

7 MAJOR WORLDVIEWS

The lenses through which we view and interpret the world.

7 Major World Views

Theism – One God

Atheism – No God

Deism – Uninvolved God

Polytheism – Many gods

Pantheism – God is all

Panentheism – God IN all

Finite godism - Limited God

THEISM



Theism – One personal God

One infinite personal God

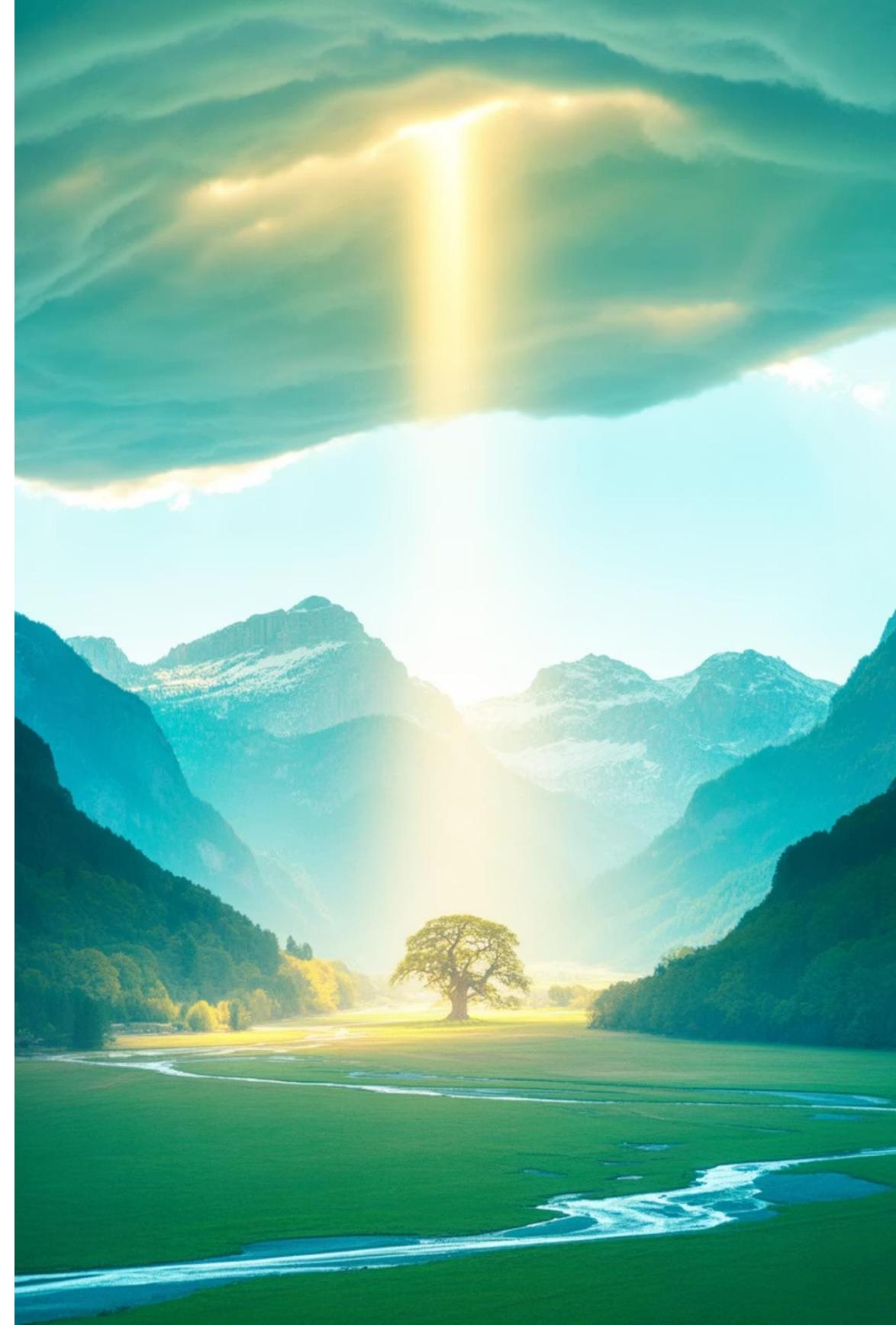
A single, unlimited, conscious being who created and sustains the universe.

Both **transcendent** and **immanent**

Exists **beyond** (transcendent - above and over creation or "up" and "out" there) and **in** (immanent - presence within creation).

In but not of the world

God is **in** the world but not *of* the world (distinct from the world just as an artist is distinct from his painting).



Theism – One personal God

Divine Attributes

Possesses all the omni-predicates:

- Omnipotent (all-powerful)
- Omniscient (all-knowing)
- Omnipresent (all-present)
- Omnibenevolent (all-good)

Miracles occur as God intervenes in the natural order.

Religious Expressions

The world is analogous to God, similar enough to allow meaningful language about the divine.

Represented in the three major monotheistic religions:

- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam

ATHEISM



Atheism – No God

Naturalistic Universe

No God exists in or beyond the universe. Reality is limited to the natural, physical world that can be observed and measured.

No Supernatural Events

No miracles or supernatural interventions (secular humanism). All events have natural explanations.

Moral Reality

Injustice and evil are realities that must be addressed through human action and social systems, not divine intervention.

Philosophical Movements

Many movements: Death of God (Al Kaiser); Death of God-talk; Myth of God (Nietzsche); Classical atheism (Freud, Ayn Rand)

Problems with Atheism

Philosophical Challenges

No First Cause

How did the universe begin? Atheism struggles to explain the origin of everything from nothing.

Morality Without Foundation

No absolute basis for morality – who decides what is right or wrong without an ultimate standard?

Evolution's Explanatory Limits

Evolution is untenable as a complete explanation. It faces crucial questions:

- Order from non-order (simple to more complex)?
- Life from non-life?
- Intelligence from non-intelligence?



Problems with Atheism



Evolution's Unanswered Questions

Something from nothing (causality)? The origin of matter and energy requires a cause.



The Personal from the Impersonal

How does consciousness, personality, and sentience emerge from non-conscious matter?



Irreducible Complexity

Many biological systems cannot function until all parts are present—they cannot begin at a basic level.



The Limits of Chance

"Chance" does not explain the origin of all things—probability calculations show the extreme unlikelihood of complex systems arising randomly.

DEISM





Deism – God set it and forget it

The Clockmaker God

One God that exists **beyond** (transcendent) the universe but **not active** in it.

The universe operates like a perfect machine, set in motion by God but running according to natural laws without divine intervention.

Historical Figures

Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were notable American deists who embraced this worldview.

Key Principles

- Mechanical universe governed by natural theology
- Similar to theism but rejects miracles
- Denies the incarnation, virgin birth, divine inspiration, and other supernatural aspects of religion
- Emphasizes reason and natural law over revelation

Problems with Deism

Inconsistent View of Miracles

Deists accept the miracle of creation but reject all other miracles. This selective acceptance appears philosophically inconsistent.

Misunderstanding Natural Laws

Deists confuse the function of the Laws of Nature (descriptive vs. prescriptive). Natural laws describe how things normally operate but don't prevent intervention.

Biblical Evidence

Ignores the abundant evidence of the reliability of the Bible, including historical accuracy, prophetic fulfillment, and archaeological confirmation.

The deist position creates an artificial barrier between God and creation, limiting divine involvement without sufficient philosophical justification.

POLYTHEISM



Polytheism – Many gods



Multiple Divine Beings

Many personal finite Gods beyond the universe and in it. Each god typically has limited power and specific domains of influence.



Immortal But Created

These gods have a beginning but no end. They are powerful and long-lived but not truly eternal in the sense of having always existed.



Compatible with Pantheism

Pantheism and polytheism are only two worldviews which are compatible with each other. Gods can be viewed as manifestations of the ultimate divine reality.



Polytheism – Many gods

Eternal World

The world is eternal – it has always existed. Unlike monotheistic creation accounts, many polytheistic traditions view the cosmos as having no beginning.

Historical Examples

Found in many historical and contemporary traditions:

- Ancient Romans and Greeks
- Some forms of Wicca and Neo-paganism
- Aspects of Mormonism
- Hindu traditions

Divine Representation

Gods are usually named after and associated with:

- Natural phenomena (thunder, sea, sky)
- Human traits and virtues (strength, wisdom, beauty)
- Human activities (war, love, crafts)

These divine beings often reflect human qualities and natural forces, magnified to supernatural proportions, providing explanations for natural events and human experiences.

Problems with Polytheism

Scientific Contradictions

The universe is not eternal, as claimed by many polytheistic systems. Modern cosmology points to a beginning:

- 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (increasing entropy)
- Expanding universe (Big Bang)
- Cosmic background radiation

Logical Hierarchy Problem

Some say the gods were birthed by the forces of nature. If so, nature is ultimate, not the gods.

This creates a logical problem: if something created the gods, that creator would be more foundational and worthy of ultimate devotion.

Problems with Polytheism

Worship Inconsistency

To render ultimate worship to what is less than ultimate is idolatry, worshiping a creation rather than the creator.

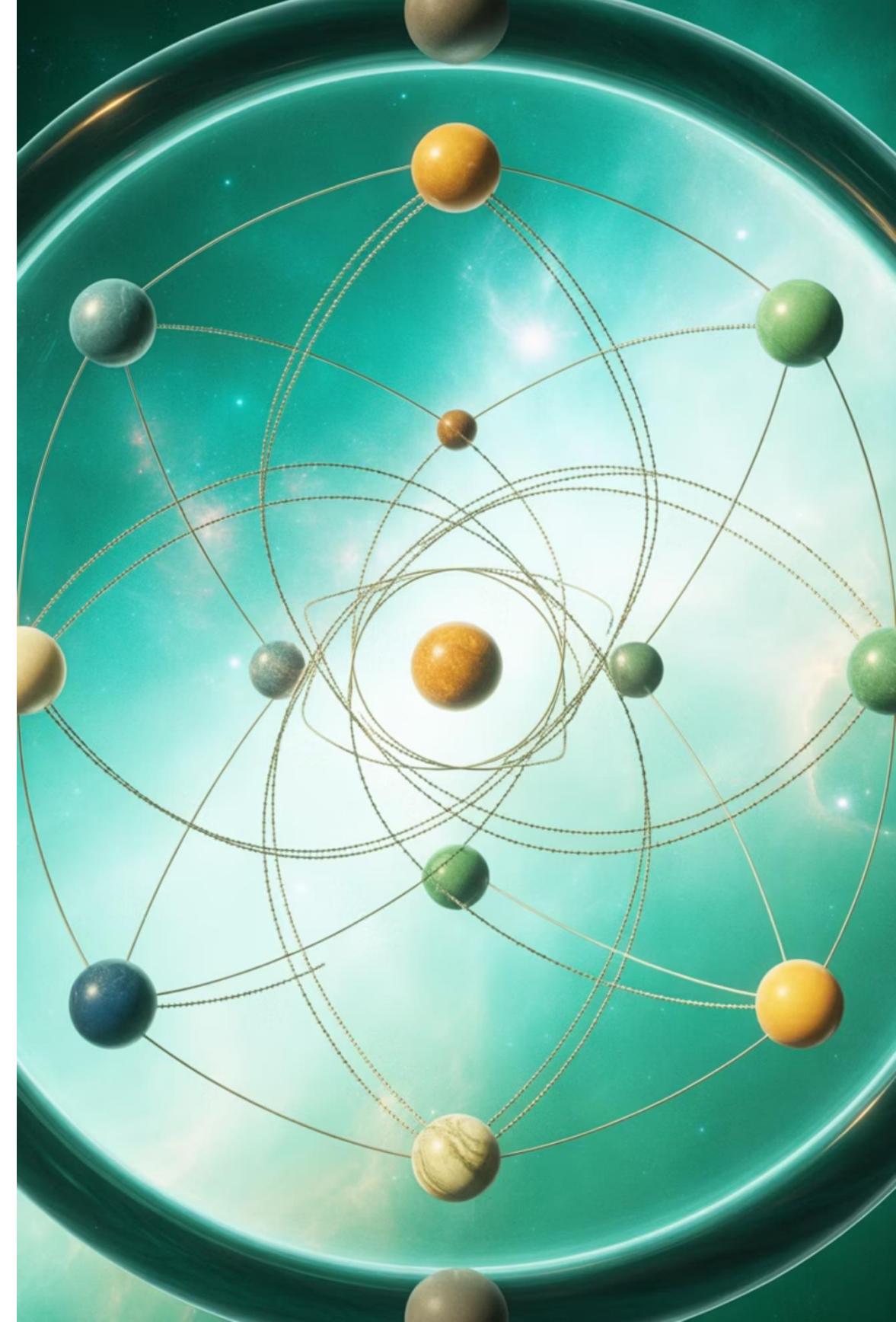
If gods are created beings with limitations, they cannot be the foundation of reality and thus would not merit ultimate devotion.

Philosophical Limitation

Philosophically, there can be only *one* perfect God – only one being can be the ultimate in all areas.

If no differences exist between multiple "perfect" gods, they would be indistinguishable and therefore the same being.

Perfect power cannot be divided among multiple beings without creating limitations.



PANTHEISM



Pantheism – God is all



God is the Universe

God (impersonal) **is** the universe – like "The Force" in Star Wars. No distinction between creator and creation.



Monistic Reality

All is **one** substance (monism) as proposed by the ancient philosopher Parmenides. Everything is interconnected and part of the same ultimate reality.



No Supernatural Events

No miracles as traditionally understood, since there is no separate divine being to intervene in natural processes.



Deism's Opposite

While deism separates God from creation, pantheism identifies God with creation completely.



Pantheism – God is all

Religious Expressions

Found in many Eastern philosophies and religions:

- Buddhism
- Taoism
- Aspects of Hinduism
- Popular culture (Star Wars' "The Force")

Philosophical Approach

Logic is often seen as a hindrance to understanding ultimate reality.

Intuition and mystical experience are valued over analytical reasoning.

Core Beliefs

According to pantheism, we have forgotten our divine nature—we are God but have lost awareness of this truth.

Spiritual Goal

The aim is to merge with the ONE and lose individual identity. The body is often viewed as temporary or illusory, while the true self is part of the universal divine.

Problems with Pantheism



Self-Defeating Logic

Pantheism creates philosophical contradictions regarding change vs. non-change. If all is one unchanging reality, how do we experience constant change?



Practical Reality Test

Fails the practical test – doesn't match our experience of reality. We experience ourselves as distinct individuals, not as one unified consciousness.



Unexplained Amnesia

Where did the spiritual amnesia come from? If we are God, how did we forget this fundamental truth about our nature?



Problems with Pantheism

Scientific Contradictions

If the world is God, how do pantheists explain the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics? The universe is moving toward entropy and disorder, which contradicts the idea of a perfect, divine cosmos.

Logical Inconsistency

To deny logic is self-defeating. Even the statement "logic is a hindrance" relies on logical reasoning to make its point.

The Problem of Evil

Ignores Evil – Pantheism doesn't work well with those who experience evil and suffering. If all is God and God is good, how do we explain evil?

When everything is divine, both good and evil become merely different aspects of the same reality, undermining moral distinctions that seem fundamental to human experience.

PANENTHEISM



Panentheism – God is **IN** all

Hybrid Worldview

This worldview is a mixture of theism and pantheism, attempting to combine the personal God of theism with the all-encompassing divine nature of pantheism.

Dipolar Divinity

A personal God that has two poles: an **infinite pole** (Spirit) beyond the physical universe and a **finite pole** (God's body) which is the universe.



Panentheism – God is **IN** all

Soul-Body Relationship

God is **in** the universe as soul is **in** the body. The universe is viewed as the physical embodiment or expression of God, but God also transcends it.

Mutual Dependence

God and the universe are **interdependent**. Unlike in theism, where God is completely independent of creation, in panentheism God needs the universe as much as the universe needs God.

This view is found in Process Theology, aspects of Hinduism, and some modern theological movements that seek to emphasize God's intimate connection with creation.

Divine Evolution

God grows, learns, and changes with history. The divine being is not static but develops alongside the universe and human experience.

Understanding Evil

Evil is seen as an incompatibility within the universe. Rather than a moral rebellion against God's will (as in theism), evil represents disharmony within the divine body.

Problems with Panentheism



Logical Contradiction

God cannot be both **infinite** and **finite** at the same time and in the same sense. This violates the law of non-contradiction.



Dependency Problem

God cannot be dependent since He is a necessary being, or else we must find what God is dependent upon (this is actually God).



Evil Resolution

If God and the universe are interdependent, and evil exists within the universe, then evil is part of God's nature—a serious theological problem.

Problems with Panentheism

The Problem of Evil

God cannot guarantee final victory over evil if God is evolving and learning alongside creation. This leaves the resolution of suffering uncertain.

If evil is merely disharmony within God's body (the universe), there's no absolute standard by which to judge actions as right or wrong.

Divine Immutability

God cannot change or else he is finite (Malachi 3:6: "For I the LORD do not change").

A truly infinite being would be perfect and complete, requiring no development or growth. Change implies moving from one state to another, which suggests

prior imperfection or limitation.

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FINITE GODISM



Finite godism – God is limited

Limited Divine Being

A finite god that is active beyond and in the universe but is limited in power, knowledge, or other attributes.

Reality of Evil

Evil is real and exists because God, while good, lacks the power to eliminate it completely.

Eternal Universe

The universe is eternal and not created by God. God works within an already existing cosmos.

Historical Origins

This view has ancient roots in Plato's philosophy and continues in some modern theological and philosophical systems.

Problems with Finite godism

Ultimate Resolution

God cannot guarantee final victory over evil if God's power is limited. This creates uncertainty about the ultimate resolution of suffering and injustice.

A finite god may be overwhelmed by evil forces, leaving no assurance of ultimate justice or redemption.

Origin Problem

If god is finite, how did god come to exist? There are only two possibilities:

- No apparent cause, which is impossible according to causality
- Created by the forces of nature, which would make nature the true ultimate reality (and thus "God")

Problems with Finite godism

Necessary Cause

The cause of the finite world must be infinite, otherwise it too would be part of the finite world requiring explanation.

Beyond Time

The creator of time cannot be in time. A truly transcendent cause must exist outside the limitations of temporality.

Infinite Regression

A finite god merely pushes the question of ultimate causation back one step, creating an infinite regression problem.

These philosophical problems suggest that if there is a God, that being must be infinite rather than finite to serve as the ultimate ground of all reality.

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