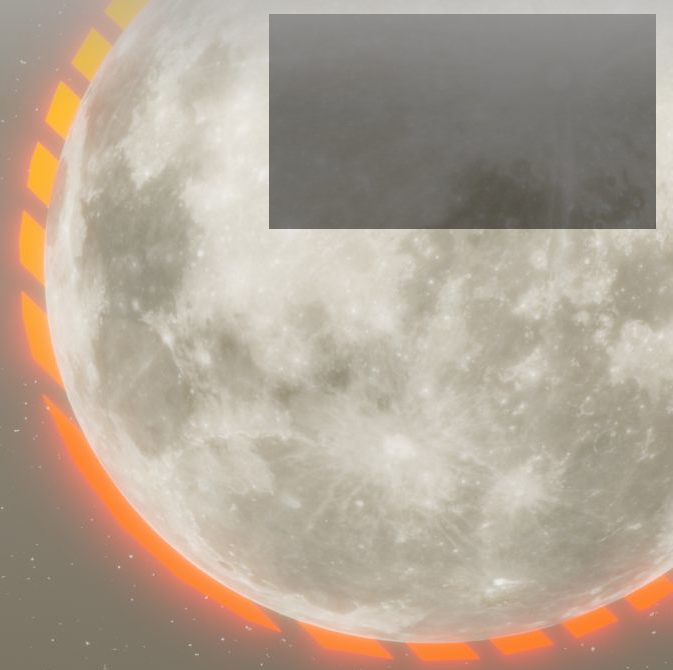
Belief in **God** is *irrational*

Classical Foundationalism

- Beliefs formed on the basis of insufficient evidence are irrational???
- Not quite; this would lead to an infinite regress, and some beliefs simply cannot have sufficient evidence
- “John Locke was entirely aware of this. It was his idea that some beliefs are certain; and beliefs that are certain, he thought, can properly be accepted in the basic way.”



The Two Types of Beliefs



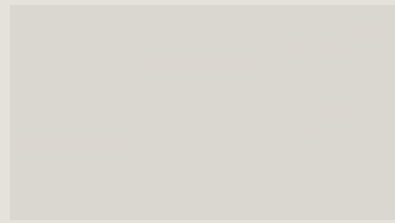
- **Non-Basic Beliefs**

- Warranted on the basis of Basic Beliefs
- Acquired through induction or deduction.

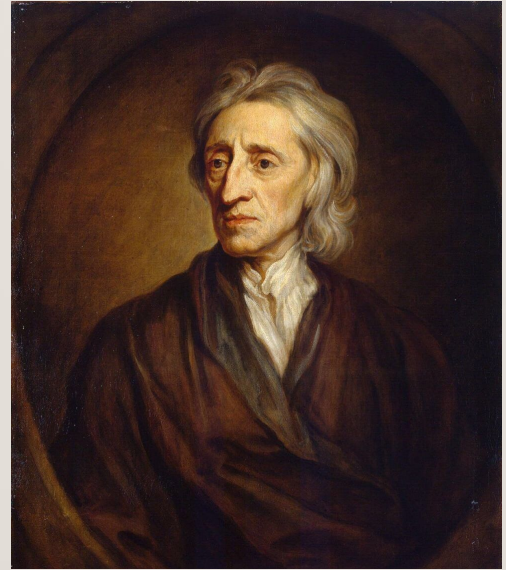
- **Basic Beliefs**

- Foundational
- Incorrigible
 - Certain
 - Impossible to falsify
- Self Evident
 - $2+2 = 4$

Classical Foundationalism - Summary



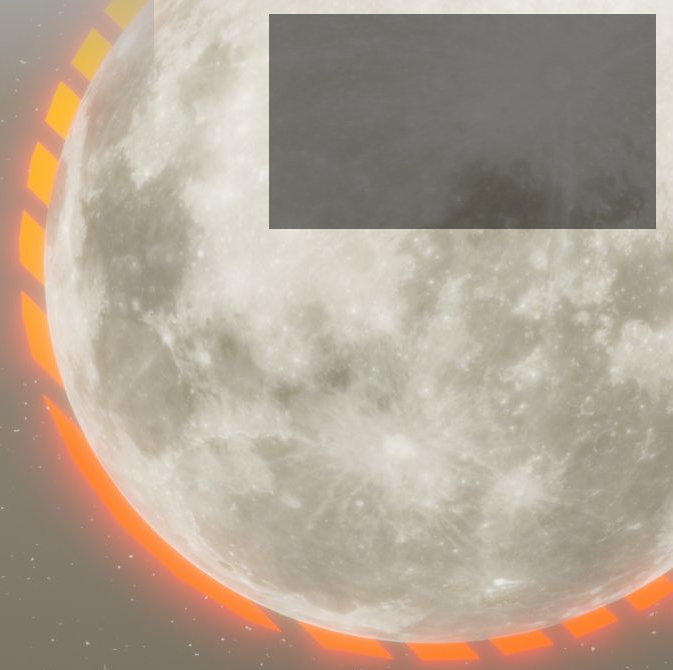
1. There are basic beliefs which are either incorrigible or self-evident.
2. All other beliefs must be formed via deduction from these beliefs.
3. Any other belief formed is irrational.



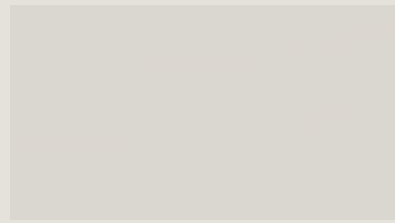
John Locke (wikimedia)

Is this view of basic beliefs too narrow?

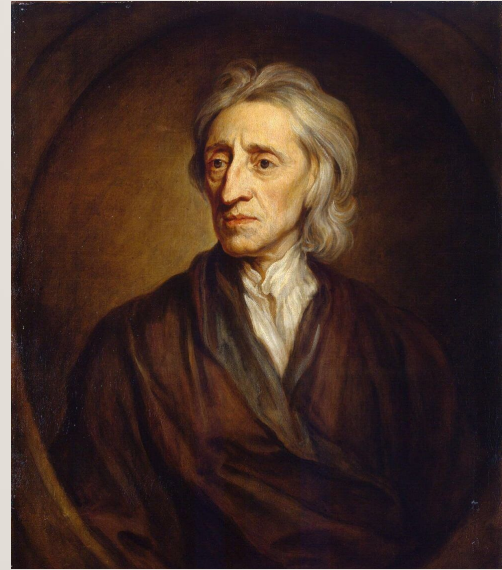
- Reality of the past
- Experiences
- Existence of other minds
- Self-defeating



Classical Foundationalism - Objections



1. Circular
2. Many beliefs about things like the past or other minds are impossible to argue strongly for.
3. Infinite regresses of deductive beliefs can occur.



John Locke (wikimedia)

1

Questions

Classical
Foundationalism,
Evidentialism, and De
Jure Objections.

2

Model

Knowledge, Basic
Beliefs, and Reformed
Epistemology

3

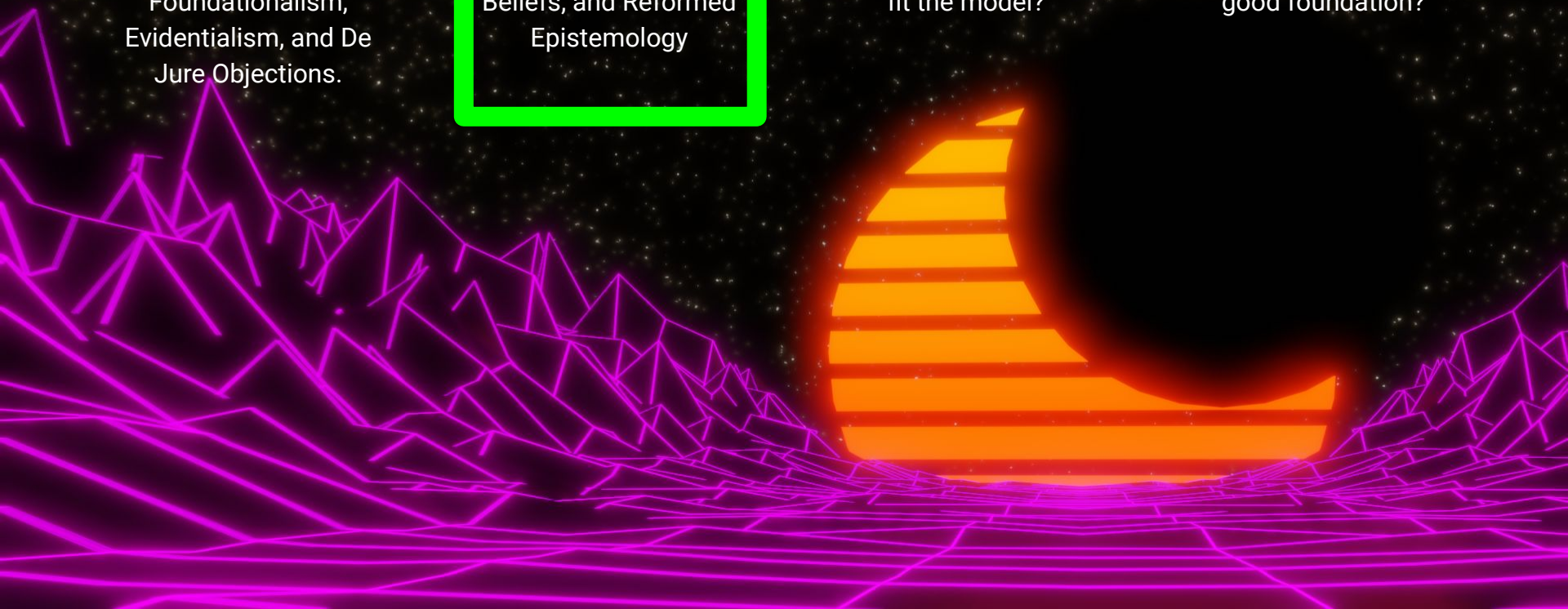
Case Study

How does Christianity
fit the model?

4

God

Does God provide a
good foundation?



If not Classical Foundationalism, then what?

Plantinga lodges two major objections to classical foundationalism

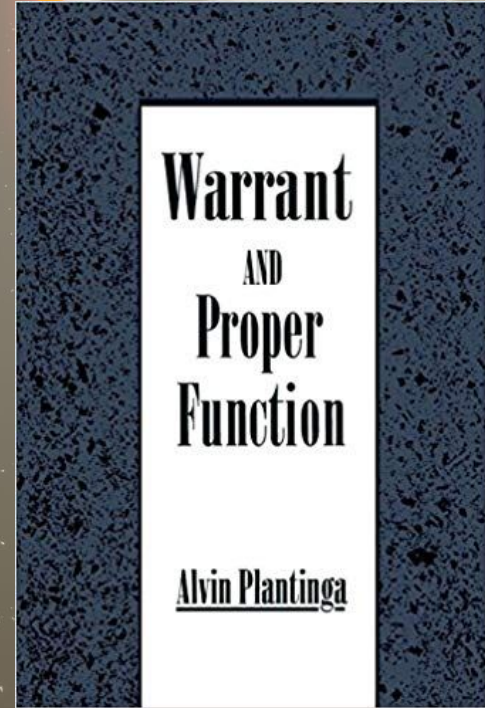
1. There is a wide array of beliefs we take to be basic but are neither incorrigible nor self-evident (e.g. existence of other minds, reality of the past, uniformity of nature).
2. The core maxim of classical foundationalism is itself, neither incorrigible nor self-evident, thus, foundationalism is self-refuting.



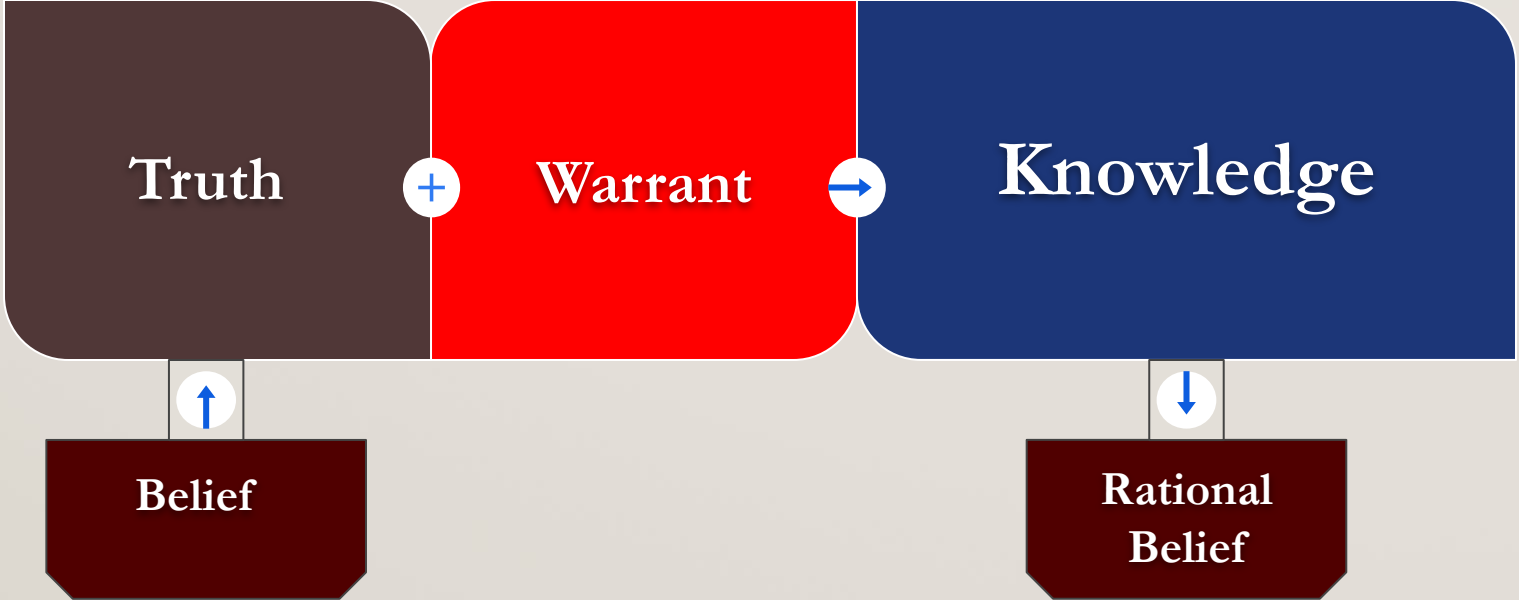
Proper Functionalism

Questions to be answered

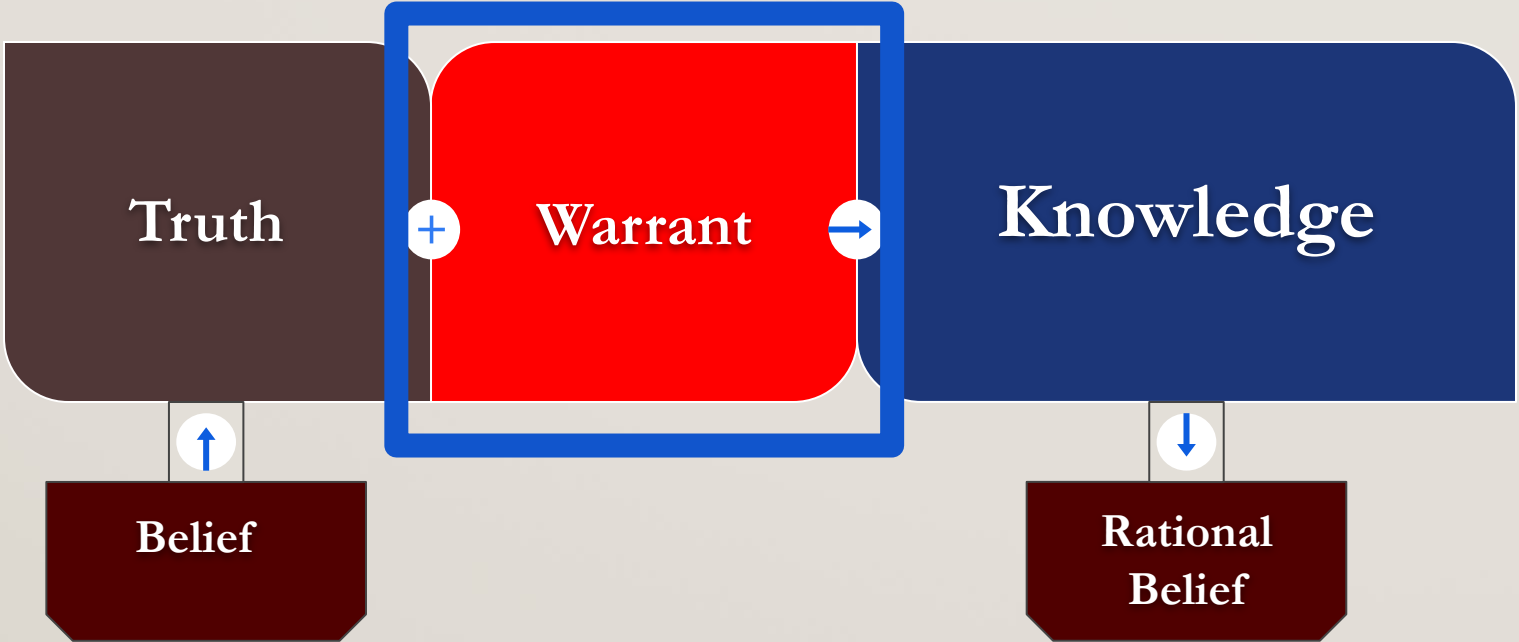
1. What does it mean to be rational?
2. What is knowledge?
3. What is a justified or warranted belief?
4. How do we determine if a basic belief is warranted?



Beliefs and Warrant



Beliefs and Warrant



Criteria for a Warranted Belief

S's belief that P is warranted if and only if at the time S forms the belief that P,

1. S's cognitive faculties are **functioning properly**,
2. S's **cognitive environment** is sufficiently similar to the one for which S's cognitive faculties are designed,
3. The design plan that governs the production of beliefs is **aimed at producing true belief**, and
4. The **design plan is a good one** such that there is a high statistical (or objective) probability that a belief produced under these conditions will be true.



Criteria for a Warranted Belief

Analogy: Mind as Machine

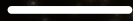
1. Proper function → Working Correctly
2. Right environment → In the Air
3. Design plan aimed at truth → Supposed to fly
4. Design plan is good at getting to truth → Good at Flying



1

Questions

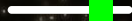
Classical
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Model

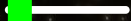
Knowledge, Basic
Beliefs, and Reformed
Epistemology



3

Case Study

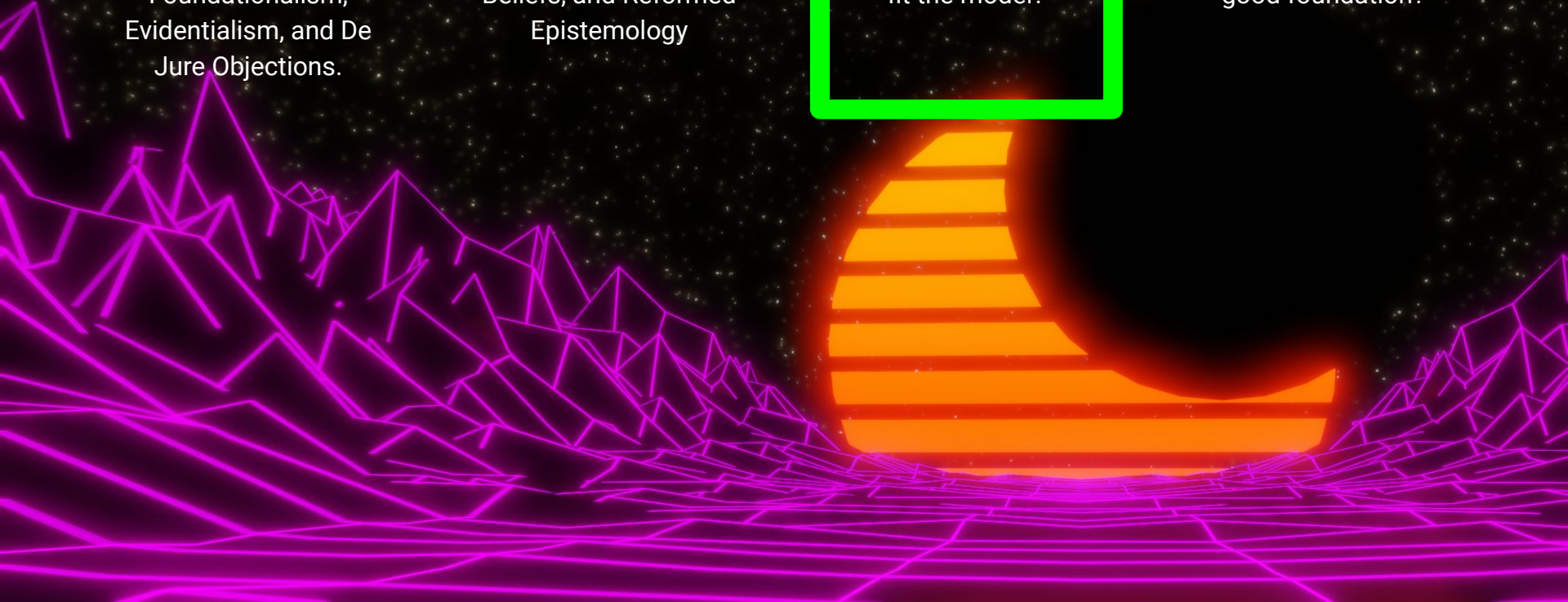
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God

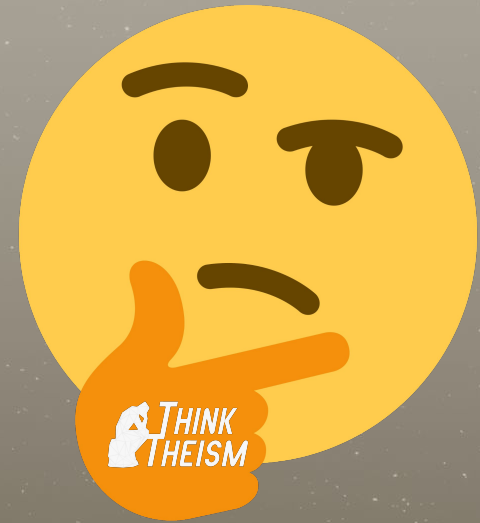
Does God provide a
good foundation?



Case Study

Now that we have a model of epistemology how do we apply it?

1. Choose a Basic Belief
2. Determine the parameters for Warrant
3. Evaluate if the belief is Warranted



Case Study: Naturalism

- What do Naturalists believe?
 - There is no such person as God or anything like God
 - Evolutionary processes formed the architecture of cognition
 - Evolution is aimed at survival, not truth.
 - Conclusion: the design plan isn't aimed a truth, so...



EAN this way

Case Study: Theism

- If God exists, He has successfully designed Carol's cognitive faculties to where they would produce a belief in God.
- This would make her belief properly basic (*sensus divinitatis*).
- God's existence becomes immediately apparent.

The A/C Model



The A/C Model

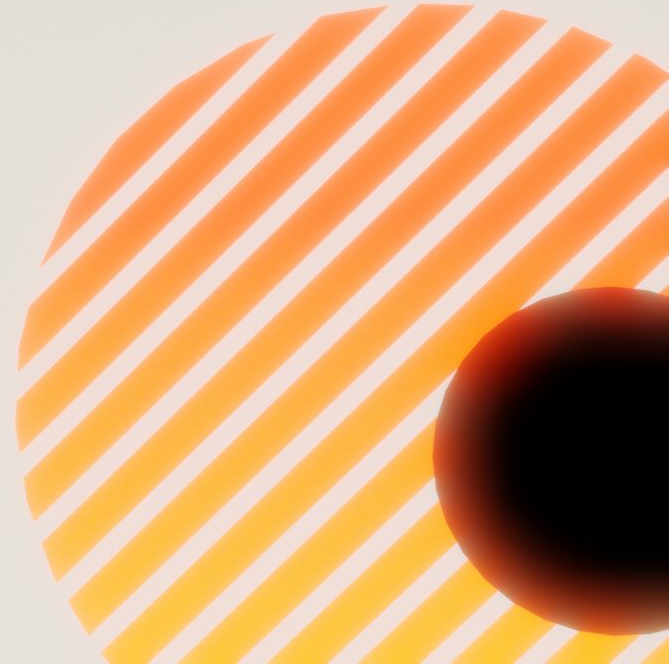
- Model set up by Plantinga based off of the writings of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin
- God created human beings with a belief producing process (*sensus divinitatis*)
- *Sensus divinitatis* works to produce beliefs about God-- namely, his existence.
- This meets the previously discussed conditions for warrant.

The Question

But how does this apply to Christianity?

The Extended A/C Model

- Claims that beliefs do not come by way of the *sensus divinitatis*, memory, perception, reason or testimony alone.
- Rather, they come by way of the Holy Spirit.
- Holy Spirit enlightens truth, and gets us to accept the gospel.
- This does not breach the criteria for justified epistemic virtues.
 - Rational
 - Warranted
- Therefore, Christian belief is properly basic.
- This leads to faith



What is Faith?

- Produced by the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit
- Knowledge of a certain and special kind.
 - Subject is (if true) of stunning significance--utterly unmatched.
 - Known by way of extraordinary cognitive process or belief-producing process. (Process--much like memory or perception).

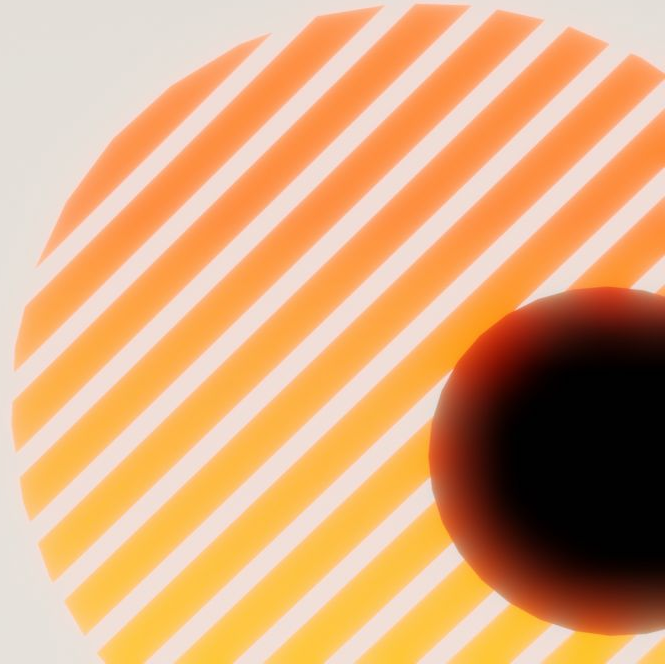
“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” -Hebrews 11:1

- Notice similarities? Theism Case Study

Case Study: Christianity

- Why is there a need for it if the Holy Spirit does all the work?
- IHS + Scripture = Faith-producing Process
- Through Scripture, the Holy Spirit seals his Word upon our hearts. This aligns our affections and thoughts with that of God.
 - Hatred for sin
 - Sanctification

When we cry, “Abba! Father!” **it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit** that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. - Romans 8:15-18



But what if you're wrong?

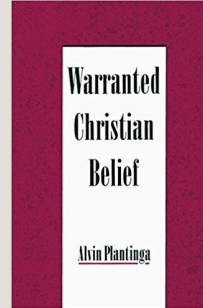
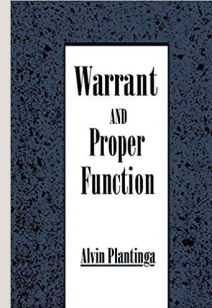
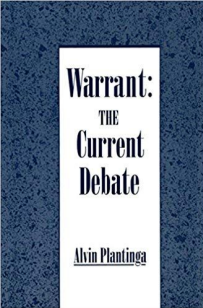
- Defeaters
 - Plantinga believes if there is a rational defeater for Christianity, then, epistemologically, it is irrational to continue believing.

Wrap-up (Conclusions)

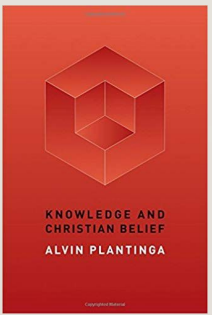
Objections to the rationality of Christian belief cannot be so easily distanced from the truth of those beliefs. If Christianity is true, then there are certain metaphysical implications that can confer warrant independent of evidence. So, any objection to Christianity's rationality will need to be accompanied by an independent argument for the falsity of Christianity.



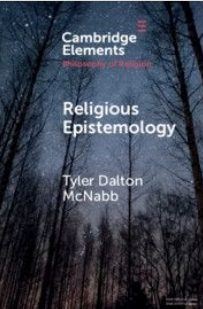
Further Reading



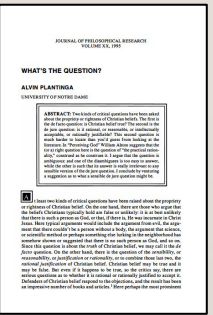
Warrant Trilogy
Alvin Plantinga
 Plantinga's magisterial work on reformed epistemology. Survey of contemporary accounts of warrant (WCD), outline & defense of proper functionalism (WPF), and application to Christianity (WCB)



Knowledge & Christian Belief
Alvin Plantinga
 Popular level distillation of the Warrant trilogy (144 pages)

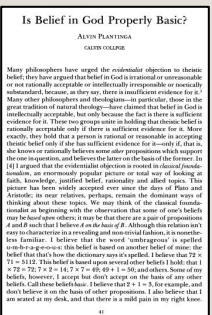


Religious Epistemology
Tyler D. McNabb
 Updated (2018), concise (50 pages), technical defense of proper functionalism & reformed epistemology.



What's the Question?
Alvin Plantinga
 Plantinga's seminal article on *de jure* objections.

"What's the Question?" *Journal of Philosophical Research* 20: 19-43.



Is Belief in God Properly Basic?
Alvin Plantinga
 Plantinga's seminal article on Reformed epistemology.

"Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" *Noûs* 15, no. 1 (1981): 41-51. doi:10.2307/2215239.

