Foundations of Knowledge
Part 1: Experiential and Natural Revelation

- Introductory discussion: How can we be sure something is true?
- For two weeks, we will look at three "levels" of revelation:
  - God's existence is self-evident from experience (Experiential revelation, week 1)
  - God's attributes revealed through nature (Natural Revelation, weeks 1&2)
  - God's precise nature and will revealed through his word (Special Revelation, week 2)
- Brief discussion of *reality*, *propositional truths*, and *realism*
- Experiential revelation
  - Experiential (The Kalām cosmological argument.[1])
    1. Everything that has a beginning of its existence has a cause of its existence;
    2. The universe has a beginning of its existence;
       Therefore:
    3. The universe has a cause of its existence.
       "... transcending the entire universe there exists a cause which brought the universe into being ex nihilo ... our whole universe was caused to exist by something beyond it and greater than it. For it is no secret that one of the most important conceptions of what theists mean by 'God' is Creator of heaven and earth." [2]
  - Personal
    1. I exist (therefore something exists)
    2. I have not existed forever (I have a contingent existence, I do not have the property of self-existence)
    3. Whatever (or whoever) has the power of self existence, and created me, is God (or has sufficient Godlike properties, as most would define God)
  - Philosophical necessity of God's existence (Sproul)
    1. Rational
    2. Ontological
- "Natural Revelation"
  - God reveals Himself through creation, what He has made. (Ps. 19, Ps. 111)
  - Extrinsic knowledge of God
  - Indirect: nature does not give proposition statements.
- Empiricism: Chain from "data" to "knowledge"
- Empiricism: from "data" to "knowledge" (Rom. 1:19)
  - truth gives data
  - data is perceived (sense perception)
  - induction generalizes data into a universal concept
  - universal concept formed as propositional statements (T/F)
  - If concept matches reality = knowledge

truth → data→ perception → induction → prop. statements (T/F) → **concept of truth** (belief)

Caution! Induction is not strictly logically valid so our conclusions are not (logically) "proven."
Next week: How can we obtain *perfectly true knowledge* with a minimum of assumptions?

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[1] Nasr, trans. Seyyed Hossein, An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines. Albany : State University of New York Press, 1993
[2] Craig, William Lane (2000). The Kalam Cosmological Argument. Wipf and Stock Publishers. ISBN 978-1-57910-438-2.