

Belleville First Assembly of God

Defending Your Faith - 2017

Topic 7: Philosophy

Class Goal: Equip the believer to respond to common challenges to Christianity in order to evangelize the lost and to disciple those with doubts.

Objectives for Meeting Our Goal: Upon completing this class, the believer should be able to...

1. Recognize common challenges to Christianity, categorize them, and...
2. Prayerfully and gently respond to these challenges (2 Tim 2:23-26; 1 Peter 3:15)

1. Questions from previous discussions or challenges from skeptics?

2. Introduction: "...the greatest danger confronting American evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism... For the sake of greater effectiveness in witnessing [about] Jesus Christ, as well as for their own sakes, evangelicals cannot afford to keep on living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence." - Charles Malik, 1980.¹

3. Deduced Certainty: What can we know about God from foundational beliefs?

- a. The universe must have had a first cause (Aristotle, Aquinas, and empirical evidence).
 - See Lesson 6 discussion on the Cosmological Argument
- b. The First Cause must be independent from the universe
 - It cannot depend on its creation for existence
- c. The First Cause must be outside of time (known as "eternal")
 - It cannot start from within its creation to make its creation
- d. The First Cause must be outside of space (known as "spiritual")
 - It cannot start from within its creation to make its creation
- e. The First Cause must be omnipotent
 - If it were limited, then it must be limited by some *thing* (cannot be limited by nothing)
 - But being independent means it depends on nothing else for its existence
 - Therefore, because the First Cause is independent, it is also limitless
 - And because an effect is not greater than its cause, the First Cause is greatest in power
 - So that which is greatest in power and limitless is also known as "omnipotent"
- f. The First Cause must be a person
 - Fine-tuning is throughout the universe (astronomy, physical constants, biochemistry)
 - It would be statistically impossible for fine-tuning to occur at all levels by chance
 - There is no scientific support for a multiverse, and it fails philosophically as well
 - The only argument remaining is intentional design, which requires a mind (a person)
- g. The First Cause must be moral
 - There is no materialistic explanation for morality (Darwin says it's against nature)
 - The only alternative to a material source is a non-material source (i.e., a spirit)

4. Conclusion: We have justification that our belief is true because out of all the ancient civilizations, only one offers a First Cause that is all-knowing, all-present, independent, eternal,

¹ Moreland, J. P., and Craig, W. L., Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview (Downers Grove, IL InterVarsity Press, 2003), 1.

spirit, omnipotent, a person, and moral. Only the ancient Hebrew Scriptures provide such a philosophically sound Being, and He is YAHWEH.

5. Class Exercise:

We have seen that the idea of the Hebrew God is not only unique, but it makes logical sense when tested against deductions developed by the ancient Greeks. Yet, in an attempt to remove such external evidence, post-modern thinkers have invented questionable philosophies. How would you employ logic to answer the following post-modern challenges?

a. **Challenge:** You claim that the God of the Bible is the First Cause, but what caused God?

Causation is a law that is necessary in the created universe of space and time, but God is
outside of this universe and its laws (and must be), so He therefore requires no cause.

b. **Challenge:** No one can be certain of anything. Through his exercise of
systematic doubt, Rene Descartes (circa 1660) proved that no one can question their own
existence because one must first exist in order to question (Cogito, ergo sum)

c. **Challenge:** How can you believe in God when there are no absolutes? The claim that there
are no absolutes is self-defeating, for that claim is itself a claim about an absolute

d. **Challenge:** You claim that the Bible is the source of truth, but there is no such thing as “truth”.
As Thomas Aquinas presented (circa 1270), to claim that there is no truth is itself a statement
about a truth, so the claim is self-defeating.

e. **Challenge:** An all-knowing, all-present being is impossible. In order to verify such a claim,
one must travel throughout all space and time and possess all knowledge of realms outside of
space and time, which would make the seeker all-knowing and all-present. Self-defeating!

f. **Challenge:** All that exists is physical & material. There is no metaphysical or immaterial realm.
This is in itself a metaphysically-based claim, discussing that which is not physical. Because
the claimant must use metaphysics to make the claim, it is therefore self-defeating.

As Paul reminds us, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). As we saw in this discussion, one method of fulfilling this warning is by soundly using “philosophy... according to the elementary principles of the world” as a *support* for trust in YAHWEH and His word.