



## Questions Editorial Board

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## The Nature of God



*These essays were created by high school and middle students as part of a series of philosophical discussions with Wendy C. Turgeon. Wendy is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at St. Joseph's College and Adjunct at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.*

### A fable

There was a boy who liked to sit in the cathedral down in the square. He'd constantly be keeping an eye out on the walls like mountains, imagining that the cold lifeless stone was wet with the melting ice of some lively spring. The windows were like panels of some vibrant life of the past he could only dream of. He gazed at the pulpit, overgrown with the roots of every sermon that resounded across the mighty hall, the greens, browns, and blues filtering across the cold floor and hard, wooden pews which held hundreds of souls, seeking some sort of salvation. The young boy would sit there and read hymns, imagining himself as one of the crusaders depicted on any of the stained glass windows dedicated to now meaningless names. He imagined himself as the black-and-white clothed priest talking of something higher than he believed he could ever imagine. One day, the young boy asked the priest, "Why does God want his house to be like this?" And the priest told the boy, "The same reason you like to come here—he likes to dream."

—William McClain  
Smithtown High School—grade 11

### Those who believe in god vs. those who do not believe in god: an email exchange

To view the world from an atheistic point of view would be very hard to explain to any deeply or even mildly religious being, because of a certain close mindedness that each and everyone of them have. But as an atheist raised with the surroundings of fear of smite and fiery hells, there is still a subconscious fear that you are wrong. While most atheists view deeply religious people as mindless and following the masses, atheists who fear a god who they supposedly do not believe in are being hypocritical in this aspect. Although while doubting the existence of god, there is still the fear engraved into them. This can lead to the conclusion that all men raised in an area where the idea of god exists are believers in god. Therefore, there is no true atheist in an environment where the idea of god exists.

—Thomas Stutman  
Hauppauge High School

**Wendy (Editor) queries:** Now, let's think for a moment: are you saying that all atheists are scared of God? Or that the very act of denying the existence of God implies some concept thereof? What if I argued that there were no unicorns? Would that imply that I really accepted the existence of unicorns? Or is the atheistic position a contradictory one in some other sense? I might also question whether all religious people are close-minded as you suggest.

**Thomas responds:** I would first like to address your question, "Are all religious people close-minded?" No, I would definitely not go so far as to say that; that would be a bigoted remark in a way towards a group of individuals and wouldn't be fair. But what I mean by close-minded is that anyone who believes in god assumes that all people believe in god. For instance, many people will say "The big man upstairs is the only one who knows that," directed towards me. This is assuming that I believe in god, which in ways I do and in ways I don't, but to get into that would be getting off the subject. And many religions deny all other faiths and beliefs but their own and wish them to eternal damnation. These groups are indeed close-minded. But the fear that these groups constantly try to place in the back of every religious and non-religious member alike affects even the group that despises these types the most, atheists, in dramatic ways. And this is exactly the point that I am trying to get across. I definitely liked your questions; they helped me make a more focused writing, and make a more valid point. And I also may have cleared up some misconceptions.



## Thinking about God

When you look at the society of today, everybody has some different belief about God. The Atheists believe there is no God, the Jews and Christians have the common belief that there is a God, but their similarities extend no further, and the Muslims have Allah. All in all, everybody has some type of belief about God, as much as those who don't do deny that fact. Although people believe in God, how do we know he/she is real? Imagine God for a second; what do you see? Me, I see the shape of a human, but that is all. Other than that I see no similarities. This is because no one has ever seen God; we do not know what he/she looks like. In that case, we do not even know if he/she exists! Furthermore, how can people enforce the words of God if we do not know if he/she is real? Proof needs to be found to show that God is real, or else I might lose faith.

I am a dedicated Jew and hope to be for years to come. My faith in this religion is lessened, however, by the fact that there is no proof that God is real. How do these rabbis, priests, etc. preach that God says "this" and commands us to do "that" when there is no hard evidence that he is real? Science also proves that God had nothing to do with the creation of the earth/human race. Many years ago a Big Bang occurred. From this, came our Earth. Humans evolved from our close related species, the monkeys. I am sure that some people who would argue that God made the Big Bang occur, but with so many pieces of space junk floating in space, it is probably not uncommon for two pieces to collide. These two were just big enough to trigger a massive "explosion" which gave birth to our world.

Although all religions of the world have their beliefs about God it is impossible to say one is correct. There is no hard evidence to say that God is. When imagining God it is probably common for most people to see a human-like figure; I know I do. Most people were brought up to see God, but it could be all wrong! He could be a fish or a zebra, for all we know!

God might be an all-knowing power in some eyes, but in mine, he is a distant silhouette moving further and further away.

—Jonathan Jacobs  
8th grade, Smithtown Middle School

**Editor:** So how can we think of a being that is unavailable to perception? What is the relationship between God and religions' views of God? Have scientists proved that there is no need for God to explain the universe? Is there any way to prove that God exists or, at the very least, that the concept of God is non-contradictory? To whom could we look to help us think about these questions? Perhaps start with a visit to Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas for some suggestions.

## The Knowing of God

Latoya Curry  
Grade 4, Abraham Lincoln School, New York City

"Love as God Loves" is a great commandment to follow.  
To be pure in heart is the power of God.  
You have knowledge, wise as you are,  
Knowing right from wrong.

Heaven is the place that is the knowing of God.  
The power that comes from the heart.  
God loves us all.  
We should not fight with each other  
Because we are all the Self.

We are like a ray of sun, fragile.  
That is why we should not hurt each other.  
Knowing the truth,  
That is the knowing of God.

## Kids Philosophy Slam

By John Davis, Founder



The Kids Philosophy Slam was created in 2000 to give kids a voice and to inspire them to think by unlocking their intellectual and creative potential through a unique philosophical forum. Each year a philosophical topic is posed to students nationwide from kindergarten through high school, and students respond to the topic through essays, artwork, music and poetry.

There are national winners in each grade level, and the top four high school finalists from across the country debate the topic at the Kids Philosophy Slam Finals in Lanesboro, Minnesota. The topic for 2004 was: "War or Peace? Is world peace possible, or does human nature make war inevitable?" Entries by the winning high school finalists and selected other winners are featured here. 2004 winners in all grade levels can be seen online at [www.philosophyslam.org](http://www.philosophyslam.org).

Jasmine Weeks, Virginia, grade 2

Peace to me means when people are not being mean to others. Next, peace also means to me when you have peace and quiet. Also, peace means there is no chaos. Chaos means there will be no fighting, war, kicking, hurting, and hostilities. It also means people are friendly and they are nice. When my brother is mean to me I say let's have peace. When my sister is mean to me I say let's have peace. Sometimes when I say, "Calm down," I'm telling myself to feel peaceful. Having peace inside of me feels real good. I love peace!"



(continued on next page)

The Never Dying Soul

Mariano di Guglielmo  
Grade 3, Abraham Lincoln School, New York City

Across the blue and endless sky  
There was a shy, an endless cry.  
The sound came from a man in a cave  
Soon he will rest in his grave.  
After he's gone his soul will live on  
Without a body, bone, and flesh,  
His body burned and turned into ash  
But his spirit will never perish.