ACTS 3057 Lectures 3-6: Does God Exist

Questions to Ponder

- If there is a God, why is it so difficult to "know" Him?
- How can God stand by and watch children massacred for absolutely no reason in the school shooting in Texas?

Philosophical Evidence for the Existence of God

- Evidence or Proofs
  - Proof implies scientific method, experimentation, etc.
  - From a spiritual perspective, if we could PROVE that God exists, then we don't leave room for faith
- Life's Ultimate Question: Is there a God?
  - Life's Existential Questions:
    - Where did I come from? Question of Origin
    - Why am I here? Question of Purpose and Meaning
    - Where am I going? Question of Destiny
  - The answer to "Is there a God?" brings the answers to Life's Existential Questions
  - Atheism answers these questions, and thus it is a BELIEF SYSTEM (as opposed to a LACK of belief)
- George has twenty philosophical arguments

Cosmological Argument

- Intro
  - The argument of Cause and Effect
  - First Cause Argument
  - A posteriori argument
    - Based on evidence and facts
    - The opposite is an A priori argument which is based on assumed truth/notions
  - Syllogism
    - Philosophical argument based on premises and a conclusion
    - Major Premise + Minor Premise + Conclusion
    - If I don't like the Conclusion, then I must poke holes in the Premises
      - Example: The Pillar of Atheism is The Problem of Evil and Suffering which is structured as a Syllogism
        - **Premise 1**: If God is all loving, He would want to get rid of all evil
        - **Premise 2**: If God is all powerful, He can get rid of evil

        - **Premise 3**: Evil exists
        - **Conclusion**: God is not all loving and all powerful
        - I don't like the conclusion, so I must poke holes in the premises
- Syllogistic Format
    - **Premise 1**: Whatever begins to exist has a cause
    - **Premise 2**: The universe began to exist
    - **Conclusion**: The universe has a cause

- There are Four Possible Explanations for the Cause of the Universe
    1. The Universe came from nothing
        - Dr Laurence Krauss - "The Universe from Nothing"
        - Dr David Albert responded negatively to Krauss' book
        - Robert Jastrow said that the Creation of the Universe from nothing would violate the laws of matter and energy.

    2. The Universe is self-created
        - Logically, this doesn't make sense! For it to create itself, it must first exist... and also not exist!
        - "The Language of God" - Dr Francis Collins wrote that "I cannot see how nature could create itself"... wrote this book as an atheist, but later became a Believer

    3. The Universe is eternal (did not begin to exist)
        - Championed by Immanuel Kant
        - Science in the last 3-4 decades conclusively proved (scientifically) that the Universe had a beginning in time
        - Robert Jastrow again refutes this in *God And The Astronomers*
        - Arthur Stanley Eddington
        - Stephen Hawking
        - Scientifically:
            - 2nd Law of Thermodynamics - Entropy: The Universe goes from order to disorder
            - Motion of the Galaxies -
            - Radiation Background of the Universe -
            - Cooling rate of the Universe - Has been cooling since the "Big Bang"
        - Philosophically, There could not have been an infinite number of moments before today, or else today would never have arrived (because infinity has no beginning or end). Since I have arrived at today, then there must have been a finite number of moments before today. Thus, the universe is not eternal.

    4. The Universe is created
        - Since the first three are false, then the fourth must be true

- What is the First Cause
    - If the Universe is composed of space, matter, time.

- The First Cause must be outside of the space, matter, time (i.e. space-less, matter-less, time-less)

- Characteristics of the First Cause
  - First Cause must be Omnipresent (because outside of space and thus, is not limited by space)
  - First Cause must be timeless (because He is outside of time and thus, is not limited by time and is outside of time)
  - First Cause must be immaterial (because He created matter and thus, is outside of matter)
  - First Cause must be all-powerful (to create out of nothing)
  - First Cause must be a person (to choose or have the will to create)
  - First Cause must be un-caused (to avoid infinite regress - i.e. 'well who created him... well who created him...')
  - First Cause must be immutable (changeless; not subject to change because change lives within the dimension of time, and the First Cause must be outside of time)
  - First Cause must be supernatural (beyond nature, since from this Cause CAME nature)
  - Sounds a lot like the God that Christians worship

- The Scripture Support
  - 2 Timothy 1:8-9 - [8] Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, [9] who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus **before time began**,
  - John 17:24 - “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me **before the foundation of the world**.
  - Psalm 90:2 - [2] **Before** the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
    Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.
  - Hebrews 3:4 - [4] For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God.
  - Isaiah 44:24 - “I *am* the Lord, who makes all *things,* Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;
  - Isaiah 48:13 - [13] Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; *When* I call to them, They stand up together.
  - Psalm 102:25-27 - [25] Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. [26] They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. [27] But You *are* the same, And Your years will have no end.
  - Romans 1:20 - [20] For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are **without excuse**,

    - There are many excuses not to believe in the existence of God, but there aren't any reasons

- Biggest Refutation is "Who Created God?"
    - That's like asking "who is the Bachelor's wife" or "Who created the Uncreated?"
    - The first Premise here was "Whatever begins to exist has a cause" - but the word "begins" implies time... but God is outside of time.

Argument for the Origin of Life

- No logical coherent answers from atheists
    - "You and I are the product of a happy chemical accident" - Richard Dawkins
    - "We don't know how life began on this planet, we don't know exactly when it began on this planet, and we don't know under what circumstances" - Andy Knoll (Harvard Scientist)
    - "We are here because one odd group of fish had a peculiar fish anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures." - Stephen J Booth

- Life could not have come from a non-living source
    - Atheist scientists, who study the origin of life for their whole lives, come to these conclusions
    - "Biochemical systems are exceedingly complex. So much so that the chance of being formed through random shuffling is insensibly different from zero. There must be an intelligence whicch designed the biochemicals and gave rise to the origin of life" - Fred Hoyle (*Evolution from Space*)
    - "It is simply inconceivable that any material matrix or field can generate agents who think and act. The forcefield does not plan or think... so the world of living, conscious, thinking beings has to originate in a living, conscious, thinking source i.e. a mind." - Antony Flew (*There is no God*, later in life *There is a God*)
    - "Since life cannot come from non-life, the only logical conclusion is that life was created supernaturally. How? I don't know." - George Wald (Harvard Geneticist)
    - "Living things come only from other living things." - Louis Pasteur (Pasteurization Discoverer, Advocated for the Law of Biogenesis)

- The Creator must also be Life-Giving (in addition to the attributes specified in the previous lecture)
    - Source of life must impart, produce, provide life - not just be living
    - If the Source is simply "living" then it begs the question - where did the Source get Life?
    - No, the Source must be Life-Giving

- Scriptural References
    - "Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)
    - "Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

    - "When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4)
    - "And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45)
    - The Life-Giving Being is the Lord Jesus Christ

- Which one would you rather be? Deliberately created? Or blindly evolved?
    - Which one will give you fulfillment, satisfaction?
    - Which gives you purpose or meaning in life?

- Syllogistic Format
    - **Premise 1:** Life exists
    - **Premise 2:** Life cannot come from non-life
    - **Conclusion:** Life came from a Life-Giving Source

Teleological Argument

- Name
    - "teleos" = purpose, goal, end of things (Greek)
    - Argument from Design
    - Fine-tuning Argument
- Constants
    - 21% of oxygen in air is just right for human life
    - Gravitational force is perfect for life to exist.
    - Distance from the sun provides the right heat for life
    - Expansion rate of universe is just right for life
    - Thickness of the earth's crust is the correct amount for life
    - Tilt of the earth offers the best condition for life
    - The speed of light is proper amount for life
    - The strong nuclear force holds the atoms together
    - Distance between stars is necessary for life
    - The cosmological constant (energy density of space) is right for matter to exist
    - The right amount of seismic activity is needed for life.
    - The position of Jupiter protects life on earth.
    - etc.
    - Lee Strobel discusses this in his books

- A Design points to a Designer
    - When you go see a painting, your mind goes to the painter
    - If walking on a beach and come across a watch, your first thought will be that it was lost by its owner, not that it was formed by natural processes and chance in the sea and washed on shore

- Quotes by Atheists

    - "The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers and parameters seem to have been finely adjusted to make possible the development of life" - Stephen Hawking
    - "As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural Agency must be involved. It is possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being. Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?" - George Greenstein (Astrophysicist)

- Could time + matter + chance result in this design?

- Scriptural References:
    - "For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead," (Romans 1:20)
    - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)
    - "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:13-14)
- Syllogistic Format
    - **Premise 1**: The constants of the universe are precisely fine-tuned in such a way that enables the existence of intelligent life
    - **Premise 2**: Intelligent life exists
    - **Conclusion**: The constants must have been fine-tuned by an Intelligent Designer

The Moral Argument

- Syllogistic Format
    - **Premise 1**: Every law has a law-giver
    - **Premise 2**: There is an absolute moral law
    - **Conclusion**: There is an absolute moral Law-Giver

- How do we know there is an absolute moral law?
    - If there isn't one, then there's no moral basis for comparing any two people
    - How do we know Mother Theresa is better than Hitler?
    - "The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures two things is something different from either." - CS Lewis

- Do objective moral values exist?
    - **Good**: Courage, Honesty, Loyalty, Love, Bravery, Kindness
        - You will not see a culture or society that says one of these is not good
    - **Bad**: Cheating, Dishonesty, Rape, Cowardice, Bigotry, Hatred

    - Inherently bad... societies may change the definitions of these things, but they are always wrong
  - On what basis are these founded?
- There are four explanations for the existence of absolute moral values
  1. Morality comes from society (Social Ethics)
  2. Morality comes from reason (Kantian Ethics)
  3. Morality comes from evolution (Evolutionary Ethics)
  4. Morality comes from God

- Morality Comes from Society
  - If this is true, why are there variations of morality across cultures?
  - Moral variations represent differences in the perception of a situation, not a conflict in the value itself
    - Values are prescriptive - "what ought to be"
    - My perception or interpretation is description - "what is"
    - Example 1: What would Hitler say if asked about whether killing innocent people is a good thing or a bad thing? It's a bad thing! But the Jews are not innocent... They are subhuman...
    - Example 2: A woman goes for an abortion once a year non-chalantly. Do you think killing innocent children is a good thing or a bad thing? Of course it's bad! But they aren't children until they're born...
  - Moral Laws vs Moral Values vs Moral Duties
  - No, but rather Society enforces morality

- Morality comes from Human Reason
  - I made up the rules
  - No, because if I make up the rules, then I can also dismiss the rules when they interfere with my self-interest... but I can't seem to dismiss these absolute moral values

- Morality comes from Evolution
  - Category Mistake
    - e.g. Yellow tastes good
  - You cannot explain an immaterial moral value by a material biological process
    - Justice is not made up of molecules
  - Moral Values are prescriptive: "what ought to be" whereas Moral Laws are descriptive: "what is"
  - "My own feeling is that a human society based simply on the gene's law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very very nasty society in which to live. Be warned that if you wish, as I do, to build a society in which individuals cooperate generously and unselfishly towards a common good, you can expect little help from biological nature. Let us try to teach generosity and altruism because we are born selfish." - Richard Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*)
  - Evolutionists claim that Morality ensures our survival
    - If whatever promotes the survival of the species is the basis for morality, then it would be morally right to kill those who are sick, handicap, stricken with

disease, etc. to ensure the survival of our species. But deep down, we know that this is wrong
    - "If we are nothing more than the products of naturalistic evolution trying to fight, feed, flee and reproduce, why trust the convictions of our minds whether about truth or about morality? If we are just 'dancing to our DNA' over which we have absolutely no control, how do we know we're right about anything?" - Paul Copan (*True for You but not for Me*)

- If morality does not come from society, from me or from evolution - where, then does morality come from?
    - The source of Morality cannot come from anything LESS than me... how can something LESS than me have authority over me?
    - Morality does not come FROM us, but rather TO us - from Someone Higher than us.
    - If morality is GIVEN to me, then Who is the Giver?
        - Must be morally perfect transcendent Giver
        - God, whom Christians call the Lord Jesus Christ
    - Can I be morally good without God?
        - Loving your friends, loving your family, being kind, being gentle, etc.
        - You can do those without believing in God
        - What is Good?
        - Why be Good?

- What is Good = Moral Values
    - "Atheists define good and bad in terms of the welfare of others" - Richard Dawkins
    - Sounds reasonable... if it produces good things for other people, then it must be bad...
    - The problem here is "Atheists define good and bad" - if good and bad are how Atheists and Humanists choose to define them, then they are a product of the human brain and human reason...
    - Why should I listen to someone else's definition to good and bad?
    - Atheists will have a hard time defining "what is Good" because what is Good always points to the Good One

- Why be Good = Moral Duties
    - Why not pursue self-interest and maximize pleasure?
    - Why be good to others? What is the real value of humans in a universe where everything is an accidental arrangement of atoms? What's so special about them?

- For an Atheist, there is no good reason to tell me that I SHOULD be good and no good definition of WHAT IS good
    - We're not saying that you have to believe in God to be good
    - We're not saying that atheists don't know morality or don't know what is good
    - We ARE saying that atheists and naturalists cannot JUSTIFY morality or provide an objective standard to judge against
    - Moral goodness is like the light and God is like the sun. You can see sunlight without seeing the sun (just as an atheist can know moral goodness without knowing God).

But, there cannot be any sunlight without the sun... and there cannot be any goodness in the life of an atheist without God, who is the sole source of all goodness.
    - Epistemology vs Ontology
        - Atheists KNOW morality (Epistemology)
        - Atheists do NOT know why it exists or where it comes from (Ontology)

- If you can be moral without believing in God, then why believe in God?
    - The problem with the human condition is not just moral goodness or ethics or morality. It's not even sin.
    - The problem with humanity is death (caused by sin - separation from God, who is light).
    - Christ came to give us that which we need the most... life
        - "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." (John 10:10)
    - What is this life? Who is this life? It is Christ.
    - To have Christ as our life is our objective as Christians.

- But a Christian can answer those two questions - and a third one with them. The answer is God.
    - What is Good?
        - Goodness is that which is aligned with the nature of God

    - Why be Good?
        - Because we are created in the Image of God and others also bear the Image of God. We are called to love them and in loving them, we love God.

    - How to be good?
        - Live the Christian life and be in union with this Morally, Perfect, Transcendent Being
        - Sacramental Life, the Church, Channels of Grace, Work of the Holy Spirit in my heart

- Scriptural References
    - "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)
    - "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (John 3:21)

- Moral Values vs Moral Laws
    - Moral Values are subjective - have a connotation of "MY values"; Moral Laws are objective - they command us
    - Moral Values are ideals that we aspire to have; Moral Laws tell us what we ought to do
    - Moral Values come from us; Moral Laws come to us
    - Moral Laws demand a Moral Law-Giver

- What happens when Moral Values or Moral Laws are gone?
  - When morality is reduced to personal taste, opinion, preference - people exchange the moral question ("What is good") with the pleasure question ("What feels good") and whatever feels good becomes good

- Morality is also a problem for Atheists
  - "Moral properties constitute so odd a cluster of properties and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events without an all-powerful god to create them." - J L Mackie
  - "Some moral views are better than others despite the sincerity of the individuals, cultures and societies that endorse them. Some moral views are true; others false. And my thinking them so doesn't make them so. My society's endorsement of them does not prove their truth. Individuals and whole societies can be seriously mistaken when it comes to morality. The best explanation of this is that there are moral standards not of our own making." - Russ Shafer-Landau
  - Many atheists have arrived at the conclusion that morality does not exist without God... but what's sad is that instead of abandoning their atheism, they abandon belief in objective morality.

Argument from Meaning in Life

- We all seek meaning in life
  - We are the only Creatures in this universe that are able to ask these questions

- What Atheists Say
  - "It is meaningless that we are born. It is meaningless that we die. We are empty bubbles floating on the sea of nothingness." - Jean-Paul Startre
  - "Life is a disease and the only difference between one man and another is the stage of the disease at which he lives." - George Bernard Shaw
  - "We must build our lives upon the firm foundation of unyielding despair." - Bertrand Russel
  - This is not surprising... because if there's no God, then everything came by chance, then there's no design, then there's no purpose, then there's no meaning.
  - "In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt and other people are going to get lucky. You will not find any rhyme or reason to it, nor any justice. The universe at the bottom has no design, no purpose, no evil and no good. Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music." - Richard Dawkins (Out of Eden)
    - "DNA neither knows nor cares" - self-defeating argument. How do you know that DNA doesn't know?

- Where does meaning come from? Value and Purpose
  - What is the Value of my life?
  - What is the Purpose of my life?
  - Where does Value come from? Who determines my Value? Where does Purpose come from? Who determines my Purpose?

    - Go back to your origin. He who created you, knows WHY He created you in the first place.
    - If you came from Time + Matter + Chance then you don't have value or purpose
    - "God made us; invented us as a man invents an engine. The car is made to run on gasoline and it would not run properly on anything else. God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He, Himself, is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is not good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about Him. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself because it is not there - there is no such a thing." - CS Lewis (Mere Christianity)
    - "You have created us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts will remain restless until they find their rest in You." - St Augustine

Arguments for the Existence of God

- Cosmological Argument
- Teleological Argument
- Argument from the Origin of Life
- Moral Argument
- Argument from Meaning

Argument from Destiny

- What happens when you die? What lies beyond the grave?
- Atheistic View
    - "You get buried" - Richard Dawkins
    - You cease to exist
    - There is nothing beyond the grave

- The Element of Hope
    - Life has several parts - birth, school, graduation, working, marriage, children, retirement, death.
    - These all have something in common - the element of hope.
        - As a student, you are working and studying because you have HOPE that you will graduate. If there's no hope to graduate, then the working and studying is not meaningful
        - As an athlete, you are practicing and working hard because you have HOPE that you will win. If there's no hope to win, then the practicing is not meaningful.
        - As an employee, you are working because you have HOPE that a paycheck will come from it. If your boss says you aren't getting a paycheck, then the work is not meaningful.

    - If all the individual parts of life require hope, shouldn't the whole of life require the element of hope?

- Christianity is founded on the Resurrection of Christ which is Hope for what is beyond the grave

Common Consent Argument

- Syllogistic Format
    - **Premise 1:** Belief in God is common to all people in all places at all times.
    - **Premise 2:** Either the vast majority of people have been deluded and wrong about this most profound element of their life, or they have not.
    - **Premise 3:** It is more probably to believe they have not been deluded about that profound idea
    - **Conclusion:** It is most plausible to believe that this idea exists; God exists
- This argument does not prove the existence of God, but shows that the existence of God is most probable
    - It is plausible that those millions who have "found God" were deluded... but it is unlikely
- Believing in God is not a "belief" but a relationship... no one "believes" they are happily married when in fact they live alone

Argument from Desire

- Syllogistic Format
    - **Premise 1:** Every innate and natural desire in us corresponds to a real object that can satisfy this desire
    - **Premise 2:** There exists in us a desire which nothing on this planet can satisfy
    - **Conclusion:** There exists something or Someone outside of this planet, transcendent to this universe or this world that can satisfy this desire
- Popularized by CS Lewis in *Mere Christianity*
- "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists. The baby feels hunger - there is such a thing as food. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world... A man's physical hunger does not prove that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation. But surely, it does prove that he inhabits a world where eatable substance exists. Likewise, though I do not believe that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, it's a pretty good indication that such a thing (i.e. paradise) exists and that some people will enjoy it. A man may love a woman and not win her, but it would be very odd if the concept of "falling in love" occurred in a sexless world." - CS Lewis

Argument from Reason

- The laws of logic and reason cannot be a mere human convention that exists independently of human mind
- What are laws of logic
    - Law of Identity

    - Whatever is, is
    - A = A

  - Law of Noncontradiction
    - Contradictory prepositions cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time
    - !(A && !A)

  - Law of Excluded Middle
    - Everything must either be or not be
    - A || !A

- If the laws of logic are not conceptions of the human mind, where do they come from?
  - They do not depend on time, matter or space
  - They seem to exist in a mind that is timeless, immaterial and spaceless
  - This Mind is what Christians call God (i.e. the Logos)

- The Laws of Logic are the Basis of All Communication
  - The laws of logic are not needed to survive and are not what make us human.
  - If we each had nothing but our own conception of the laws of logic, then communication would be impossible. But we know that communication is possible. Therefore, the laws of logic do exist.
  - When people debate, they presuppose the existence of objective truth. And each debater is trying to show that his claims are closer to that objective truth than their opponent. Without this objective truth, which is grounded in the laws of logic, communication is rendered useless

- To deny the laws of logic is self-refuting. Because if you say they don't exist, then you are using the laws of reason to do it. They are to thinking what the eyes are to seeing. Every thought depends on the laws of logic/reason.

Pascal's Wager

	God exists	God does not exist
I believe in God	Infinite Gain + Finite Loss	Finite Loss
I do not believe in God	Finite Gain + Infinite Loss	Finite Gain

- You have to bet your life on one of these four quadrants. Which one has the best risk/results.
- Pascal proposed this wager and decided that the "I believe in God" was the best bet. So he decided to live his life as if God exists. But what he found was that it was not Finite Loss, but rather Finite Gain.
- This is not an argument for the existence of God. But this is an argument to make you caution Atheism. Someone who is a mathematician might say "what am I gonna lose"

- "I would rather live my life as if there is a God, and die to find out there isn't, than live my life as if there isn't and die to find out there is." - Albert Camus
- "Aim for heaven and you'll get earth thrown in... but if you aim for earth you'll get neither heaven nor earth" - CS Lewis

Naturalism

- The idea that everything arises from natural properties and natural causes
- Naturalists believe that we, as humans, are formed by the natural things of this world
- Take a fish in a fishbowl. If the fish could talk, would it ever complain that it was wet? And if the fish wanted to leap from the fishbowl and live outside of it, wouldn't that be an indicator that the fish was not made to live in water?
- There is duality in the world
  - It seems that the world gives and takes
  - A tropical island with no cares versus a village that was ravaged by war. When I look at the latter picture, or at any disaster in the world, I feel discomfort; anxiety, sadness, etc. I desire peace.
- Isn't that an indication that I was not made for this world?
  - I was made for the heavenly Kingdom

Discussion Post 3

Does God exist? This question is the root and foundation of understanding all of life's existential questions - where did I come from, why am I here, where am I going?

We start this week by simply laying the foundation - the Universe has a Cause. The Syllogistic Format is easy to understand and frankly, very logical, I await the discussions about the atheist's usage of it for the "Problem of Pain and Suffering." Everything that exists has a cause. The Universe exists. Thus, the universe has a cause. We discussed the ONLY four potentials for the Cause of the Universe - the Universe came from nothing; the Universe came from itself; the Universe is eternal (i.e. refuting the first Premise); the Universe is Created.

I had read about the First Cause Argument (i.e. Cosmological Argument) before in *Timeless Truths* and seen it elsewhere. But this is the first time that many parts of it really made sense. For example - we read in Timeless Truths that the First Cause must be "Immaterial (He transcends space)." But I had never put together that the REASON He must transcend space is because space (along with matter and time) are what compose the Universe. So since the First Cause brought about the Universe to exist, the First Cause must be outside of those things that compose it. This goes for many of the First Cause Characteristics we discussed (e.g. Supernatural, Omnipresent, Changeless, etc.)

I also learned from the Philosophical perspective of why the Universe is not eternal... it comes down to a math problem (and I love math)... infinity has no beginning or end. So there could not have been an infinite number of moments before this very moment. Thus, there must have been a finite number of moments. Therefore, the universe is not eternal.

When considering the Timelessness of God, though it can't be fully comprehended - I've previously used the analogy of a Video Tape (or more appropriately today, a YouTube video). That video has a beginning, a middle and an end. At any given moment, you're watching the present. You can rewind to the past or fast-forward to the future. But none of those actions affect YOUR reality or YOUR timeline. In that way, you are OUTSIDE the "time" that exists in that video. It's not a perfect analogy, but of course we can barely come close to the reality of the One Who is Timeless.

Discussion Post 4

Continuing our discussion on the existence of God, we discussed three arguments this week - The Argument for the Origin of Life, the Teleological Argument (Argument from Design) and the Moral Argument.

In the Argument for the Origin of Life, we basically concluded that life must come from a Life-Giver and this was supported by the claims of several atheist philosophers, scientists, etc. After studying the Origin of Life for decades, they all seem to conclude that life cannot arise from non-life. So we add "Life-Giver" to the characteristics of the Creator that we discussed in the previous week.

In the Argument from Design, we briefly looked at several Universal Constants that seem to be fine-tuned to support life on earth. This is an argument we would hear a lot when we were kids "if the earth was just 10 feet closer to the Sun, we would all burn! See how great God is??" I remember questioning that statement because I knew that the earth moved in an elliptical pattern (sometimes closer to the sun than others) and because we regularly fly on airplanes 30,000 feet in the air and somehow don't get burned. But now, as an adult, seeing this argument it makes me almost want to investigate each of the 12 constants George mentioned (and find the rest of the 30/40 that Dr Hugh Ross writes about. The conclusion here was that for all this fine-tuning, there must be a Fine-Tuner... an Intelligent Designer.

Finally, in the Moral Argument we first agreed that absolute moral values do, indeed, exist. How could one judge between two people (e.g. Hitler and Mother Theresa)? Then, we started to discuss the four explanations for the existence of absolute moral values. Morality comes from society, from reason, from evolution, or from God. We got so far as to determine that morality cannot come from society since there are variations of morality across cultures. And so those moral variations represent differences in the perception of a situation.

Discussion Post 5

This week's lesson started by concluding the Moral argument from God.

George argued against evolutionary morality - it's a category mistake. Firstly, evolution is a physical process, but morality is not physical or physically measurable. Secondly, evolution is descriptive - describing physical changes. But morality is prescriptive - prescribing values and laws.

And thus, if morality is not evolutionary and (as discussed last week) not brought about from society or from the individual, then where does it come from? From Someone who transcends it, perfects it, and is greater than us - Who Christians call God.

The atheist may measure goodness as it relates to human welfare. But the problem with this is that the atheist's definition has no bearing on me, nor should it supersede my morals.

This reminds me of the departure of my grandmother a few years ago. For me, a man of faith, I recognized it as something from God: something good. At her funeral, in my eulogy I said something like "this is one of the saddest days of our life, and yet it is the happiest day of hers." If I assessed this day using the definition of an atheist, I could not conclude that it was a good day. But from the perspective of God, heaven rejoiced.

And why be good at all? Why not live in pleasures and lusts of life? If at the end we are buried and that's it, then the atheist has no reason to be good.

Discussion Post 6

This week we finished discussing the Arguments for the Existence of God.

We started with the Argument from Destiny. Where am I going? What lies beyond the grave. The Atheistic view is very grim and likely feeds into their arguments that we discussed last week about meaning and purpose in life. I like the logical argument that George gave us about the Element of Hope especially in that it relates directly to the Christian foundation - hope in the Resurrection. One thing we didn't really discuss is the idea of a "legacy" - many people in the secular life are very concerned with the legacy they will leave in the world and how they will be remembered or how they will affect the world. An atheist may call this the "Hope" for life beyond the grave. I'm not really sure how to answer that.

We then discussed the Common Consent Argument. Naturally, as Christians, we tend to think in the opposite way... like St Athanasius "Contra Mundum" who was AGAINST the world. However, George said something very important here... that we have an inclination to worship. It is so interesting to me when my friends at work who claim to be Atheists will naturally say something like "Jesus!" or "Oh my God!" Sometimes when something isn't going your way, you might say "please God no!" or "please please please..." I think that all of these stem from our natural inclination to worship. We may say them without meaning or "in vain" - even as Christians. But maybe it's because we come from a long line of people who consent to the idea (i.e. the Truth) that God exists.

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