

What is existence?

Philip Bitar

Version 2012-01-26

◆ **Best predictor theory of knowledge (BPT):**

Knowledge is given by the simplest, most accurate model for predicting observations

- ◇ *Best* refers to simplest, most accurate
- ◇ See handout

◆ **What does it mean to say that an object exists?**

The assumption of that existence is an axiom in our model.

- ◇ Ex: electrons, black holes, strings in string theory
- ◇ An axiom is in our model either because it improves predictive accuracy or it simplifies the model.
- ◇ Example: another mind, God (a cosmic mind)

◆ **What does it mean to say that an object does not exist?**

The assumption of that existence is not an axiom in our model.

- ◇ Ex: phlogiston (fire as element in combustibles), ether (medium for propagating light)
- ◇ Eliminate concept of the object when assumption of the object's existence is no longer in the simplest, most accurate model.
- ◇ Example: God (?)

◆ **What does it mean to say that a claim is logically unknowable?**

If the claim were true, this wouldn't affect observations or simplify the model.

- ◇ Implication: Something that is logically unknowable doesn't exist