

Lesson Two Handout

Answering Objections

Summary of Last Class:

- Vatican I, *Dei Filius*: “If anyone shall say that the One True God, our Creator and Lord, cannot certainly be known by the natural light of human reason through created things; let him be anathema.”
- St. Thomas Aquinas offers 5 Ways, or Proofs, for the existence of God from reason alone.
 - Proof does not equal persuasion plus truth
 - E.g. The Devil was about to *persuade* Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but this does not prove that it was good.
 - Proof = no possibility for error
 - All Five Ways begin with the observation of the world around us, which leads us to certain deductions that there is a God.
 - E.g. we observe motion in the universe, or change, what is in motion is set in motion by another. We cannot go infinitely backward in this series, so there has to be one outside of the series to cause it to move. This being that exists outside of the series of events, is God.
 - E.g. a series of dominoes is set in motion by an external force from the series of dominoes.
- Divine Attributes
 - By the light of natural reason, we can also deduce certain attributes about God. We can deduce that He is:
 - Eternal
 - Spiritual/Immaterial
 - Infinite/Unlimited
 - One
 - Omnipotent
 - Omnipresent
 - Good
 - Perfect

Class II: Common Objections to the Existence of God

I. Atheism

From the Greek *atheos*, which means without God.

The atheist denies a first cause of all things, but their argument essentially asserts that there is no such thing as a Personal God.

Prominent atheists: Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*; Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, etc.

II. Material Evolutionism

Asserts that the laws of nature may be due to blind force inherent in matter itself. Stated clearly, “the universe came from an explosion of a mass of concentrated matter or energy. This gave rise to the first atoms that possessed chemical and physical forces, which by action and interaction, have gradually evolved the greater variety of things, with and without life, which we see in the world at the present day. All living creatures, then, are products of physical mechanisms.

III. Pantheism

Greek *pan* = all *theo* = god.

Pantheism is the direct opposite of materialism as materialism holds that nothing exists by matter. Pantheism, however, states that nothing exists except spirit, God, the Absolute. In other words, “God is everything, and everything is God.”

Prominent pantheists were Heraclitus (c. 500 BC), and the Stoics (a school of philosophy founded c 350 BC)

IV. Agnosticism

Term introduced by Thomas Huxley (T.H. Huxley, "Science and Christian Tradition," 1889) and later expounded by Herbert Spencer

Greek *gnosis* = knowledge. Agnostics believe that we cannot ultimately know that God exists. They withhold judgement that there is a God.

V. Nihilism

Latin *nihil* = nothing

Nihilism is the attitude or viewpoint denying all traditional values and moral truths. In its modern expression, nihilism is the cult of nothingness; the belief that behind the appearance of reality there is nothing: no God, no truth, no right and wrong, only sensation and facts.

Modern Objections:

Richard Dawkins

- God of the Gaps

Christopher Hitchens

- Theodicy, or the problem of Evil