

Classical Apologetics

A Reason to Believe?

CHAPTER 1

THE GREAT DEBATE

There is no issue that provokes more controversy than the question of whether or not there is a God. The debate is not limited to the parlor or the marketplace but has been the focal point of massive intellectual endeavor for centuries. The debate raged in the ancient world as vigorously as it does today. The Epicureans scoffed at the Stoics for their theistic beliefs. The Skeptics mocked the Platonists' "Idea of the Good" and the Aristotelians' "Unmoved Mover." Not all nations were enamored or persuaded by Israel's Yahweh. In every culture with believers in God there have been unbelievers. In no sense can we say there has ever been universal acceptance of either theism or atheism.

The debate has sometimes been calm, sometimes brutal. The Inquisition, the rack, the sword, and the bullet have been used as means of persuasion for religious points of view. People have been banished from their families for changing their religious alliances. Men fight, maim, and kill—or yawn dispassionately between casual puffs of their pipes as the issue is discussed. In one culture the killing of the infidel—or the believer—is viewed as a work of merit, while another culture proclaims that people should never get excited over religion. From apathy to violence, from unbridled passion to careful, calculated reasoning, the debate takes place.

Welcome to Our World

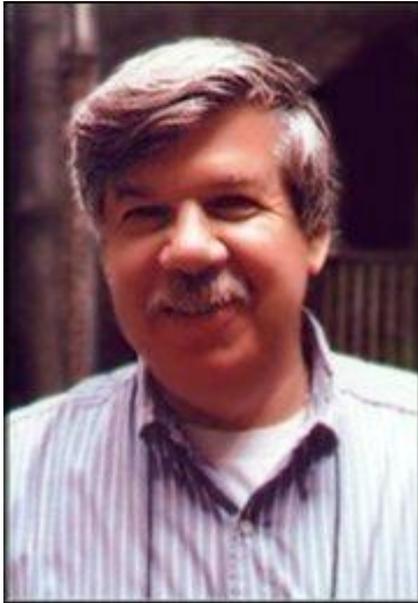
- The prevailing mood is that science yields no evidence to support believe in God and in fact has presented evidence that makes belief in a god somewhat tenuous.
- This has left our culture in a few prevailing categories....

Our Culture, Our Categories

- **A Sense of Agnosticism** (a popular choice today):
“We just don’t have any compelling evidence to affirm the existence of God.”
- **A Sense of Atheism** (Nihilism): “There is no God and science proves it.”
- **A Sense of Secularism**: (practical atheism) In light of the fact that there is no God, we should live for the ‘here and now.’

Stephan Jay Gould:

(Paleontologist / Evolutionary Biologist)



(1941-2002)

“We are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because comets struck the earth and wiped out dinosaurs thereby giving mammals a chance not otherwise available. We may yearn for a ‘higher’ answer—but none exists. This explanation, though superficially troubling, if not terrifying, is ultimately liberating and exhilarating. We cannot read the meaning of life passively in the facts of nature. We must construct these answers ourselves.”

--Life, The Meaning of Life:

Reflections in Words and Pictures

on

Why We Are Here.

Has Science Ruled out God?

- This semester is devoted to the task of offering some of the evidences for the existence of God that deals with the basic issue:

WHAT IS THE PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD?

To Do That We Must Begin With: What Are the **BIG** Questions?

- Does the Bible contradict itself?
- Isn't it all a fairy tale?
- Aren't all religions good or the same? Why Christianity?
- Isn't Christianity a crutch for weak-minded people?
- Is there a God? Can you prove God exists?
- Why is there so much evil in the world?
- What about suffering?
- Doesn't the Bible conflict with Science?
- Is the Bible Infallible?
- If there was ever a time when there was absolutely nothing, why is there something?
- Is there meaning to life? Purpose?

Or Better Still: What is *THE BIG* Question?



Titus

- How do YOU know?

Vs.

- How do you KNOW?

What Do You Know (for sure)?

- Write down five things you know for sure.
- How do you come to know these things?

What Are the Ways of KNOWING?

(How Do You Know What You Know?)

(Epistemology)

- Divine Authority?
- Human Authority?
- Experimental Observation (the Senses)
- Logic (the Mind)



- *A priori*
- *A posteriori*

Science Ignores:

Divine Authority

&

Human Authority

....and go with the Senses and Logic.

But What If....

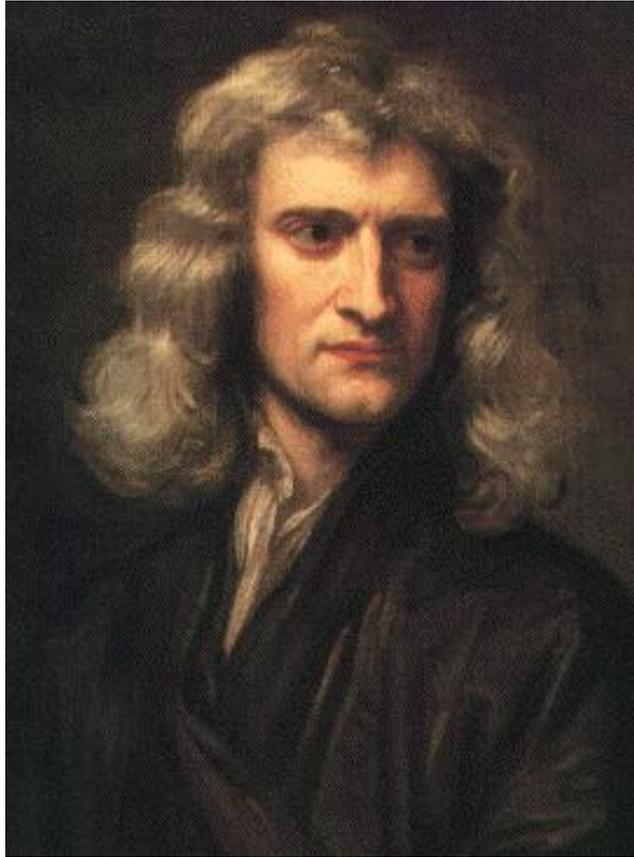
- But what if the Logic is illogical?
 - Spontaneous Generation (self-creation)?
 - Creation by Chance?
- Or what if logic is ignored altogether?
 - Can we find a 'sufficient reason' to account for the world we live in?
 - Is there proof for a necessary being that is self-existent?
 - Is that being rationally necessary?
 - **In other words:** If something exists *now*, reason demands that something has *always* existed—that something, somewhere has the power of being within itself—or we could not account for the existence of anything.

The Apologist's Task:

Proof vs. Persuasion

- The skeptic always responds with “Prove it!”
- This is a good thing!
- Our job is to offer proof not try to persuade.
- Why??

What We Can Learn from Sir Isaac Newton and Samuel Pepys



Newton



Pepys

Samuel Pepys (1633-1703)



- Diary (1641-1669)
- “Clerk of the Acts” for Royal Navy Board 1680
- Didn’t know arithmetic....so he took to learn it.

PHILOSOPHIÆ
NATURALIS
PRINCIPIA
MATHEMATICA.

Autore *J. S. NEWTON*, *Trin. Coll. Cantab. Soc. Matheseos*
Professore Lucafiano, & Societatis Regalis Sodali.

IMPRIMATUR.

S. PEPYS, *Reg. Soc. PRÆSES.*

Julii 5. 1686.

LONDINI,

Jussu Societatis Regiæ ac Typis Josephi Streater. Prostant Vena-
les apud Sam. Smith ad insignia Principis Walliæ in Cœmiterio
D. Pauli, aliosq; nonnullos Bibliopolas. Anno MDCLXXXVII.



Pepys's Problem (11/22/1692)

- A - has 6 dice in a Box, wth wch he is to fling a 6.
- B - has in another Box 12 Dice, wth wch he is to fling 2 Sixes.
- C - has in another Box 18 Dice, wth wch he is to fling 3 Sixes.
- Q. whether B & C have not as easy a Taske as A, at even luck?

Newton's Reply (11/26/1692)

What is ye expectation or hope of A to throw every time one six **at least** wth six dyes? [*etc.*]

If the Question be thus stated, it appears by an easy computation that the expectation of A is greater then that of B or C, that is, the task of A is the easiest.

Pepys's Reply (12/6/1692)

(Prove it!)

•...You give it in favour of ye Expectations of A, & this (as you say) by an easy Computation.

But yet I must not pretend to soe much Conversation wth Numbers, as presently to comprehend as I ought to doe, all ye force of that wch you are pleas'd to assigne for ye Reason of it, relating to their having or not having ye Benefit of all their Chances. ; and therefore were it not for ye trouble it must have cost you; I could have wish'd for a sight of ye very Computation.

Pepys wanted the reason: He asked “WHY?”

"I cannot bear the Thought of being made Master of a Jewell I know not how to wear."

- [13] Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you**; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

(1 Peter 3:13-17 ESV)

What did Newton do?

- Newton kept refining his proof....

Our World Today: The New Atheism

- Richard Dawkins

- “The Selfish Gene”
- “The God Dilusion”



- Daniel Dennett

- “Darwin’s Dangerous Idea”
- “Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon”



- Sam Harris

- “The End of Faith”
- “Letter to a Christian Nation”



- Christopher Hitchens

- “God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything”



The Old Atheism

- Nietzsche: “God is dead”
- Bertrand Russell: Infinite regression: cause / effect
- Karl Marx: “Religion is an opiate for the masses”
- Jean-Paul Sartre: “Man is a useless passion”
- Martin Heidegger: *Dasein*- “Man is being there”

8 Characteristics Of the New Atheism

1. Boldness
2. Specific Rejection of God and Scripture
3. Rejection of Jesus Christ
4. Grounded in Scientific Argument
5. Refuses to Tolerate Moderate or Liberal Forms of Belief
6. Attack on Toleration
7. Questions Parental Right to Teach their children a belief in God (Child abuse)
8. Religion must be eliminated to preserve human freedom

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*from *Atheism Remix*, by Dr. R. Albert Mohler

Welcome to Classical Apologetics!

- Next time we take Four Steps Backward....